

institution watch

PEOPLE
FIRST
OF CANADA



PERSONNES
D'ABORD
DU CANADA



50 years

Canadian
Association for
Community Living

Diversity includes.

Volume 8, Issue 2, 2014

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 the Right
to Live in Community.
For more information,
contact Don Gallant
at (416) 661 9611 or
Shelley Fletcher at
(866) 854-8915.

Task Force Members

Shane Haddad
Laurie Larson
Norm McLeod
Janet Forbes
Peter Bourne
Mary Whitehead
Roy Skoreyko
Jean Coleman
Michael McLelland
Rick Tutt
Barb Horner
Leo Garland
Peter Park
David Weremy
Chris Currie
Catherine Rodgers
Shelley Fletcher
Don Gallant

MESSAGE FROM THE TASK FORCE

Laurie Larson and Shane Haddad, Co-chairs



Dear Premier Prentice,

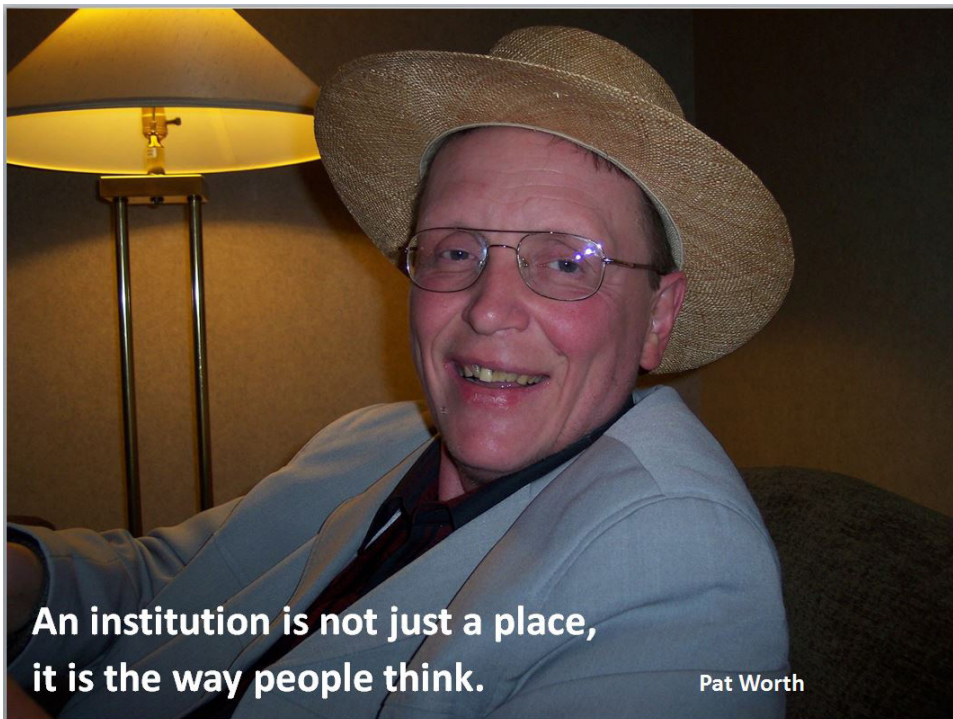
We write on behalf of the Canadian Association for Community Living — People First of Canada (CACL-PFC) Joint Task Force on The Right to Live in the Community. The National Task Force, acting on behalf of our national organizations, promotes the rights of all citizens to be supported to live as valued members of their community. We are active across the country in advocating for the closure of institutions and for the respectful acknowledgement of the experiences and needs of survivors of institutions.

The announcement (on March 11, 2013) by the government of Alberta of plans to close Michener Centre was a source of celebration throughout the country. It signaled a return to community of 125 individuals with developmental disabilities residing in the Centre's facilities and more importantly it signaled a commitment to ensuring a meaningful and good life in community for all persons with developmental disabilities. The decision to rescind the closure plans and the recognition that Michener will remain open, potentially for decades more, has shocked and appalled all those who have tirelessly worked for so long to ensure governments move past this archaic practice of segregating individuals and denying them the supports and opportunities to live freely in society. It is certainly a major disappointment to individuals with developmental disabilities and families in Alberta, and indeed throughout the country.

This decision in Alberta stands in stark contrast to the successful closure of all of Ontario's large institutions just years ago. On December 9, 2013 the Premier of Ontario stood and publically apologized to individuals who were wrongly incarcerated for years in

continued on next page...

"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."



Ontario's institutions. Premier Wynne stated: "I offer an apology to the men, women and children of Ontario who were failed by a model of institutional care for people with developmental disabilities. We must look in the eyes of those who have been affected, and those they leave behind, and say: "We are sorry."" She also went on to say: "Over a period of generations, and under various governments, too many of these men, women, children and their families were deeply harmed and continue to bear the scars and the consequences of this time. Their humanity was undermined; they were separated from their families and robbed of their potential, their comfort, safety and their dignity."

The individuals in Alberta who have been profoundly affected by years of confinement in Michener will not be receiving such an acknowledgement or an apology. Instead, they are told of the 'top notch' care provided and what a 'special' place this facility is.

The decision to keep Michener open is in direct opposition to what we know about the harms of institutions, based on extensive research conducted in Canada, the United States and internationally over more than 40 years. Indeed it is in direct contradiction to the voices of individuals with developmental disabilities who spent years in such facilities. To keep Michener open pays a massive disrespect to the voices and lives of those who lived (and died) in facilities like Michener.

We know that you have spoken that remaining in Michener is a matter of choice. However while proponents of Michener may speak of choice it is not that simplistic an issue. There is a moral obligation for government to put forward on behalf of all its citizens services and supports that are known to reflect best practice. When evidence and research indicate that a service is not in those best interests then personal choice cannot be used as a convenient excuse to continue its delivery. Individuals were not given the choice to remain in Residential Schools. We finally realized that such a model was not in the best interests of people, and governments, correctly so, took action.

We understand the fear and concerns of families when faced with such a change. But such fear cannot be used to continue to isolate and segregate persons with developmental disabilities. We know unequivocally that with appropriate planning and the provision of appropriate supports all people can and should live in community. Fears and concerns of families must be met with a promise of a better life in community, not a promise to continue to operate a facility that we all know did not and cannot enable people to exercise their right to live in community.

We do not expect this letter to cause a reversal of your decision but we do hope that it will cause you to meet with and talk to individuals who have lived in and left Michener for a life in community. Hear their stories. Talk to their families. Through and from them you will learn that life outside Michener is possible for all, and that nothing is to be gained by its continued existence.

ONTARIO'S CLASS ACTION...SOME PERSONAL THOUGHTS

Marilyn Dolmage is one of the Litigant Guardians for the recent Class Action against the Government of Ontario on behalf of residents of the Huronia Regional Centre. The Class Action was settled in 2013 and the province apologized to the former residents on December 9TH of that year.

Since the Settlement Marilyn and her husband Jim along with Pat Seth and Marie Slark have worked tirelessly to support people to submit their claims, continue the lobbying to make sure the Settlement is handled fairly and provided countless updates on the current status of the Class Action and the Settlement process.

What follows are some edited highlights of Marilyn's July 18, 2014 update.

Our Activities: We have been speaking about the class action and claims process at gatherings across Ontario, and accompanying people on the site visits to the former Huronia Regional Centre. It has been such an honour to meet the people who are trying to make the most of the class action settlements. Thank you for your support.

Deadline extended: The deadline for Huronia, Rideau and Southwestern claims has been extended until November 30th. The decision was made to relieve time pressures for the class members supported by the Ontario Public Guardian and Trustee. The extension of the claims deadline means money will not get to people until at least May 2015. We know many were hoping it could bring them some relief sooner and we worry some people will die in the meantime, sadly never getting to enjoy it at all.

Listening to survivors: That is why this case is so important. After years of being isolated, overpowered and dismissed - in effect, taken hostage once they let go of their parent's hand - people are finally being respected and believed.


To assist class members is to honour our common humanity. What would we want and expect others to do for us, if we had been harmed and finally had a chance to get some help? I pick up coins on the street when I see them; don't you? So of course we care about other people getting the money they are due! Not to provide help to access a benefit is to perpetuate devaluation and harm to people with disabilities.

Assisting a person with a claim does not involve providing "legal help". The legal parts of the class action have been completed. Think of this analogy: *if a person won a lottery prize (any amount), would you provide the help they needed to claim their winnings? Would you make sure they got what they were due? Of course!*

The lawyers at Koskie Minsky have a duty to continue working for all of the class members – both living and deceased. They have already been paid their fees and expenses plus their profit.

An antidote to institutional harm is community networking: Associations, agencies and allies have invited Marie, Pat, Jim and me – to lead gatherings in many communities. These work best when survivors, families, friends, allies, and support workers attend together and connect.

Site Visits to the former Huronia Regional Centre: HRC is the only one of these 3 institutions that has not been sold. The settlement provides a unique opportunity for people to revisit – both the location and their memories – with support.



The site visits are exhausting but awesome - hard to describe. People go through the empty buildings telling the most horrendous stories about what happened to them there, but they are relieved to be heard and believed. Visits can be the best way to reassure some people that the institution is entirely closed and celebrate that everyone got out.

Honouring those buried in the HRC cemetery: Of 2000 graves, about 1500 are unmarked. At some point in the past, cemetery markers were removed to create a sidewalk elsewhere on the institution grounds. Later, the markers were discovered but not returned to their rightful places, cemented instead into a rough square, which looks like a mass grave. The HRC settlement required the government to erect signs on the road, and they must build an iron fence around the perimeter, and create a registry of those buried there. Paola DiPaolo – motivated by the loss of her uncle, buried there – is bringing people together to ask the government to go further – to place markers honouring every person. She has analyzed government lists and maps and they started a Facebook group you can join - *“Remember Every Name”*.

We have gathered at the cemetery at the end of each HRC site visit – strewing flower petals, weeding, clearing stones, even reading all of the names of people now known to be buried there – and we cry, pray, sing, hug and connect.

Class members have reconnected with one another at the community meetings and site visits. Some people call out to others by name, and they have had some meaningful reunions. One person may remember what they saw happen to another, to assist with making their claim. Residents were sometimes forced to harm one another and this has bothered them for many years; finally now they can talk about it. Assisting with that person’s claim may be a way to address their pain.

We realize it can be heart-wrenching for family members to learn what really happened, but many are gratified that they can finally do something about it, by helping with claims. A group of elderly mothers attended one event in Toronto and we talked **about the ways their sons and daughters do communicate, even without words.**

We have gained a lot of appreciation for the harm institutional admission did to relatives back home and to extended families. Effects are multi-generational, passing through families – not unlike the stories heard about indigenous families through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Advocacy involves persistence: Here is what Community Living in Upper Ottawa Valley told us about how they are assisting class members to access their files, make claims and deal with their trauma: *“We are sending requests everyday by fax and following up with email lists to ensure nothing gets lost. We are setting up a meeting for folks who experienced institutional life so they can share their stories and know they have been heard and will be supported through this emotional process. The presentation from Marie, Patricia and yourself has inspired many to want to be heard. Thanks for all your support”*.

Understanding such complex trauma: I worked for 5 years as a social worker at Huronia, but I don’t think I could ever have understood how demeaning and terrifying it was to be forced to live there. That meant that I could not really perceive what was happening all around me. **There is a desperate need for access to trauma counseling and trauma-informed support.**

Seeing what is written in people’s institution files can be the key to claiming what people are due: File access is especially important when people live with significant cognitive disabilities. Those people will need help to make claims - but they will also need help to access those files. We recommend that class members sign their own file requests wherever possible, even if considerable support is needed. If others request files for them, they may be asked to show proof of legal decision-making authority – like a power of attorney.

We try to piece together important stories – to help class members with claims, but also to better understand their ongoing challenges.

Claims are more likely to be accepted if you describe what happened but then use words from the settlement to sum it all up. Since people in the claims office are unlikely to understand the power imbalances of institutions, we need to help people explain:

Class members often don't know the basic facts of their own lives: As children, they didn't know exactly when they were admitted; and the institution didn't tell them when they were discharged. People want to know their own and their family histories. Some sisters and brothers who are helping with claims were born after the person was admitted.

Many of us witnessed the December 9, 2013 government apology in person. Anyone can watch it and related news coverage on the internet at <http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/en/mcass/programs/developmental/Huronia.aspx> Many of us want to watch the video over and over again – and then make sure the government follows those words with real action!

Marie Slark wants to ensure the government meant what it said, and is advocating now to keep her brother – who was once rescued from Huronia - out of a nursing home. **We are “volunteers” – hoping to make Ontario a better place for people with disabilities, and to connect our efforts with yours.**

Check out the Institution Watch website for Marilyn's complete Report which was written on July 18, 2014... it contains many poignant and moving personal stories that support the above summary.

HURONIA TOUR

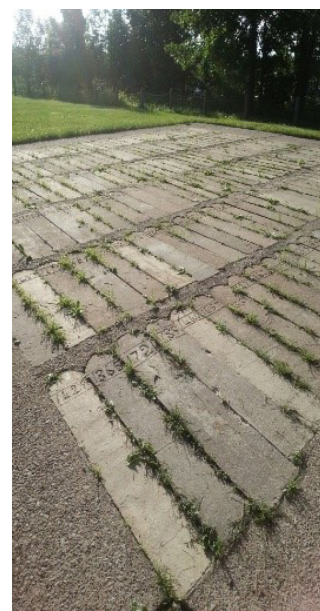
A group of people from the People First Ontario retreat went to the Huronia Regional Centre and visited the gravesite to honor those that passed away at the institutions. Most of the gravesites were unmarked or were only identified by numbers. Over 2,000 people were buried in this site and all who visited were impacted. The following poem was written by one of the people who visited the site.

Unmarked

Here I lay in this cemetery
You will never know me as I am unknown
But here I am buried
Forgotten as the grass has grown

Here is my history
There is not much to see
You will never know my story
This marking is all there is of me

Here represents my life
A number on a stone
You will never know my strife
My rejection, abandonment, abuse are all gone
~ Anonymous



A VISIT TO THE PAST

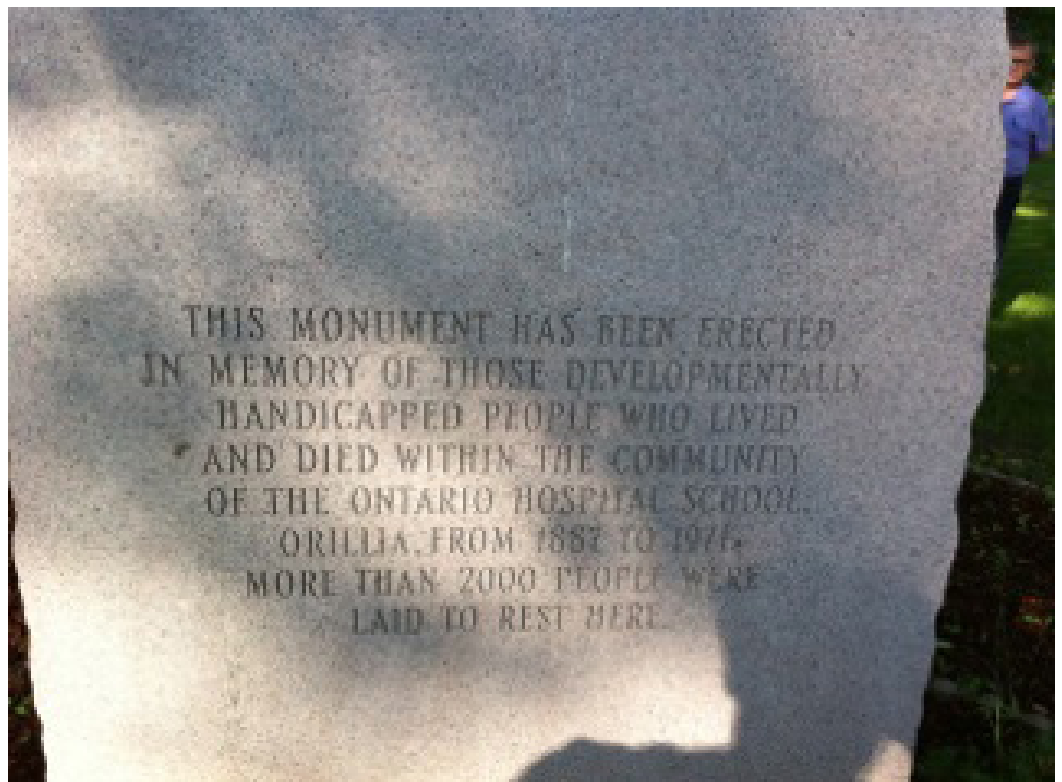
Richard Ruston and Rick Tutt

In early July members of People First of Ontario were attending a retreat in Orillia. One night after dinner we decided to visit the now vacant (we thought!) grounds of Huronia Regional Centre and the adjacent cemetery where 2000 deceased residents of HRC are buried.

As our convoy wound its way around the grounds of the former institution we found most of it still standing. A number of the buildings have been repurposed for other government or semi government agencies. The Ontario Provincial Police occupy one building. To our surprise and horror the former "C" Cottage (whoever called these monstrous buildings cottages had a warped sense of reality) houses the regional offices of the Ontario Disability Supports Program (the government allowance for people who have a disability). The reality is that people who live in the community and have to meet their ODSP worker probably have to visit the grounds of the hated institution. This is a real sign of an insensitive government. And it has been going on for years. People First of Ontario is actively lobbying to have the location of this office moved to the real community.

We then drove across the highway to the cemetery where about 2000 people are buried. Less than 500 of the graves are marked mostly by small cement slabs with anonymous numbers. The majority of the graves are unmarked in any manner so you have no idea that you might be walking on former residents' final resting places. How sad it was to see that even in death the residents do not receive the respect and dignity that they were denied in life.

A group is attempting to identify all the graves and you can view their work on Face book at "Remember Every Name".





Richard Ruston, President of People First of Ontario summed up the visit as sad and disturbing, reflecting “It made me so angry to see people with disabilities not being treated as real people.” He wonders if the cemetery will ever be improved to show respect to the people resting there.

As part of the Class Action Settlement the government has promised to identify the location of graves in the cemetery and make it a more appealing place to visit. People First will be watching to ensure those promises are kept.

PROVINCIAL / TERRITORIAL UPDATES

ALBERTA Premier Prentice Deeply Disappoints

On September 19, 2014 and within days of becoming Alberta’s Premier, Jim Prentice announced that Michener would not be closing, that it would not close during his tenure and that anyone who had moved out as part of the closure process could move back. In a completely incoherent statement he claimed to have spent his career protecting the vulnerable while his very decision continued to place vulnerable individuals at risk. The announcement was completely unanticipated as all previous indications were that Prentice would continue with the closure if he became Premier.

It would appear that the lives of the individuals confined for decades at Michener and on the verge of enjoying the relative freedom of community life, albeit in group living arrangements, were sacrificed for political expediency. The closure of Michener was opposed by every opposition party in Alberta and repeated efforts by the Alberta Association for Community Living (AACL) failed to convince the parties or leadership candidates to reverse their public positions, although in private some said they did not oppose closure in the future. In addition, every candidate in the Alberta NDP leadership campaign and the PC Party leadership campaign opposed the closure except Prentice, who was silent.

Added to this was the announcement by the media that 5 individuals, who recently moved from Michener, died when transferred to long-term care facilities. While these individuals had health complications and on average

Albertans live less than 2 years when placed in long-term care, the clustering of these deaths naturally raised public concerns. The government failed to address this public concern leaving questions about the transfer process unanswered. Until these public deaths neither the media nor the politicians cared about the rate of death among Michener residents. And while the rate of death among those who moved was comparable to the rate of deaths within Michener, this fact was lost on the public, the media and the politicians.

Lastly, the decision to close Michener by the Redford government was lumped in the minds of the public, media and opposition parties with a host of controversial Redford decisions and actions that cost the PC Party substantial public support. Within moments of being elected PC Party leader, Prentice made successive and daily decisions to distance himself from the Redford government to end the opposition onslaught and gain public support. As a result a decision that directly affected the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities was grouped in with inconsequential political decisions such as selling government airplanes and halting the decision to change Alberta's license plates.

While it would appear it is not now possible to reverse the government's decision, and sustained vigilance is necessary, Michener is not to admit any new residents and those there now who wish to leave may do so. The result will be the eventual, however now delayed, closure of Michener. It is anticipated that only a very small number of individuals who recently moved will return to Michener. At the time of Prentice's announcement almost half of the individuals in Michener's institutional facilities had moved out.

Alberta's decision not to continue to close Michener's institutional facilities defies every known fact about the devastating effects of institutionalization, flies in the face of the position of every local, provincial, state, national and international organization of individuals with developmental disabilities, their families and professionals and contradicts Canada's and Alberta's supposed support of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We will not rest until every institution is closed, every individual returned to freedom and no one ever threatened by institutionalization again.



FREE OUR PEOPLE!

Michener Centre – Freedom Denied

The recent announcement that Michener Centre, an institution that houses approximately 124 people with intellectual disabilities in Alberta, will not close as scheduled was more than disappointing to People First of Canada.

The People First movement was built upon the foundation of freedom – freedom from institutions and the right to live in the community.

Our vision of an inclusive country does not include institutions for people with intellectual disabilities. We believe in the articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We believe all people have human rights. We believe that keeping Michener Centre open violates the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities.

We want to send a message and raise awareness of the right of every Canadian to live in community.

Join us and show your support for the right to live in community.

#FreeOurPeople #inclusion #WeArePeopleFirst

NOVA SCOTIA

The Department of Community Services set out to totally transform services for persons with disabilities. A committee worked over five months to create a road map to improve the way people with disabilities access government services facilitated by Dr. Michael Bach and Don Gallant from the Institute for Research and Development on Inclusion and Society.

Within the Services for Persons with Disabilities transformation process, work was led by a community-government committee. The road map we - community and government - created together would be put forward to cabinet for approval. The fact of the matter is many families experiencing disability are at a breaking point.

To date the original committee has met three times to get a progress report from the Department of Community Services stating solid steps forward. At the latest meeting held in July there is a work plan in place with clear dates in place for halting entry to institutions and creating community based alternatives.

The Department is clearly committed to changes aligned with the Roadmap, as evidenced by some of the operation and policy decisions that have been made in the last six months.

- Moving forward on individualized/Self-Directed Funding Demonstration Projects
- Staff orientation on the new direction for Services for Persons with Disabilities Program

- Riverview Home Corporation – Renovation Project - not proceeding with the Phase 3, 32-bed renovation at Riverview Adult Residential Centre
- Group Home Replacement in Central Region - the group home will be replaced with a small option home in combination with Independent Living Support funding for residents who can transition to a community option
- Levels of Support Policy - DCS has shifted away from a system of classification of participants by their disability and support needs. Classification has been replaced by The Levels of Support Policy which allows for a holistic, person focused assessment and the determination of a level of support
- Increase of Independent Living and Alternative Family supports - planning will begin to create new spaces for 70 individuals who are either on the SPD waitlist or who have requested a move to the community
- Replacing the Homes for Special Care Legislation

The immediate work to be done now is that the “Roadmap” calls for strong community involvement in all of the ten recommendations. It calls for issue focused work groups on legal capacity and legislation reform, facility restructuring, transformation of the residential service system, managing waitlists, crisis response and development of community based networks of specialized care, and employment. We are making it very clear to government that as work continues that this entire plan depends on community involvement, NSACL plans on continuing to be involved in the various work groups.

SASKATCHEWAN

An Exciting New Life for Valley View Centre Residents on the Horizon

The results of Valley View Centre’s transition process can officially be seen as three residents prepare to move into their stunning new home in Moose Jaw. Lifetime friends Eric, Jack, and David are set to become part of the first group of the 184 remaining residents to fully transition out of the institution and into the community.

Their house, located in one of Moose Jaw’s best neighborhoods, was selected specifically by the transition team with the three men in mind as part of their PATH and Person-Centred Plan. Paired with support services from Moose Jaw’s Citizen’s All, a local community based organization, the move will allow the men to become full-fledged members of the community.

The house boasts five large bedrooms, a fireplace, state-of-the-art fridge and stove, luxurious deck and sprawling backyard, and is situated right next door to a park and skating rink. It’s currently undergoing some renovations, but will be move-in ready in the next few months.





“It’s absolutely gorgeous” says Michele Fitzpatrick, an SACL Manager of Advocacy. She accompanied the three men during the first tour of their new home.

“They checked out every single thing in the house, every door, every room” says Michele. “The families were ecstatic. Everyone was impressed. It was a wonderful day, the heartwarming feeling was worth a million bucks! I saw Eric a few days later and he was still grinning from ear to ear.”

The new house is just the first step in successfully transitioning each and every resident into the community, but proof of the Saskatchewan Government’s commitment to make Saskatchewan the best place to live for people with disabilities.

Recently, the Ministry of Social Services decided to push back closure date to 2018 in order to fully accommodate the needs of the residents as they transition out of the facility.

“We initially estimated a closure date of 2016, but we will take the time needed to develop the unique, person-centred plans for each resident. We are committed to doing this respectfully, and doing it right” says Minister of Social Services Donna Harpauer.

In the meantime, the transition team has already secured two more properties, and is on the hunt for more in the hopes that they will find a home that perfectly suits the lifestyles of the next group of residents transitioning out of Valley View as they did for Eric, Jack, and David. The team already has detailed plans for an additional 23 individuals.

“They chose to live with each other. They all have similar interests, they love to do things together like going to hockey games” explains Michelle. “And now they won’t have to compete with 30 other people to do those things.”

The men are anxiously waiting until they can move into their new home, and are already making plans for their new lives outside of Valley View. “They’ve already invited us over to have coffee, and we’re going to teach them how to bake a cake” says Michelle.

Valley View Closure Date Moved to 2018

“The Saskatchewan Association for Community Living fully supports the Saskatchewan Government’s decision to move the closure date of Valley View Centre to 2018. This adjustment will allow the transition team more time to further develop and discover new and exciting opportunities for each and every individual’s person-centered plan as they transition into the community. We are very happy with the results of the transition process thus far and feel that this new date is a considerate and realistic approach that will only serve to ensure that all individuals at Valley View Centre and their families are provided with the best resources after transitioning to new homes.”

MANITOBA

People are on the move. While Manitoba remains a province without a closure date for its large congregated settings the number of people moving from the Manitoba Developmental Centre is encouraging. The Human Rights complaint resolution will expire at the end of this year and the agreement to support 49 people may be slightly delayed due to a number of factors that slowed the process. However, the commitment from Family Services to strive to meet the deadline and the willingness of agencies to welcome new people to their communities is strong. We still urge the Government of Manitoba to announce a closure date and finally support all people to live good lives in the community.



The Board of Directors and President and CEO of St. Amant are leading their organization to help people living at River Road realize their dreams of moving to new homes in the community.

St.Amant is a large health and social service organization located in Manitoba. 85% of St.Amant's services are community based and their latest strategic plan has focused on supporting 15 people per year to move from their large residence to community based living options. As year one of the plan is coming to a close, the organization is pleased to report that they are right on track with 15 people scheduled to move.

"We're really looking forward to supporting as many people as we can to make the transition to community and we're working very hard with family members and our funders to make it happen," said John Leggat, President & CEO of St.Amant.

As the organization moves people to community, they are also working with their provincial funder to reclassify their large building from a developmental centre to a healthcare centre.

"Our goal is to be able to provide short-term community-based healthcare services in areas that are increasingly in need – such as respite, crisis stabilization and critical care," said John.

St.Amant is most well-known for its growing community living and early intervention autism programs.

Abilities Manitoba Inc., the Manitoba Alliance of Direct Support Professionals, Community Living branches and the larger network of service provider agencies continue to promote an awareness of the needs of people to be supported by well qualified and fairly compensated employees.

The Community Living disAbility Services of Family Services has been working closely with the community based groups to enhance the range of options people will have to choose from when they are searching for residential support. Demonstration projects on innovative options will be implemented in the near future.

Finally, some exciting news to share about Manitoba. This fall twenty young people will begin their adult life by enrolling in post-secondary education as the first step toward a future with a meaningful career. Red River College is introducing Transforming Futures which will fill the desire of students and their families to enhance their status as capable and in-demand employees upon graduation.



MY HOME MY CHOICE: FROM GROUP HOMES TO SUPPORTED LIVING IN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

My Home My Choice is a three-year, multi-stakeholder initiative designed to develop new transformation models to better respond to the housing needs of people with intellectual disabilities. People with significant disabilities and more complex needs have traditionally been institutionalized. With the closure of large-scale institutions, groups homes have become a prevalent service model for provision of residential support. While there are a range of options and supports provided under group home arrangements there is growing recognition that the usual approaches to funding, staffing and delivery are not designed to maximize individual choice and mobility in disability supports. In the current context of fiscal restraint, growing demand for housing for this group, aging caregivers and increasing prevalence of intellectual disability, there is a concerning trend to placement in nursing homes and long-term care facilities.

The overall purpose of this project is to increase the capacity of community service providers to assist adults with intellectual disabilities and more complex needs to move from group home arrangements to supported living in the community. The project will engage local organizations in defining and executing transformation plans and use an active research methodology to identify the process and key factors involved in making the shift from provision of group home based residential support to supported living in the community.

My Home My Choice will be delivered and managed by the Canadian Association for Community Living in partnership with provincial partners including: Inclusion BC, New Brunswick Association for Community Living, Community Living Ontario, and Nova Scotia Association for Community Living. Six (6) local partners include the Langley Association for Community Living (BC); Restigouche Residential Services (NB); Parry Sound Community Living and Rygiel Support Services (Ontario) and Regional Residential Services and Breton Abilities Centre (Nova Scotia).

This project builds on other CACL community development initiatives currently underway by tackling one of the biggest challenges – moving from the heavy investment in group homes, to separating personal support services from agency housing stock, and enabling access to a much wider array of housing and other opportunities in the community. This will address what is emerging as a major challenge – aging families no longer able to support aging family members with intellectual disabilities in the family home.

We have learned from our past efforts that we need to move beyond sector-specific initiatives – like education, family support, employment, etc. – to create cross-cutting community-based leadership that tackles issues of inclusion in a comprehensive way. Leadership development, holistic and comprehensive community development initiatives in local communities, and re-building local capacity to sustain social and economic inclusion are three dimensions of an emerging national, pan-Canadian CACL community development focus. My Home My Choice fits squarely within our growing capacity and strategic directions to deliver on these objectives.