

DISABILITY RIGHTS COALITION

This is an important message from the Disability Rights Coalition about Human Rights and the Unlawful Exclusion and Segregation of People with Disabilities

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- In 2014 a Human Rights Complaint was filed with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission because three people labelled disabled had been incarcerated at the Nova Scotia Hospital for many, many years despite being medically discharged years before
- The people incarcerated, who are referred to as the complainants, were refused the opportunity to live in the community with adequate funding and personal supports
- In 2018 the Human Rights hearing began and took place over many weeks
- The Disability Rights Coalition [DRC] intervened and was added as a party to the complaint resulting in many of our members testifying at the hearing

WHO IS THE DISABILITY RIGHTS COALITION [DRC]

- The DRC is an advocacy group made up of people with disabilities, their friends and family members and dedicated professionals, which was formed after the Nova Scotia Government neglected to implement the recommendations in the Kendrick Report

WHAT THE DRC STANDS FOR: WE BELIEVE

- No new government dollars should be used to develop large congregate settings to warehouse people including oversized group homes or institutions
- Best practice that respects human rights should prevail, which means person-centered planning be established to honour individual choice and control
- A committee of key community stakeholders must be established, with the DRC acting in the selection process and mandate, to work in partnership with government to develop a disability strategy in Nova Scotia

WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT COLLECTIVELY

- Phase 1 of the Human Rights Complaint was completed in November 2018
- Lawyers for the complainants argued that it was contrary to law, that it is discrimination based on disability, for the Government to exclude people with disabilities from living in the community

- We await the decision from the Board of Inquiry. If discrimination is found, then ***OUR VOICES NEED TO BE HEARD*** as a collective community and move the result to Phase 2, which is ensuring all persons with disabilities have the right and the opportunity to live in community with adequate supports
- If we are unsuccessful, which means the Board of Inquiry does not find the Government has been discriminatory in their practice of denying the opportunity to all persons to live in community then ***OUR VOICES NEED TO BE HEARD EVEN LOUDER!***

The government has and will likely continue to argue that they cannot afford to accommodate persons with disabilities to ensure their right to live in community. Is this a legitimate claim? What happened to the Government's promise to honour the RoadMap? Are we prepared to let Government argue they can't afford equality for Nova Scotians who have a disability?

MOVING FORWARD

DRC held a Community Forum on December 11, 2018 to provide people with an update & get feedback; 62 people attended! The Panelists included Wendy Lill (member of Community Homes Action Group-CHAG), Vince Calderhead, Lawyer for the Human Rights complainants; Jenn Power, parent and advocate.

We need to continue the momentum and work in partnership with other disability groups.

- A Working Group is meeting to prepare a response to the Human Rights Board of Inquiry outcome. We will share our response with all of you, so you can prepare to have your voices heard when the announcement is made...so please stay tuned!

With the Legislature opening on February 28th, we also hope to raise awareness with our MLA's and the Opposition Critics for Community Services, Health, Education, Justice & Labour...and will ask all of you to educate your own MLA.

From there we will determine ways to bring the community together again, such as another Community Forum.

THIS IS THE TIME: OUR VOICES NEED TO BE HEARD!

To Get Involved or Learn More...

Contact: disabilityrightsns@gmail.com