

NDP MPP Jeff Burch tables legislation to protect vulnerable Ontarians in supportive living homes

Report 2021-116
Appendix A

QUEEN'S PARK – NDP MPP Jeff Burch (Niagara Centre) has announced a new private member's bill to regulate supportive living homes.

The Protecting Vulnerable Persons in Supportive Living Accommodation Bill provides a framework for operators and sets minimum standards that must be met so that tenants are no longer at risk.

"Residents of supportive living homes are some of the most vulnerable people in our province, and deserve to be protected.

"The sector remains unregulated with no minimum standards of care. We've heard too many shocking stories of high-risk adults and seniors being mistreated, neglected and left to live in deplorable conditions," said Burch on Tuesday during a press conference at the Ontario legislature.

"When things go wrong there is nowhere for residents and their families to turn, and these unlicensed private operators are allowed to carry on offering inadequate care to others.

"This legislation will finally require operators to be licensed to ensure all Ontarians in supportive living homes receive a high standard of quality of care, food and accommodation."

Supportive living homes include low-income seniors and people with disabilities who need assistance to live on their own, and also provide accommodation for people experiencing mental health and addictions issues.

Burch was joined at the press conference by Karen Barry, the daughter of a former supportive living home resident, who shared her father's first-hand experiences as a resident of an unregulated group home.

"In the home my father was placed in, he had to contend with unsanitary conditions, bed bugs in the apartments above him and rodent infestation in the basement below him that was also used for food storage," said Barry.

"He lived in fear and neglect and he paid a significant amount each month to do so. He ended up living a nightmare that I can't forget, I don't think he can either."

Burch's private member's bill, to be tabled Tuesday, will create a framework for inspection and complaint protocols, introduce new safeguards to protect residents, and will make failure to have a license a punishable offence with fines of up to \$1,000 per day.

"Alberta introduced provincial legislation to protect their vulnerable residents living in supportive living facilities almost a decade ago. We need action in Ontario to stop more vulnerable people suffering at the hands of these unlicensed for-profit operators," added Burch.