

institution watch

PEOPLE
FIRST
OF CANADA



PERSONNES
D'ABORD
DU CANADA



50 years

Canadian
Association for
Community Living

Diversity includes.

Fall 2010 / Volume 5, No. 3

Monitoring the
progress toward
a vision of full
community living
for *all* persons
with intellectual
disabilities.

This is a newsletter
written and produced
by the People First of
Canada-CACL Joint
Task Force on
Deinstitutionalization.
For more information,
contact Don Gallant at
(416) 661-9611 or
Shelley Rattai at
(866) 854-8915.

Task Force Members

Shane Haddad
Norm McLeod
Rose Flaig
Peter Bourne
Mary Whitehead
Fred Ford
Rick Tuft
Laurie Larson
Peter Park
Mary Rothman
David Weremy
Chris Currie
Catherine Allix
Shelley Rattai
Don Gallant

"An institution is any place in which people who have been labeled as having an intellectual disability are isolated, segregated and/or congregated. An institution is any place in which people do not have, or are not allowed to exercise control over their lives and their day to day decisions.

An institution is not defined merely by its size."

Deinstitutionalization Task Force



FALL 2010

MESSAGE FROM THE TASK FORCE

**Norm McLeod and Shane Haddad,
Task Force Co-chairs**

Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities says that State Parties 'recognize the equal rights of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, with choices equal to others, and shall take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of this right and their full inclusion and participation in the community'. These rights are also guaranteed in Canadian legislation and charters, most notably the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. A right to live in the community, to choose where and with whom we live is a fundamental right of citizenship. A right so fundamental that surely it is a right enjoyed by all citizens in this country. Unfortunately this is not true for many thousands of Canadians with intellectual disabilities.

The harsh reality for many Canadians with intellectual disabilities and their families is that the right to live in community remains an elusive dream, a promise unfulfilled. While progress has been made, thousands of people remain trapped in institutions throughout this country. Attitudes and practice have been slow to change. Too many people in our society still believe that institutional placement is in the best interest of persons with intellectual disabilities. Too many people assume that somehow services in institutions are superior to those in community. Too many people still believe that persons with an intellectual disability need to be 'fixed' or 'made ready' to live in community and that an institution is the place where this fixing should occur. Too many people still define a person's value and potential contribution not by their personhood, but by their label. Too many people still believe that community does not have the capacity or willingness to support all of its citizens regardless of their real or perceived limitations.

To realize full inclusion in this country will require more than a simple closure of large institutions. We need to develop and enable access to alternate supports that do not replicate the type of segregation and control found in institutional environments. Simply replacing large institutions with smaller options is not enough. We must ensure community based options do not impose continued segregation and isolation. A simple change in location is not sufficient; we must change how we view disability... not as a defect but rather as a natural part of our own diversity, a natural part of what it is to be human. The presence of a disability must not necessitate a life of exclusion.

As a society we have acknowledged that large scale institutionalization of persons with intellectual disabilities was a mistake. Unfortunately for people with intellectual disabilities and their families many provincial politicians and policy makers have learnt little from our past. Several Canadian provinces continue to maintain large institutions (with no indication of imminent closure plans) and throughout the country we witness on a daily basis persons being placed in nursing homes, long term care facilities, and seniors residences. Placements made based not on the wishes or ambitions of people but rather based on what is expedient and available. We have not stopped institutionalization, we have merely changed locations.

We cannot continue to tolerate the status quo. If we place value on persons with intellectual disabilities then our actions must reflect that value. Life in community is a right – a right we cannot as a society deny persons with intellectual disabilities. The fact that there are thousands of people still living in institutional facilities should both shock and shame us.

SPEAKER'S CORNER

This is the story of an amazing man who has astounded us with his ability to visit a whole new world and just go with the flow. In order to keep this man anonymous his name has been changed for the purposes of this story. "Kent" entered an institution in his pre-school years and has just moved back into the community, for the first time, as he has begun collecting his old age pension. He is a gentleman who has acquired many labels over his lifetime but certainly lives with significant autistic tendencies and does not speak. Due to anxiety and agitation he has experienced in the past during transitions and change, he only visited his new home once before actually moving. Even during this visit it was difficult for anyone to know whether he truly understood that this was going to be his house. We even wondered if he could conceptualize what house meant, having spent his whole life in the institution! His support staff went to the institution several times to get to know 'Kent' and how best to meet his needs. Even after this, there were still questions about how upsetting it might be for him to suddenly be living in a whole new environment.

On the day of his move, he entered his new home, spied the couch and immediately lay down for a comfort test run. It was close to lunchtime so his new roommate and support staff were cooking lunch. He made a beeline to the kitchen, sat down at the table and waited patiently for his first meal in his house. Imagine smelling your meal cooking and seeing it being prepared for the first time in almost 60 years! The kitchen is now most definitely his favorite place and there isn't a meal he hasn't polished off with great enjoyment.

Since his first day in this brave new world, 'Kent' has done an incredible job of taking it all in stride. Once he made sure that his support staff was going to understand and respect his "no", it's like he always lived in his home. He has watched a few baseball games in the park across the road; he's gone for walks around his neighborhood and hung out in his yard supervising his staff. His sister lives within walking distance and will hopefully become a frequent visitor. During his years in the institution he was often found hanging on to a ball and it was seen as a bit of a fixation. It's been over a week since his big move and not once has he sought out his ball. We're hoping this is his way of telling us that he is happy, content and thankful to finally have a home of his own.

PROVINCIAL / TERRITORIAL UPDATES

MANITOBA

The process of the Human Rights Complaint filed in September 2006 continues. As we move through the proceedings involved in the complaint our ability to share details are subject to confidentiality, making it difficult to provide a complete update. We can say things are moving along, although not as quickly as we would like or in a manner that we prefer. Community Living-Manitoba is grateful for the support of community organizations which continue to speak up and respond to news items or controversial situations. We are discovering that a human rights complaint comes with contention, discomfort, and requires some time. In launching our complaint we have learned that the details and outcomes emerge in unexpected ways at times.



Manitoba Developmental Centre

The joint committee with government and community representatives created to facilitate an “accelerated pace” for people transitioning into the community is still operating. Its strength and function has changed and become more challenging because staff support for the fundamental tasks of planning and negotiation has dropped. Community representatives are committed to continuing the work with the committee members to keep discussions open and planning ongoing. People who are presently involved in a transition process are a priority for us.

Presently there are 280 people still living at the Manitoba Developmental Centre.

ALBERTA

At the beginning of this year The Persons with Developmental Disabilities Program (PDD) was directed to make budget cuts to the supports and services provided to people with intellectual disabilities. The Alberta Association for Community Living along with service providers and families stood in strong opposition to the proposed budget cuts. Their united community advocacy resulted in an increase in funding; however, the increase was less than required. Funding is insufficient to support people wishing to move out of institutions and indeed insufficient to respond to the needs of people now living in the community. Some young adults who require supports and currently living at home with their parents are being placed on waiting lists, and some community agencies have reduced their level of support to the people they serve.



Michener Centre

In July, the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports announced an independent administrative review of PDD. The review is looking at administration spending within the PDD program branch, the six Community PDD Boards, and community-based service provider agencies. The Minister in her press release stated “any savings found as a result of this review will be redirected to front-line services for

adults with developmental disabilities. Funding for the PDD program will not be cut. The review will only look at administrative spending, to ensure PDD program administration is as effective and efficient as possible.” The results of the review are expected to be made public this fall.

It is highly unlikely an administrative review will find substantial savings, administrative reviews often do little to ensure that people receive better quality supports. Administrative reviews typically cause disruption in the delivery of supports to people, result in a loss of morale and commitment amongst staff. If the government is truly sincere and wants to find ways to be more effective and efficient it should look at what other provinces are doing such as Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario and British Columbia. These provinces have closed their institutional services and redirected the funding to enable people living in institutions to receive supports in the community. Even in this time of fiscal restraint there is still great opportunity to close institutions and give all Albertans an opportunity to live inclusive and meaningful lives.

Three people will be leaving Michener this week and planning is underway for another three to move from Youngstown Home. There are 239 people living at Michener.

SASKATCHEWAN



Valley View Centre

The Saskatchewan Association for Community Living (SACL) believes all individuals have the right to live in safe, affordable and accessible housing in the community of their choice. The SACL is committed to identifying more residential options and future possibilities in the province, with the goal of increasing housing choices for individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families. To this end, the SACL wants to continue discussions with individuals, families, the government and other community-based organizations. The SACL believes feedback from a variety of stakeholders will be very valuable as the organization continues to advocate for increased choice.

In the fall of 2009, the SACL identified residential options as one of its top 3 priorities, along with family engagement and inclusive education. The SACL has established a Residential Options Committee and will also hire a full-time staff member to focus on researching and analyzing options in Saskatchewan.

Currently, there are about 225 people living in Valley View Centre in Moose Jaw. The Government of Saskatchewan has voiced its support for community living but has not committed to the closure of the facility. However, in the fall of 2008, the government committed to a \$76.9-million investment to eliminate the wait list for residential and other supports in Saskatchewan.

The SACL will continue to advocate for more choice in the living arrangements available to individuals with intellectual disabilities. As part of this goal, the SACL will encourage the government to further invest in supports for individuals to assist them as they transition from Valley View Centre to residences in the communities of their choice.

ONTARIO

CLASS ACTION AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO

A number of former residents of Huronia Regional Centre, the oldest and largest of Ontario's institutions for people who have an intellectual disability (it closed in March 2009) have been attempting to get court approval for a class action against the government of Ontario.

The plaintiffs (former residents) are alleging that the Province of Ontario breached its fiduciary, statutory and common law duties to the residents through the establishment, operation and supervision of the institution. In particular, it is alleged that the Province's failure to care for and protect residents resulted in loss or injury suffered by them, including psychological trauma, pain and suffering, loss of enjoyment of life, and exacerbation of existing mental disabilities.

After several months of legal proceedings, The Honourable Mr. Justice Cullity of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, on July 30, 2010 certified this action as a class action, allowing residents of Huronia Regional Centre who resided at the facility between 1945 and 2009 to join in the class action.

The Province (the defendant) has announced it will seek leave to appeal the certification decision and the motion for leave to appeal will be heard this coming October.

"A lot of people think that we need institutions because of all the problems we have in the community. Well, the problems in the community are nothing like what we put up with in the institution. If we've been strong enough to survive institutions, we'll be strong enough to survive the community."

The late Patrick Worth, founding member of the National Task Force

There is also a move to "encourage" former residents of Rideau Regional Centre and South-western Regional Centre (both institutions also closed in March of 2009) to join in similar legal actions. There has already been significant interest from former residents of Rideau Regional Centre.

DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION WORKING GROUP KEEPS GOING

Even though Ontario has finally closed its largest institutions the work of Community Living Ontario's Deinstitutionalization Working Group is far from over. In the last edition of *Institution Watch* we talked about **A Call to Action in a New Era...** which was initiated by the Working Group and is now becoming embedded in the fabric of the Association. Other priorities include: developing a real history of institutional practices in Ontario; promoting a monument or memorial to recognize the thousands of our fellow citizens who lived and died in institutions far away from family and community; and starting a campaign to identify other larger institutions in which people who have an intellectual disability live and start promoting community living opportunities for these people.

Arguably the most daunting task facing the Working Group is to encourage ourselves and others to look at the range of community supports to ensure that they have not perpetuated the institutional culture within community. This is a part of our work in which we must engage many individuals and groups as partners...it is something that we cannot do alone...but it is a task that must be undertaken.

YUKON

The government of the Yukon, as recently announced by Health and Social Services Minister Glenn Hart, has undertaken the development of a social inclusion strategy for the territory. The Department of Health and Social Services will take the lead in developing the strategy, working with partner departments and non-government organizations to create a strategy that will provide evidence-based research and measured social indicators on which to base decisions within government.

In rolling out this initiative, government defines a socially inclusive society as one where all people feel valued, their differences are respected and their basic needs are met so they can live with dignity. The social inclusion and poverty reduction strategy is being developed to identify issues of social exclusion in Yukon society. This campaign builds on the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction symposium and workshop that took place last April. YACL participated in this forum and one of our Board members sits on the ongoing government / NGO committee. A follow-up symposium will take place in November.

“A social inclusion strategy is a significant advancement in social policy in Yukon. Social inclusion ensures that services target those in need and are accessible for all members of society,” Minister Hart said. “Social inclusion is a measure of any government on how it deals with those citizens in need of support.”

While poverty is one of the most obvious factors in excluding people from participation in healthy living, social exclusion also refers to inadequate housing, education, employment or social participation as well as inadequate financial supports. Developing a territorial strategy will involve four phases, 1) creating a collaborative process, 2) collecting data and consulting, 3) developing a strategy to address priorities from the data and consultations and 4) reviewing and reporting annually.

YACL is most optimistic that this strategy when fully developed and implemented will have significant positive impact and benefit for persons with disabilities in Yukon.

NOVA SCOTIA



Riverview

There has been no substantive change in the conditions in this province. Hundreds of people with intellectual disabilities continue to live in Adult Residential Centres or Regional Residential Centres and the practice of building 8 bed group homes continues – some on the front lawns of existing institutions!

Despite these disappointments, however, there is a new spirit of communication in the air in Nova Scotia. We are witnessing increased communication among members of the broad disability community, and enhanced communication between that community and government. A group of organizations representing people with a wide range of disabilities formed a ‘Committee’ to come to consensus on what we are asking government policy to be. This group has agreed that there needs to be an end to new spending on institutions and that there must be person centered planning around individuals. It references the U.N. Convention and its principles.

The Minister of Community Services, Denise Peterson-Rafuse, is new to the legislature and has expressed and demonstrated an eagerness to learn more about the field of disability. She has been meeting with coalitions, people with disabilities, family members and community organizations. To date these meetings have been meaningful and we hope will ultimately have impact on government direction and policy. It is a real and welcomed change.

The Minister has met with and made a commitment to the 'Committee' to develop a Disability Strategy for Nova Scotia via meaningful consultation with the community. Exciting times!

QUEBEC

According to the latest available data, as provided by the Ministry of Health and Social Services, there are still approximately 250 people with intellectual disabilities living in institutions in 4 areas of the province such as Abitibi, Laurentides, Laval and Montreal. While progress continues to be slow, on a positive note, this new data does indicate a reduction in the number of people institutionalized in the province. This is encouraging and we do know that the province is committed to assisting persons in leaving these institutions. The Association du Québec pour l'intégration sociale (AQIS) continues to monitor these provincial efforts to ensure that as people leave they have access to appropriate supports in the community.

NEW BRUNSWICK

The new Disability Support Program is now operating in all regions of the province. This new program is providing individualized and flexible disability supports to adults (ages 19 to 64) so as to facilitate their personal development and their participation within the community. In addition to individualized funding, the program is promoting personal involvement and control over planning for supports by using person centred approaches to developing disability support plans and by providing access to independent planning facilitation (through NBACL).

Work is under way to replace the Restigouche Hospital Centre with a new smaller psychiatric facility in northern New Brunswick. Initial planning has begun to assist over 30 individuals with an intellectual disability to leave the current facility over the next two years. A consultant has been hired to help guide the process of planning for the return of these individuals to their communities. NBACL has had discussions with the Department of Health on ways to build capacity within the province to better support adults who have an intellectual disability and a mental illness. We are exploring possible ways to provide education and training for mental health professionals, social workers, and other key people.

NBACL has also received funding to develop "supported living" opportunities for adults with an intellectual disability so that they can live in their own homes. NBACL has hired 4 Social Inclusion Facilitators to assist people with planning, implementing and monitoring supported living arrangements. These facilitators are working in four regions and plans to expand this initiative to other regions have been developed.

NBACL continues to pursue the development of alternatives to nursing home care for younger adults with intellectual and other disabilities who require more intensive supports. This has been in the context of supporting individuals who are at risk of nursing home "placements" without the appropriate supports to remain in the community.

In July, the government of New Brunswick announced that it will create a Youth Centre of Excellence. In a press announcement, the Social Development Minister noted that “this new facility will build additional capacity in New Brunswick for specialized treatment and residential services for young people and children who have complex needs”. This fall, the government will be consulting with key stakeholders, particularly parents, “to get their input regarding services to be provided, development criteria, location, and governance structure.” NBACL is following this issue closely and with great concern that institutional models of support will be pursued.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Newfoundland and Labrador successfully closed its two institutions for persons with intellectual disabilities in the mid 1980s. In addition, during the 1990s, the majority of group homes (which had been created to assist in the institutional closures) were also closed in favour of more individualized living options. During those years, NLACL worked in close collaboration with the provincial government to develop an array of community supports that enabled people with intellectual disabilities to live in community. One of the most important support services was the Home Support program. This program provided funds (to individuals and their families) that enabled the purchase of supports necessary to continue to live with family or to establish supported living arrangements in the community.

However in the late 1990s, due in part to the difficult financial situation faced by the province, levels of home support to many families and individuals were reduced, a ceiling (cap) was placed on the level of support available to individuals, and approval of home support hours was restricted to instances of emergency only. These changes which continue to this day, coupled with major departmental restructuring and the introduction of a regionalized service delivery, have had significant negative impact on many individuals and families.

While we have not witnessed an ‘official’ return to institutionalization, many of our families indicate that they fear for the future of their family member. With a ceiling on home supports and funding very difficult to obtain, many families are fearful that options once viewed as completely unacceptable are increasingly being discussed with families as viable, perhaps even preferred, options. More and more, we are hearing reports of families being offered ‘placement’ in a long term care facility, a nursing home or seniors residence as an answer to the residential needs of their son or daughter.

At present, the provincial government has announced that it will be holding a series of public consultation sessions throughout the province to seek input on the vision, mission and guiding principles that will form the basis of a new provincial Long Term Care and Community Support Services Strategy. In advance of this consultation, government has released its consultation document ‘Close to Home – A Vision for Long Term Care and Community Support Services’. NLACL, on behalf of its families, and in concert with other organizations within the disability community have expressed concern about this document and its possible negative implications for persons with disabilities. Our analysis of this document gives rise to a concern that the provincial government is responding with a major investment in long term care facilities without (or perhaps instead of) an equal investment in community supports and services.

It is also noted that the Disability Policy Office of the Department of Human Resources Labour and Employment will be conducting public consultations in Fall 2010, regarding development of a strategy to support the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life. Government has indicated that input received at these sessions will be incorporated into the planning and implementation of the LTC CSS strategy.

NLACL is, and will remain firm in its assertion and resolve that people with intellectual disabilities have the right to live in community, not in long term care facilities. Persons with intellectual disabilities have the right to a full array of support services required in order to make this right a reality. We will ensure throughout these consultations that our voices are heard and that the resultant strategy developed does not in any way diminish the ability of persons with an intellectual disability to live in community.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

On July 8, 2010, the court approved the Woodlands class action settlement. Eligible survivors will be entitled to make claims for compensation of up to \$150,000 for abuse and neglect experienced at the institution. Details of the settlement – including audio recordings of these details – can be found at <http://www.kleinlyons.com/class/woodlands/woodlands-settlement-index.php>

While the settlement comes as welcome news, community living advocates are outraged that the government successfully petitioned the court to exclude all survivors who left the institution prior to August 1, 1974, the date when the province adopted legislation allowing for individuals to sue the Crown. This means that many – more than 300 survivors – who have suffered and waited the longest will not be recognized and will not receive compensation. These survivors and their supporters are calling on the provincial government to “do the right thing” and include all survivors in the settlement.

In another development related to Woodlands, New Westminster city council has voted to retain the ruin of the Woodlands Centre Block, which was destroyed by fire in 2008. This decision was made in spite of a public consultation and survey that indicated 95% support for the demolition of the tower. Many former residents have asked that the tower be demolished. The Task Force also wrote to city council requesting that their wishes be honoured. The vote was close, however, and BCACL continues to correspond with city council in an effort to ensure that this decision is revisited and overturned out of respect for the former residents.

The most significant development in the province’s community living services is an initiative by Community Living BC (the crown corporation responsible for community living services) called “Service Re-design”. CLBC states that it needs to save money (\$22M) to reduce waitlists and that it is “looking for better ways to deliver services while ensuring that individuals receive the right supports to meet their needs”. It appears that CLBC intend to realize the bulk of these savings by closing group homes and placing individuals in less expensive “home-share” arrangements. While no specific numbers have been announced with respect to group home closures, BCACL has expressed concern that CLBC intends to close “as many group homes as possible” within a very short time frame.

While there is broad support for “home sharing” as a good option for many individuals – and agreement that something must be done to deal with the current waiting list (of more than 600 individuals) – concerns are being expressed that the “service redesign” process is occurring too rapidly to ensure that the new “home share” placements are a good fit for the person. Furthermore, there are concerns that cost savings, and not the needs of individuals have become the paramount consideration. According to one advocacy group, “home sharing works very well for some individuals but it is not safe or appropriate for everyone”. It has been reported that some individuals are being forced to move against their will and that “home sharing” arrangements are being presented as the only service model available.

Community living advocates in BC are concerned that the fundamental principles of individualized planning and choice are being undermined in the current process. A petition is being circulated to “stop the cuts”, while advocacy groups and the media continue to monitor the situation and to report on the outcomes for individuals. Service quality monitoring and safety are particular concerns, with a number of issues and problems being reported by family members and caregivers.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

People First and the Yellowknife Association of Community Living are continuing to monitor the cluster housing model that the Government of the NWT built to provide supported living services to those with an intellectual or developmental disability in the Northwest Territories.

We were just informed that the 3 residences of 4 people each have just reached capacity and a waiting list is being created. That is a total of 12 people in a concentrated area of the town of Hay River. We are concerned about the social inclusivity of this living arrangement in this town.

We will continue to liaise with the Department's Supported Living Planner to discuss keeping Yellowknife residents with intellectual disabilities here in this city in a supported living environment. Recently a young man from Yellowknife with intellectual and other disabilities was sent to one of the residences at the Hay River Campus for a temporary period of evaluation, even though he expressly wrote that he wanted to remain in Yellowknife to be with his friends and work mates. People First of Yellowknife along with YKACL are monitoring the status of this placement to ensure that this young man's wishes of returning to Yellowknife are honoured.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Our Partners for Change committee continues to meet and is committed to working collaboratively with the newly formed Disability Action Council (DAC). The DAC is currently in the process of educating itself with respect to the 14 recommendations and the appointment of a new Minister, Minister Janice Sherry. There have been numerous changes occurring within the provincial government, including the new Department of Community, Seniors and Labour which replaces Social Services and Seniors. The Honourable Doug Currie is now the Minister of Education and Early Childhood.

In our province we continue to see the need to address the lack of Future Value-Based Planning for individuals. The lack of such planning is resulting in crisis situations for many individuals. The PEI ACL has been working to address this issue with individuals and families in consultation with government and non-governmental services providers. Our intention is to have plans in place that are based on values and core beliefs, not just as an option or an emergency bed.

During May of this year, PEI People First visited 7 communities across PEI showing the People First of Canada 'Freedom Tour' film and the PEI People First 'Pillars to Post' video. These community meetings included open discussions on the importance of community support to stop admissions to institutions, speaking out on personal accomplishments and the importance of speaking out for their rights, and interactive workshops on Supported Decision Making. The tour ended at Province House in Charlottetown with a closing Rally and speakers from each of the political parties.

PEI is a small province and while this may at times have its drawbacks, it also has a lot of positives. We do not have any large institutions specific for individuals with intellectual disabilities, and we are able to keep a watchful eye on what is happening across the province. While things are far from perfect and much work will need to be continued, there have been success stories. We know that progress is slow and we can be impatient but looking back we can clearly see that there has been progress.

In March of 2011, the PEI ACL will be co-hosting a National Conference on Deinstitutionalization. For more information, contact the PEI ACL at 902 566 4844.

NUNAVUT

There are currently no large institutions designed specifically for persons with intellectual disabilities in the Territory of Nunavut. People who have returned to Nunavut from institutions elsewhere are for the most part living in group homes. There are still, however, many people living in institutions in the South, who have not yet been assisted to move back home.

PEOPLE FIRST OF CANADA

Most people think of their home, or where they live, as a central part of their lives. Home is often where we connect and are kept connected. It is often the hub of a person's life and activities – it is where we eat, where we sleep, where we relax, where we prepare, where we keep our stuff, where we decorate, where we entertain and are entertained...it is often the only place in the whole world where people feel comfortable enough to be naked!



Springfield Rally

But what if you don't have a real home? What if the place you live in is an institution, a nursing home, a senior's home, a group home, a long-term care facility, a personal care home, a foster home, or another setting you don't consider home. What happens if we have nowhere that acts as our central hub and helps keep us connected? For many persons with intellectual disabilities, the lack of secure and appropriate housing means being disconnected, isolated, and excluded – it means living in an institution.

When the Joint Task Force on Deinstitutionalization wrote a definition of an institution to help guide their work, they were very much aware that an institution could not be simply defined as a building or a facility. Their definition was informed by the lived experiences of self-advocates and went beyond the size and scope of any physical structure. More than ever, it seems that this definition of an institution is both necessary and justified.

Across the country, we are seeing both forward and backward movement as it relates to institutions for people with intellectual disabilities. On the east coast, Nova Scotia continues to build facilities with the intentions of warehousing individuals, while New Brunswick moves forward in providing more options for individuals in the community rather than in institutions. In Newfoundland, individuals are being placed in personal care homes, senior's homes, and other inappropriate settings. In central Canada, Ontario has closed the last of its large institutions and individuals are now fighting for compensation.

In Manitoba, the continued use of the Manitoba Developmental Centre remains at the discussion table. While many citizens of that province are divided and vocal on the issue of deinstitutionalization, many are also uneducated and uninformed as to what it means. A recent town hall meeting in a Manitoba community was a shameful display of both ignorance about and discrimination towards people with intellectual disabilities. In Saskatchewan, work continues to close large institutions like Valley View Centre. Up north, in Nunavut, group homes remain the norm and among the only choices available for housing for people with intellectual disabilities, while in the Yukon, getting any new housing is a struggle.

The basic fact that deinstitutionalization is a matter of human rights has never been so evident to People First of Canada. Safe, secure and appropriate housing is the keystone to inclusion. When we have a real home, we have a neighbourhood, a community, chances and opportunities. Living in the community is the foundation of belonging to the community, of being included and involved, of having choices and rights.

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

We encourage you to submit stories, Provincial/Territorial updates, pictures and/or personal perspectives on this issue. Please send all contributions directly to Don Gallant at dgallant@nl.rogers.com for publication in our next edition (due out in February 2011).

Have you signed the Declaration of Support for Community Living?

This Declaration of Support for Community Living can be accessed at

<http://www.institutionwatch.ca/>

Please visit this site and sign our declaration, and the Task Force would ask that you share this site among your various organizations and networks.

WE, INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY, commit to working together to assist persons to return to their communities and call on all levels of government in this country to:

- Acknowledge that institutions for persons with intellectual disabilities have no place in today's society;
- Stop financing or otherwise supporting the establishment of new institutions for persons with intellectual disabilities;
- Stop all new admissions to existing institutions;
- Support the right of all people with disabilities to live in the community as equal citizens;
- Commit the necessary resources to support the development of quality, comprehensive community-based alternatives to institutional care;
- Acknowledge the wrongs that have been committed against those individuals who have been held for far too long in institutions across this country.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CACL and People First of Canada gratefully acknowledge the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships Program – Disability component for supporting our national Community Inclusion Initiative.

The opinions and interpretations expressed in the publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

**PEOPLE
FIRST
OF CANADA**



**PERSONNES
D'ABORD
DU CANADA**

120 Maryland St., Suite 5
Winnipeg, MB R3G 1L1
T: (204) 784-7362
Toll Free for Members: 1-866-854-8915
F: (204) 784-7364
E-mail: info@peoplefirstofcanada.ca
Web: www.peoplefirstofcanada.ca



50 years

**Canadian
Association for
Community Living**

Diversity includes.

Kinsmen Building, York University Campus
4700 Keele Street
Toronto, ON M3J 1P3
T: (416) 661-9611
F: (416) 661-5701
Web: www.cacl.ca
E-mail: info@cacl.ca