

**From:** John Rabeau <jrabeau@cogeco.ca>  
**Sent:** March 19, 2021 11:15 AM  
**To:** MinisterMCCSS@ontario.ca  
**Cc:** Christine.Elliott@ontario.ca; James.Wallace@ontario.ca  
**Subject:** Syl Apps

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Dear Minister:

It has come to my attention that MCCSS has indicated its intention to cease funding mental health beds at Syl Apps for young offenders who are caught up in the youth justice system. In my opinion this is a significant retrogressive step in your Ministry's ability and indeed responsibility to deal with children with severe mental health disorders who are in your care

After retiring from the OPS, after a number of years, finishing my career in the Ministry of Corrections as Assistant Deputy and Deputy Minister, I served for ten years on the Kinark Board of Directors. As a result, I have familiarity with both the needs for mental health services in the Corrections field (both children and adults) and Kinark's range of services and ability to deal with the most difficult to serve children whose needs for mental health are most acute.

In my opinion, given my experience, one of the greatest issues that we face in Ontario in respect to serving the prison population both adult and children, is the lack of mental health treatment services. As a result I must say I was shocked to hear about the cancellation of the program at Syl Apps. There is a need for more services, not less, and there is little demonstrated ability within the present youth justice system outside of Syl Apps to do so. The primary focus of the youth facilities is primarily on custody for young people and not their needs for mental health treatment.

There is minimal capacity to diagnose and provide treatment for children in the institutions and no capacity to treat the types of severely mentally ill children that Kinark (Syl Apps) are presently treating. The other facilities do not have the necessary training or professional staff to deal with the behaviours often presented by these children and as a result, similar to the adult population they, unfortunately, end up being locked in isolation because their behaviour is too disruptive. This response demonstrably exacerbates the problem and, in fact, creates greater mental issues for these individuals.

Unfortunately, the community children's mental health system has not been as responsive to dealing with children in conflict with the law (similar to the adult mental health system) because of their criminal behaviour. It seems plain to me that discontinuing a service that will not be provided elsewhere is absolutely the wrong approach to be taking. It is a regressive step, from what I believe was a very good beginning in Ontario to deal with mentally ill children in the creation of Sly Apps several years ago.

During my time on the Kinark Board there were continual issues for the organization in dealing with two Ministries and their varying and sometimes conflicting approaches. It would certainly be easier and more efficient for Kinark to only have to deal with one Ministry. My worry, however, would be that over time, children in the youth justice stream would not be given the opportunity of accessing the mental health intervention they require that Sly Apps has to offer, unless the system is designed to do so.

Just to wrap up, Kinark has been in the business for many years. They have a proven track record in dealing with children with mental health needs. It makes no sense to walk away from this on the part of MCCSS, and from my knowledge have no legitimate grounds to do so. We certainly do not need less services for children with complex mental health issues. I sincerely hope there would be a re-consideration of this decision.

Thanks for taking the time to consider my input,

John Rabeau  
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