

We are writing with an update on recent developments resulting from the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal's findings of systemic discrimination in access to social assistance for persons with disabilities who need supports and services to live in community. The two parties (the Disability Rights Coalition and the Province of Nova Scotia) are working collaboratively to develop a remedy in response to the finding, with the benefit of an independent, outside jointly-hired expert, to advise us on what changes need to be made to the services and programs for persons with disabilities delivered by government.

Eddie Bartnik has been engaged to conduct an independent review and make non-binding recommendations to the two parties. Eddie is from Australia and has extensive international experience in disability, mental health and community services. He is strongly committed to good lives for the people we serve and to building welcoming and inclusive communities through a partnership approach. Eddie brings many years of experience in services system reform and delivery of personal, local and accountable support and a whole of government and community approach.

Through this process Eddie will be talking to the people who know the system best, both from government and the community. To that end, as a first step Eddie will be in Halifax the week of October 3rd to meet with a range of stakeholder representatives and gather input. Sessions are in the process of being scheduled, and invitations will go out shortly, but in the meantime, please know that you may receive an invitation for one of the following dates: October 4, 5 or 6.

Assisting Eddie with the first stage of consultations will be Dr Tim Stainton from British Columbia who has extensive Canadian and international experience in human rights and disability services reform.

For the integrity of the process, we've agreed not to talk publicly about the content of the consultations and collaborative process until it wraps up a few months from now.

We are optimistic and committed to doing the best we can for those we serve. Thank you for your support of this process and for your commitment to persons with disabilities and their families.

Vicky Levack
Disability Rights Coalition

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