

# Group home residents not criminals, says ministry

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16 or older, would undergo treatment for a three-month period.

Area homeowners, including Laurie Wagg and Christine Ferguson of nearby Frederick Street, Sue and Graham Wise and Chris Smith of Church Street and

Margery Dukeshire of Park Drive, each explained why a group home would not be welcome.

They wanted to know if the residents would have 24-hour supervision. As well, they asked if patients would administer their own medication and be allowed to go out into the community. The

proposed house is 10 feet away from Dukeshury's property.

"I am concerned for the children in our neighbourhood," she said. "These people do escape from time to time."

Sue Wise said she was alarmed to discover zoning is in place for a group home in

the area. "I think this is institutional," said Wise. "This is a really sad thing for our neighbourhood to face."

Group home residents would take part in a therapy program and return to their families for the weekend, Jensen explained, adding they would pose no danger.

"They are not frantic;

rather, they are clinically depressed," he said. "None are criminals. They have no association with crime."

Safety remains the residents' main issue, however. Greg Parker of Church Street told council he and his family moved to Stouffville because they wanted a safe place to live.

"I'm happy to let my children wander. If this comes here, I will not be able to let them go," he pointed out.

Councilor Harry Bowes, whose ward includes Church Street, asked if the proposal fits the criteria for the per-

mitted use. It doesn't compare to the two group homes that are in Stouffville now, he noted.

"This is not a family setting. The people stay during the week for two months or so and move on. It's not a group home. It's a halfway house."

Residents will be able to tell the applicant how they feel because council directed staff to inform Loft Community Services that a public information meeting is a must.

Loft did not return phone calls.

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