

The Honourable Tim Houston
Office of the Premier
7th Floor, One Government Place
1700 Granville Street
Halifax, NS, B3J 1X5

December 15th, 2021

BY EMAIL: PREMIER@novascotia.ca

Dear Premier Houston,

I am the parent of a son with Down's Syndrome, and a retired Social Worker and university teacher with a long history of promoting deinstitutionalization and full community participation of people with intellectual disabilities. I am very saddened by the shocking reversal of your position on the Nova Scotia Appeals Court decision on the rights of persons with disabilities.

For a brief moment, it seemed that Nova Scotia might look to a brighter future for all persons with disabilities, where they could be respected, valued and active in our communities.

Nova Scotia is one of the last jurisdictions to face this issue head on. You were right in your decision not to appeal the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal decision. The time is long overdue to address this grave injustice. There are obvious parallels to the shameful history of residential schools for indigenous children. It would be unthinkable to reverse the decision on their closure.


The assumption that people running these institutions have done the best they could with what they had is ill-informed. While no doubt some of the people were caring, the history of these institutions was never, ever for the benefit of the "inmates." The original version of such institutions was the "poorhouse." They were like brutal jails designed to punish needy and dependent persons. Think Oliver Twist. They were quite purposefully "hell holes" riddled with degradation, abuse, and disease. They were to be avoided at all costs.

In the 20th century came the pseudo-science of eugenics, a terrible abuse of expert power. Before it was used as a rationale for the actions of Nazi Germany, it was widely used in North America to justify the large-scale institutionalization and medical mistreatment of people with disabilities all with the goal of improving our gene pool. They created huge, isolated institutions with terrible names like "asylum for idiots." The names have been euphemized to terms like "rehabilitation centres" and "homes for special care" but they remain segregated, debilitating, dehumanizing warehouses for unwanted people.

Please Premier, don't listen to all the excuses, rationalizations and restraints that stand in the way of a better future for our citizens with disabilities. Create a Nova Scotia where "Everybody is somebody!" and worthy of a dignified place in our communities.

I would welcome an opportunity to speak to you personally about this decision.

Sincerely,



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MSW, DCL (h.c.), LLD (h.c.)
Founder of L'Arche Homefires

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