

Spirit Rising House Owners Accused of Selling Cannabis to Minors

Spirit Rising House Owners Charged with Distributing Cannabis to Minors

Four owners of the Manitoba-based foster care provider, Spirit Rising House, were charged on Monday with distributing illicit cannabis and providing it to minors. The accused—John Bennett, Christine Ormiston, Ian Rabb, and Kelli Register—have been under investigation since February after allegations emerged that the company was supplying vulnerable youth with marijuana. The province severed ties with the company following its internal investigation, and all children in care were removed. Police search warrants revealed troubling evidence, including exposure of minors to drug dealers and exploitation.

Ongoing Investigation and Legal Battle

Searches of Spirit Rising House's group homes in April led to the collection of evidence that implicated the owners in criminal negligence, causing harm to the children in their care. Winnipeg police found that children were sometimes driven to illegal cannabis distributors to purchase cannabis using their allowances. An affidavit by Winnipeg Constable Phillip Cole stated that the actions of Spirit Rising House had contributed to physical and mental harm to the children.

Well-Known Addictions Counselor Involved

Ian Rabb, one of the charged owners and a well-known addictions counselor, founded Spirit Rising House in 2021. He previously worked with recovery centers, including Kelburn Recovery Centre, from which he was removed following these allegations. Rabb also ran for political office in Manitoba in 2011. In response to the charges, Spirit Rising House has defended its care practices, asserting they were trying to address addiction and exploitation issues among vulnerable youth in their care.

Legal Proceedings Await

The law firm representing the owners has declined to comment as the matter is ongoing in court. The outcome of these serious charges will continue to unfold as the legal proceedings move forward.

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