

June 8/21

April 6, 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter today to outline serious concerns regarding the welfare of children and youth in isolation hubs.

I am currently staying at the Edmonton Isolation Hub.

On April 5 at 4 am I was woken up to a father screaming at his young daughter in another hotel room. The father was swearing at this child. I immediately called the front desk and went outside my room to try and figure out what was happening. Security was slowly walking to the door and I yelled at them to hurry up. Security came and knocked on the door and the screaming stopped. I requested that they call the police as I was concerned about the welfare of the child and they responded "We can't do that". I emphasized that there was a child in the room and that they needed to ensure the child was ok. They continued to knock and I went back to my room. Through the peephole in my door I witnessed the father eventually come out to speak with security. The hallway immediately smelt like strong cannabis¹ and the father was severely intoxicated, slurring his speech, and could not acknowledge the questions or concerns of security. The conversation consisted of security instructing the father to 'quiet down' and then the security officers left. Approximately 20 minutes later the father resumed screaming at the child. I called the front desk again and a nurse accompanied the security guards to the room. At this point I clearly raised the question of the child's welfare to the nurse and security. They responded that they could not call the police. To my knowledge, security informed me that they looked in and the child was allegedly asleep on the bed. At no point did anyone speak directly with the child to ensure her safety. I estimate her age to be about 4 years old.

The security and the nurse left the child in the room.

The next day I called the isolation manager to ensure that a report was written and that they go and check on the child. I assumed that the father was hungover and wondered if the child was hungry. I am not sure if this check-in was carried out and I am not sure whether a report was written.

I am relaying this story to you because it illustrated very serious child and youth welfare issues at the hubs and this is NOT an isolated issue. The inaction of security, nurses, and hub staff is a clear example of negligence. The Government of Nunavut policies placed all the parties in their respective positions and these same policies do not provide appropriate protocols and protections to respond to situations of violence and abuse. In addition, the policies in place result in children being left in the care of intoxicated caregivers.

By requiring Nunavummiut to isolate in the hubs, the GN has a clear duty of care towards children during their stay. The incident expressed above illustrates a serious breach of this duty with the Government of Nunavut holding liability. In addition, since this experience I have heard one similar story of parents who accompany their children for medical appointments, whereby parents or guardians become too intoxicated to properly care for their children. I understand that reports are filed in these situations so the Government of Nunavut is aware that these situations are taking place, and failure to find appropriate solutions contributes to the negligence on the part of the GN.

¹ The hotel manager informed me that in Edmonton they have locked all windows and balconies for isolation rooms.

As I draft this letter I understand that alcoholism and substance abuse are deeply challenging diseases that are informed by a number of complex factors. Quarantine requirements can exacerbate these issues. Individuals who struggle with any of these issues that isolate with children should be provided with additional support to ensure the safety and wellbeing. Punitive measures directed towards parents would only exacerbate tensions leading to escalating interventions and putting children at greater risk of abuse, apprehension, or other traumatic experiences. It is critical that the GN consider these issues when moving towards a solution while prioritizing the safety of the children.

These issues are extremely serious and GN policy is playing a clear role in putting children in these potentially risky situations without providing appropriate protections. It is critical that such safety protocols are put in place to ensure the welfare of children and youth throughout their stay at the hubs.

I look forward to receiving a timely response,

Andrew Morrison
andrewiqaluit@gmail.com

John Quirke

From: Adam Arreak Lightstone
Sent: June 8, 2021 4:29 PM
To: John Quirke
Subject: FW: Letter

Sent from my Bell Samsung device over Canada's largest network.

----- Original message -----

From: andrew morrison <andrewiqaluit@gmail.com>
Date: 2021-06-08 4:23 p.m. (GMT-05:00)
To: Adam Arreak Lightstone <alightstone@assembly.nu.ca>
Subject: Letter

Hi Adam, yes that's fine, I just want to stress again that it was a systemic thing and not place blame on the parent

Thank you
Andrew