

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Mother of 14 Year-Old Child with Disability files Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario Application against Empower Simcoe for Implementing Visitation Ban

Toronto, ON – June 19, 2020 – Pamela Libralesso filed an Application with the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, on behalf of her 14 year-old son against Empower Simcoe, the agency running the group home at which her son resides for its COVID-19 visitation ban.

Ms. Libralesso, and her husband, have not seen or communicated with their son since mid-March 2020, at which time Empower Simcoe implemented a visitation ban that completely barred the family, whom are essential caregivers and support persons, from access to the group home. This has left her son in isolation without any contact from any of his family members, which is detrimental to his mental health and well-being.

The application alleges Empower Simcoe discriminated against the applicant on the basis of disability in the area of services. In particular, it is alleged that Empower Simcoe discriminated against the applicant by failing to turn its mind to ways in which it can accommodate his disability-related needs and by failing to implement alternatives. Electronic communication of any kind is not an appropriate accommodation for his particular needs.

“I have always taken the position that it is feasible for Empower Simcoe to put in place an access plan that both appropriately accommodates our son while at the same time ensuring the safety of the other resident and staff and the home, “ said the applicant’s mother, Pamela. “It has now been over 80 days since we have seen him, and we are concerned on the potential long-lasting harm and traumatic consequences this may have on his mental health and well-being. For him, we have simply disappeared from his life and he does not know why.”

The applicant has requested that the Tribunal hear the matter on an expedited basis.

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