

**From:** Joanne Lowe  
**Sent:** March 18, 2021 4:07 PM  
**To:** [David.Mitchell3@ontario.ca](mailto:David.Mitchell3@ontario.ca)  
**Subject:** Youth Justice and Mental Health Needs

Hello David,

I hope this email finds you well.

I had intended to share some information with you much sooner but with all of the changes occurring in so many areas impacting the Youth Services Bureau, I was delayed in doing so.

I am reaching out to you from my unique position in that I have 2 roles. In addition to my role as Executive Director at YSB, I am also the VP, Mental Health and Addictions at CHEO which is one of the largest child and youth mental health provider in our region along with YSB. Without out a doubt, the pandemic has contributed to an increased level of acuity and complexity among children and youth with mental health disorders. We have seen an increase of almost 50% in demand in our region and most concerning is that many youth are presenting at very high risk of suicide and self-harm.

During this same time, YSB received youth from Sylaps as a result of the initial temporary closure of their secure custody program. The impact of the sudden closure and subsequent sudden transfers of these youth can only be described as traumatic, at best and the impact on pre-existing mental health and addiction disorders was painfully evident with some of them requiring hospitalization at CHEO and additional staffing support in our YJ unit. Many of the youth did not understand why they were transferred and several of them believed that they had done something wrong. In our conversations with the Sylaps staff, we are assured that they did their very best to dissuade the youth of this self-blame but, as you know, these are youth who already struggle with anxiety, depression and an overall lack of self confidence and self-assurance.

I was reflecting on this when the closure was announced as permanent a few weeks ago and felt it would be important to share with you that, in the absence of the specialized mental health services that had been available at Sylaps, I anticipate an increasing level of youth requiring hospitalizations and intensive services. The Sylaps closure has indeed created a gap in the Province that should be concerning for us all.

I would be more than happy to discuss further.

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