

Letter to the Premier -- Judy MacDonald, PhD

“Be the change you campaigned on. Start working with the disability communities of this province instead of pushing back against them, once again dismissing their rights to full citizenship.”

Dear Premier: While we have not had the opportunity to meet, I would like to introduce myself and raise an issue of the utmost importance to Nova Scotians and our disabled communities. I am a woman with a disability as I have lived with chronic pain for over 30 years. I am one of the privileged, as I have been able to tap into medical resources that have facilitated my ongoing engagement in professional life. Most members of the disability community have not been so fortunate. My scholarship focuses on disability inclusion and access with particular emphasis upon postsecondary education. I have been actively watching the events over the years since the Roadmap on the province's commitment to accessible housing and services in 2013. While I recognize that deinstitutionalization cannot happen over night, we do need to continue moving forward with providing more access to services and accessible housing options for member of our disability community. You know the stats, we have 555 disabled persons in NS living in long term care homes, and close to 2000 disabled persons waiting for community services. The quality of live for disabled persons has been greatly compromised by the inactivity of our provincial governments. I specifically write governments because I acknowledge that you have only come into power since the summer election. However Premier, it is under your leadership that you are appealing the decision of our courts questioning the systemic discrimination toward disabled persons. Imagine for a moment what message this sends to our disabled citizens! For years, their needs have been dismissed, told their needs are 'too complex' or 'too hard' to accommodate. For years, they have been warehoused in institutions or languishing on waitlists as hope of living a life with dignity fades in the distance. In your own words, 'people should not have to take their government to court to do the right thing' and you recounted that you heard the NS Supreme Court "Loud" and "Clear", yet your actions paint a very different picture.

I plead to your sense of humanity to do that right thing now, to withdraw the petition to the Supreme Court of Canada. Be the change you campaigned on. Start working with the disability communities of this province instead of pushing back against them, once again dismissing their rights to full citizenship.

Sincerely, Judy MacDonald, PhD (she, her)