

institution watch

PEOPLE
FIRST
OF CANADA



PERSONNES
D'ABORD
DU CANADA



50 years

Canadian
Association for
Community Living

Diversity includes.

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

This is a newsletter
written and produced
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MESSAGE FROM THE TASK FORCE

Laurie Larson and Shane Haddad, Co-chairs

It has been such a long time coming.

On December 9, 2013, Premier Kathleen Wynne, in the Ontario Legislature, made a formal apology to the former residents of Huronia Regional Centre and included reference to former residents of both Rideau Regional Centre and Southwestern Regional Centre.

In an eloquently worded and we believe sincere apology, she indicated that the government of Ontario takes responsibility for the suffering of former residents of these facilities and their families.

She indicated that the government failed these citizens for not only placing them in institutions but for the abuse and lack of compassionate support they received while living in such facilities.

Many courageous people in Ontario have worked diligently to reach this historic moment in time. Foremost among them are Marie Slark and Pat Seth, the chief litigants in the Huronia Class Action, along with their supporters Jim Dolmage and Marilyn Dolmage. To all four of these people we owe enormous gratitude.

It has been a long battle for so many people. To the survivors of the institutions we can only hope that this apology will offer some assistance in their recovery. To those who did not survive the horrible experience, you are remembered with respect.

Please do not think all is over and all is well. We must now work hard to help our friends who survived work towards their recovery and to assist those who are living in the community benefit from true community life. A community life which is free from institutional practices and attitudes.

"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 APOLOGIZES TO FORMER RESIDENTS OF REGIONAL CENTRES

On December 9, 2014, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne made the following statement to the Legislative Assembly:

“One of a government’s foremost responsibilities is to care for its people, to make sure they are protected and safe. And therein lies a basic trust between the state and the people.

It is on that foundation of trust that everything else is built: our sense of self, our sense of community, our sense of purpose. And when that trust is broken with any one of us, we all lose something - we are all diminished.



I stand to address a matter of trust before this house and my assembled colleagues, but I am truly speaking to a group of people who have joined us this afternoon and to the many others who could not make it here today. I am humbled to welcome to the legislature today former residents of the Huronia Regional Centre and Rideau Regional Centre in Smiths Falls and to also address former residents of the Southwestern Regional Centre near Chatham, along with all their families and supporters.

I want to honour them for their determination and their courage and to thank them for being here to bear witness to this occasion.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we take responsibility for the suffering of these people and their families.

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.”

As Premier, and on behalf of all the people of Ontario, I am sorry for your pain, for your losses, and for the impact that these experiences must have had on your faith in this province, and in your government.

I am sorry for what you and your loved ones experienced, and for the pain you carry to this day.

In the case of Huronia, some residents suffered neglect and abuse within the very system that was meant to provide them care. We broke faith with them - with you - and by doing so, we diminished ourselves. 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.



At Huronia, some of these residents were forcibly restrained, left in unbearable seclusion, exploited for their labour and crowded into unsanitary dormitories.

And while the model of care carried out by this institution is now acknowledged to have been deeply flawed, there were also cases of unchecked physical and emotional abuse by some staff and residents.

Huronia was closed in 2009 when Ontario closed the doors to its last remaining provincial institutions for people with developmental disabilities.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we no longer see people with developmental disabilities as something “other.” They are boys and girls, men and women, with hopes and dreams like all of us.

In Ontario, all individuals deserve our support, our respect and our care. We must look out for one another, take care of one another, challenge ourselves to be led by our sense of moral purpose before all else.

Today, we strive to support people with developmental disabilities so they can live as independently as possible and be more fully included in all aspects of their community.

As a society, we seek to learn from the mistakes of the past. And that process continues.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that we have more work to do.

And so we will protect the memory of all those who have suffered, help tell their stories and ensure that the lessons of this time are not lost.”



FINALLY WE HAVE A VOICE

Marie Slark and Patricia Seth were chief litigants in the Huronia Class Action. Below is the text of a statement that Ms. Slark made to the judge at the Settlement Hearing.

“My name is Marie Slark. My friend Patricia Seth and I are the Lead Plaintiffs in the Huronia Regional Centre class action.

We have had the honour to represent all those other people who lived at HRC.

We hope the settlement is approved today.

Most class actions are about things – or money. This one is about people – everyone who suffered at Huronia.

We have had NO power over our lives. Finally we have a voice – the government and the public are listening to us. We thank the lawyers for that.

I am glad the Court is listening now.

It was really hard for me to speak up for myself. Like others, I was taught in the institution to keep quiet or else I would get hurt. It has been difficult to tell people about how I suffered and how this continues to limit my life. But I know that other class members are much less able to speak and understand than I am.

The claim form must be easy to use, and people will need help to make claims. The people who were most likely to be harmed at HRC are going to need the most help to make their claims.

I hope other class members will get the chance I have had, to tell their stories.

Some will use words, and some will find other ways to communicate.



This case brings to light serious injustice. We are asking the Court to make sure EVERYONE gets justice.

Pat and I want to continue to be involved to make sure people make claims and get their money.

I would like everyone to know that I never expected a \$25,000 payment.

I am proud of the hard work I have done on this

class action. But I don't want anyone to think I would take money that should be going to other class members. Pat and I will only accept the honorarium if there is money left over.

We appreciate the apology, but no amount of money will give us our lives back.

The survivors should get as much money as is possible. I wish there was more.

Maintaining the cemetery will honour those who died. Remembering the stories and sharing the documents will tell people this must never happen again to people with disabilities."

COMMUNITY LIVING ONTARIO

Chris Beesley, Executive Director

For 150 years we in Ontario housed people who had an intellectual disability in institutions. From the beginning evidence existed that these were inhumane places for people to live, yet our government, with the support of the people of Ontario continued to build institutions throughout the province. Tens of thousands of people wasted away in these places, some for most of their lives. Abuse and neglect was commonplace and far too many suffered and died in the institutions. On December 9, 2013, the Premier of Ontario, speaking on behalf of the people of Ontario, apologized to those who suffered under the institutional system.



Over the past number of decades, Community Living Ontario advocated relentlessly for the closure of the institutions in Ontario. In fact, parents first formed the Association with the aim of developing supports in community that would help people avoid placement in an institution. We must nevertheless acknowledge that there was a time when even Community Living Ontario did not clearly demand an end to the institution system. In the early days, while the suffering of so many was obvious and parents agonized over choices they were forced to make regarding institutional placement for their sons and daughters, our Association advocated for reform of institutions rather than for their closure. Our vision of an inclusive community, free of institutions, was slow to be fully formed. While thousands of people suffered, died and wasted their lives in isolation, we for a time encouraged a continuing role for institutions.

Along with the government all members of society who facilitated the continuation of the institutions must share responsibility for the harm that was caused. We welcome the Premier's apology on behalf of all of us who allowed the suffering to continue for so long. Community Living Ontario accepts its share in the responsibility for the harm done and commits to continuing our work to ensure that from this time forward, people who have an intellectual disability are fully included and share in all that our society has to offer. In 2009 our members adopted a Call to Action reiterating our determination, consistent with our Vision, to end institutional practices of all kinds. We further committed to ensure that institutions will never rise again in this province.

PEOPLE FIRST OF CANADA

Shane Haddad, President

Learning to give and receive an apology is an important life lesson. We learn that an apology is an expression of regret. We come to appreciate that an apology is an act of responsibility. We recognize that an apology is making restitution. We also know that an apology is a request for forgiveness. For many, it is an important step in the healing process.

The apology made by Premier Kathleen Wynne to the former residents of Huronia, Rideau Regional Centre and Southwest Regional Centre shows all of the aspects of an apology; it is heartfelt and sincere. There is a promise in this apology – a promise that this government will not allow this to happen in other places, to other people in Ontario. We, PFC, will hold Premier Wynne to that promise.

However, People First of Canada would like to point out that there are many other institutional-type settings that currently exist in Ontario. Many people are still living in inappropriate settings, whether it is a 26-bed group home, a long-term care facility, or simply a home that a person has had no choice or voice in choosing.

While we commend Premier Wynne on doing the right thing for the former residents of Huronia, we urge the Ontario government to not stop there. We implore the Ontario government to take it one step further and pay attention to what is going on in the other inappropriate settings throughout your province. We ask you to ensure that people are living full lives in community, participating and contributing; with access to all the supports they need to do so. To do otherwise simply means that people have moved from one institution to another. To do otherwise, Madam Premier, diminishes your apology.



PEOPLE FIRST OF ONTARIO

Kory Earle, President

On December 9, 2013 we witnessed an historic moment in the province of Ontario, Premier Wynne delivered an amazing apology to the former residents of Huronia Regional Centre!

We commend the Premier, who did a great job on the apology and it was so heartfelt....



What a historical moment! We thank Patricia and Marie who were the lead plaintiffs in this Class Action. They did us all proud! Their courage and dedication is something to be admired! Also thanks to Marilyn Dolmage and Jim Dolmage for all that they have done. Their support was incredible. We also thank the lawyers, and of course the former residents whose stories have touched us all! We also remember all those that are not with us today. They are in our hearts!!!!

Now let's ensure this never, never again happens in the Province and indeed Canada

People deserve better!!!

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY LIVING

Laurie Larson, President

WE ARE SORRY!

Such a simple statement. Yet, in the context of the recent settlement regarding the Huronia class action, also so very powerful and impactful. To finally after so many years have the government of Ontario, as delivered by the Premier, say “we take responsibility for the suffering of these people and their families...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 can only imagine the impact these words have for the men and women who managed to survive the horrors of the institutional model as manifested in institutions like Huronia. It is unfortunate that it was such a long time coming, and even more disheartening that other provinces and territories have not issued similar statements.



An apology for an act also brings with it intent to not repeat the same mistake again. It is on this point that we hope Premier Wynne recognizes the power (and inherent promise) in her words.

We have closed the large institutions in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada but far too often we have replaced them with new ‘programs’ that are equally institutional in nature. The service delivery system for persons with developmental disabilities is still unfortunately very institutional in design, intent and delivery. To make good on her promise Premier Wynne must ensure that we change the fundamental way in which we support people with developmental disabilities. We must begin to support people to make choices, to have control, to exercise citizenship, rather than offering them a menu of outdated and inappropriate residential, day, and/or employment ‘programs’.

If we can accomplish this in Ontario, and throughout Canada, then we will indeed have learned from the mistakes of the institutional model – a model that is defined by the way we think not by the size of a building. If we do not leave that kind of thinking behind us, then we have just switched institutions, and there will be the need for another ‘we are sorry’ in the not too distant future.

PROVINCIAL / TERRITORIAL UPDATES

ALBERTA

Michener Centre Transition – January, 2014

On March 11, 2013 the Alberta government announced plans to move 125 adults with intellectual disabilities out of Michener Centre's institutional facilities and into the community. The institutional facilities will then be closed. Michener Centre also operates group homes in the Red Deer community and there are no plans to close these.

Since the announcement a transition team has been established to work closely with individuals, guardians and families to relocate people living at Michener Centre into communities of their choice. To ensure a smooth transition, government staff, in collaboration with individuals, guardians and families, have been developing transition plans for people moving to the community. Sixty-nine transition plans have been completed with another 32 in progress.

To date six residents have moved out of Michener Centre. Feedback from all of the families involved in these initial moves have been positive, especially in cases where individuals have moved closer to their parents and/or siblings. It is anticipated that another 20 or more will move to the community by the end of March.

The Society of Parents and Friends of Michener Centre and the Alberta Union of Public Employees (AUPE) continue to oppose the government's decision to move people out and close the institutional operations. They have held rallies, presented a petition to government, and persuaded some municipalities in the greater Red Deer area to pass motions to keep Michener Centre open. The Union has also filed a request for a judicial review into the decision-making process of the government in closing Michener's institutional facilities. A spokesperson with the Ministry of Human Services said the judicial review would not delay the transition of the 125 residents from the facility. The judicial review is scheduled to be heard in March. The Alberta Association for Community Living (AACL) is monitoring this action and will seek intervenor status if warranted.



We are thankful, that in the face of opposition by AUPE and a small group of families, the government has not wavered in its decision to move people out of Michener Centre, return them to community and close the institutional facilities forever. It is a visible demonstration of the Alberta Government's commitment to create a better quality of life for all Albertans.

SASKATCHEWAN

Gaining Momentum at Valley View Centre

Currently there are 190 people who live at Valley View Centre in Moose Jaw. As announced by the Saskatchewan Minister of Social Services, June Draude, in 2012, the aging facility is slated for closure in 2016 with the residents moving to community-based services by that time. In a unique arrangement, both the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living (SACL), and the Valley View Centre Family Group (VVCFG) are actively participating in the planning of the Centre's closure through participation on the Transition Steering Committee, involvement on the Transition Planning Team, and engagement with the working groups facilitating the transition. The Government has also further funded two additional SACL Transition Plan Advocates who are on site at Valley View Centre.



The February 2013 Interim Report of the Transition Steering Committee to the Ministry of Social Services, and the subsequent Valley View Centre Transition Planning Recommendations to the Minister of Social Services (May 2013) has set the framework and direction for the transition of the people who currently live at Valley View Centre to their new homes in the community. The interim report identifies the foundation and overarching philosophy that the transition will undertake, while the recommendations report identifies 14 recommendations with a plethora of additional sub recommendations for how to go about transitioning the people who currently live at VVC to community.

The 14 Key Recommendations are:

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|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Recommendation # 1: | Transition Valley View Centre services to community-based services |
| Recommendation # 2: | Provide the residents of Valley View Centre with the opportunity to live in ordinary homes, in regular neighbourhoods, and in the community of their choice |
| Recommendation # 3: | Ensure each Valley View Centre resident has a person-centred transition plan |
| Recommendation # 4: | Expand the range of residential services and funding options available creating innovation in service delivery |
| Recommendation # 5: | Ensure there is continuity of services for Valley View Centre residents |
| Recommendation # 6: | Facilitate the continuation and development of natural relationships |

Recommendation # 7:	Ensure Valley View Centre residents continue to have access to ancillary services
Recommendation # 8:	Expand and enhance crisis prevention and support service capacity
Recommendation # 9:	Expand respite services
Recommendation # 10:	Ensure each resident has access to individualized activities of choice
Recommendation # 11:	Ensure funding is available to support individuals through Transition
Recommendation # 12:	Develop an action plan to implement these recommendations
Recommendation # 13:	Develop an evaluation framework
Recommendation # 14:	Increase public awareness regarding community inclusion

The preparation being undertaken is placing the individual and his/her needs first in the planning process by ensuring that each person transitioning to community-based services has a Comprehensive Person-Centred Plan. Each person-centred plan will identify the resources required to support the individual and will guide the process that each person goes through, and eventually lead to their new community-based home. If there is not an appropriate option already in existence for the person, work will commence on developing new resources to meet their need.

This process of planning is underway, and is preceding the development of new resources. Rather than having one big plan, 190 individual plans are being developed to best support the people leaving the Centre. This is a slow process, but the focus is on doing it right, rather than doing it quickly. It is expected that in the spring of 2014 we will begin to see people leave the Centre for their new community-based homes, and Community Inclusion for the people who currently live at Valley View Centre will gain momentum.

MANITOBA

St Amant is moving in the right direction

St. Amant is an organization that supports people with developmental disabilities and autism through a range of programs and services in Manitoba. Over 85% of programming is community based yet we still operate a large residence, the founding program, started by the Grey Nuns over 50 years ago.

“We know what needs to happen and we’ve been advocating to move individuals to the community for years,” said John Leggat, President & CEO of St. Amant.

As one of the largest providers of community living services in Manitoba, St. Amant has been told by the people we support that a move to an independent and empowered living environment makes a significant impact on quality of life. For years St. Amant has been working on plans to move people living at River Road Place to community, and the new strategic plan sets targeted and achievable goals to make that happen.

“The strategic plan puts our values into action,” said John Leggat. “With the goals on paper, everyone involved, from funders, to board members to staff and family members are on the same page and working toward common goals, on the same timeline. In order to achieve this plan, we need the support of our funders and the families and legal decision makers.”

The 5-year strategic plan includes the goal of moving 100 people from River Road Place to the community. St. Amant has also identified the goal to share expertise by hosting more public workshops and to participate in advocacy in partnership with families and other agencies.

“I would like to see St. Amant take a stronger leadership role with other stakeholders and families. We need a voice and St. Amant can be a strong voice,” said Janet Wikstrom, a family member of a person supported by St. Amant’s community living program.

The plan includes a lot more than just moving people from River Road Place. It also includes plans to expand our short term services such as crisis stabilization and respite to support families.

“As an organization, we recognize the significant limitations of providing services in areas where large numbers of people share common space and services. We are committed to helping people determine their futures and how services should be provided to achieve personal outcomes,” said John Leggat.

Manitoba Developmental Centre

New Directions was the first community based agency in Manitoba to establish homes for people moving from the Manitoba Developmental Centre. During the first year of the Human Rights Complaint settlement agreement twelve people moved into their new homes in the City of Portage la Prairie. All transitions went smoothly.

“With the enhanced staffing and nicer living arrangements, we have really seen individuals blossom. They have had a chance to flourish and grow. That’s why we are here,” says Lorna, one of the twenty-nine full time staff. In addition there are twenty-four casual staff members and they have all been hired from Portage and the surrounding area.

Several service provider agencies throughout Manitoba are supporting people in new homes or are engaged in the planning process with them. Affordable and adequate housing is a challenge in most cities and towns. There were delays due to building code issues that slowed the progress of meeting the agreement, but the commitment remains strong to continue to support people moving into the community. There are currently just over two hundred people living at MDC.

We still wait for our government to announce a closure but in the meantime we are so excited for the people who have moved.

