

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario Grants Applicant's Request to Expedite Case about Visitation Ban at Empower Simcoe's Group Home**

Toronto, ON – August 18, 2020 – The Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario has granted an applicant's request to expedite his application against Empower Simcoe. The application challenges the implementation of Empower Simcoe's COVID-19 visitation ban at its group homes. The Tribunal found that the facts of the case met the stringent test for expedited process and requires an urgent resolution.

The applicant – who is 14 years old – has been subjected to Empower Simcoe's blanket visitation ban since March. He alleges that Empower Simcoe is discriminating against him by failing to contemplate ways in which it can accommodate his disability-related needs and by failing to implement alternatives to the strict visitation ban.

He requested that the Tribunal hear the matter on an expedited basis because of the ongoing harm to his mental health and well-being resulting from the isolation from his family.

"I am relieved that the Tribunal saw the urgency of this matter," said the applicant's mother and litigation guardian. "When so many other sectors have relaxed their visitation bans and people are going out to patios and gyms, my son's case highlights the pre-existing disparities that exist for adults and children who live in group home settings. They are already more vulnerable to rights violations because the law does not provide enough protections for this population to meaningfully address their concerns."

The Tribunal's full decision can be found [here](#). The next procedural steps are currently being case managed to maintain utmost expediency.

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