



Nova Scotia
Association for
Community Living

In Home Supports Needed for Children with Intellectual Disabilities – Not Segregated Housing

Nova Scotia has a dark secret – we are one of the last provinces in Canada to close its institutions. There are still more than 500 people with disabilities being held in eight institutions across Nova Scotia. It's a shameful distinction and something not many of us are comfortable talking about. It is one of those out of sight, out of mind problems – if we house people with disabilities away, we don't have to face the realities that they are being denied their basic human rights. And yet – this is our reality. It is happening right here in our own backyards, and in 2020, a time when countless organizations and governments have declared their commitment to inclusion.

The Nova Scotia Association for Community Living (NSACL) was deeply disappointed and saddened to hear a recent announcement made in Sydney River, Nova Scotia – the Province is funding \$1.2 million dollars for the construction of a home for children who have autism spectrum disorder or intellectual disabilities. Children as young as two-years-old will live in this facility. They will be housed away from their families, away from their communities, they will be segregated.

For many years, people with intellectual disabilities and their families have been at odds with the provincial government as they have made promises to close residential institutions and focus resources instead, on supports that would enable people to remain in their communities and/or live at home with their families. In 2013, after many consultations with the disability community, the provincial government accepted a five-year action plan called "Choice Equality and Good Lives in Inclusive Communities – a Roadmap for Transforming the Nova Scotia Services to Persons with Disabilities Program." This roadmap focused on increasing supported living options in community, instead of institutions. The government has since increased the implementation time for this plan to ten years. Even given this unfortunate delay, NSACL has remained hopeful the government's commitment to community living would stand. That hope was crushed with the announcement made earlier this month in Sydney River.

NSACL is focused on inclusion and promoting the rights and values in keeping with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). We are dismayed and disheartened by the provincial government's support for this new facility. It goes against their previous commitment to get people with intellectual disabilities into community and closing residential institutions. It also goes against Article 23 of the UNCRPD, which Canada ratified in 2010. I invite everyone to read Article 23 in its entirety on the United Nation's website, but to summarize, Article 23 notes that children with disabilities have equal rights with respect to family life, they should not be segregated, and families should be provided with every effort to provide care within their family.

NSACL encourages the government to reconsider this funding along with future funding like this and to examine how money can best be spent to provide adequate support for families in need. There is much research to support that it is less costly to provide services and support in the community than in institutions, including information included in McGill Law's 2017 Working Paper Series, "Right of a Child with disabilities to NOT be institutionalized." This paper also notes the growing research that institutionalization simply does not provide a suitable environment for any child to grow up and that



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providing early supports to parents of a child with a disability is a decisive factor that will influence the decision of parents to keep the child in the family rather than place him or her in an institution.

Families desperately need support so their families can stay together, they need the appropriate guidance and resources to keep their children home. We urge the Nova Scotia government to allocate funds to provide these community-based services to help families, health care providers, and to raise the community's awareness. All children deserve to live with their family and NSACL is committed to ensuring people with intellectual disabilities are not forgotten.

Yours in inclusion,

Patricia Neves
Acting Executive Director, NSACL