

April 4, 2019

The Honourable Stephen McNeil  
Province House  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dear Premier McNeil:

We, the Disability Rights Coalition and our allies, want to bring to your attention the Province's widespread and decades-long unfairness towards persons with disabilities in the provision of community-based supports, and to ask for your public commitment to make immediate changes to right this large scale human rights injustice. The Province's denial of basic human rights to people with disabilities affects all of us, and equality seekers are united in calling on you to put an end to this historic segregation, isolation and discrimination.

In his March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019 decision, Walter Thompson Q.C. sitting as a Human Rights Board of Inquiry, found that the Province had been discriminating for many years against three people who had been locked up unnecessarily in a psychiatric hospital, Quest and the Community Transition Program (CTP) even though everyone involved agreed that they could have been supported to live in the community, and found the Province responsible for "indifference that really, after time, becomes contempt".

However, the Board of Inquiry declined to rule on the many hundreds of other cases where people with disabilities are similarly unnecessarily institutionalized for years—and sometime decades—even though the Province acknowledges that they have *already* been assessed and determined to be eligible for social services and capable of living in the community.

The disregard shown by the Province to the wishes of these individuals also amounts to contempt. Lynn Hartwell, a Deputy Minister in your government, testified to the harm and disadvantage faced by people with disabilities as a result of the Province's inaction since the 1990s, and acknowledged the undisputed benefits of community integration. At the same time, the Province continues to spend millions each year unnecessarily institutionalising people with disabilities in psychiatric hospitals, regional rehabilitation centers and other facilities.

The Board's decision contemplates that those on the Province's wait list of over 1,500 people should file their own human rights complaint in order to have their human rights vindicated.

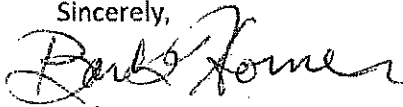
Rather than engage in an absurd scenario in which hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people with disabilities or their loved ones need to file human rights complaints tying up the legal system, now more than ever, we look to our democratically elected government to take action to fix what it admits is a broken and inequitable system for persons with disabilities. Elderly or ill parents are in crisis as they struggle to ensure their adult children with disabilities receive choice, inclusion and equality in their day to day lives through meaningful access to social services to meet their needs – justice delayed in these circumstances is truly justice denied.

In 2013 your Liberal government endorsed the *Roadmap for Choice, Inclusion and Good Lives* for people with disabilities, and set a ten-year time frame for emptying institutions and clearing waitlists. We call on you to fulfill your government's promises by 2023 – including addressing the needs of everyone on the waitlist in a timely manner, and ensuring that no one is unnecessarily institutionalised in large congregate care facilities – through a legislated, multi-year funding commitment. It is within your power to put an end to indifference and contempt for the rights of people with disabilities in this province.

Now, the Province must make a decision. It can allow the 1,500 persons with disabilities in this province lacking necessary supports to languish while hundreds will seek to file their own human rights complaint. Or it can do the right thing, and take immediate steps to resolve the policy and human rights crisis it has created for persons with disabilities and their families.

People with disabilities in Nova Scotia have waited long enough for their human rights. We call upon you to take prompt and effective legislative action to right this historic and ongoing wrong.

Sincerely,



Barb Horner  
Disability Rights Coalition

**Additional Signatories:**

United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing

Nova Scotia Federation of Labour

Amnesty International Canada

Canada Without Poverty

Nova Scotia Teachers' Union

Nova Scotia College of Social Workers

Halifax Pride

Halifax-Dartmouth & District Labour Council

Public Service Alliance of Canada – Atlantic Region

The Council of Canadians

Canadian Federation of Students, Nova Scotia

Canadian Union of Postal Workers Nova Local 096

Service Employees' International Union, Local 2, Nova Scotia

Adsum House for Women and Children

YWCA Halifax

North End Community Health Centre

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Nova Scotia Office

Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia

Association of Black Social Workers

Autism Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia Association for Community Living (NSACL)

Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities

Independent Living Nova Scotia

L'Arche Atlantic

Nova Scotia Residential Agencies Association, representing:

- Amherst and District Residential Services Society
- CACL – Clare Branch
- CACL- Antigonish
- Cape Breton Community Housing Association
- Cape Breton Residential Society
- Cape Breton West Community Action 2000 Society
- CARES- Cheticamp Area Residential Educational Society
- Celtic Community Homes Association
- Colchester Residential Services Society
- Community Living Alternatives Society
- Community Living CMHA-/Col/E. Hants Branch
- Conway Workshop Association
- Corridor Community Options Society
- Gateway Homes
- Heatherton Group Home Society
- Highland Residential Services Society
- Highland Visions
- Homes For Independent Living (NS)
- Hub Residential Services Society
- Isaiah House
- Isle Madame Small Options Society
- Kings Meadows
- Koster Huis
- L'Arche Antigonish
- L'Arche Cape Breton
- L'Arche Halifax
- L'Arche Home Fires
- Louisdale Community Homes Association
- Mawita'mk
- Metro Community Housing Association
- Our Neighbourhood Living Society
- Port Hood Small Options
- Queens Association for Supported Living
- Regional Occupational Centre
- Regional Residential Services Society
- Resi Care Cape Breton
- SCLO-Riverview Enhanced Living Society
- Shelburne Association Supporting Inclusion
- Society for the Treatment of Autism (NS)

- South Shore Community Service Association (Bonny Lea)
- Support Services Group Co-operative
- Supportive Living Society
- Unity House
- Yarmouth Association for Community Residential Options
- Yarmouth Association for Community Residential Options – Dartmouth

People First Nova Scotia

People First Annapolis County

People First Kings County

People First Truro Chapter

People First Windsor chapter

People First Yarmouth chapter

Advocating Parents of Nova Scotia

Community Homes Action Group

Brain Injury Nova Scotia

James McGregor Stewart Society

Community Living Centres

St. Margaret's Bay & Area Association for Community Living

Women's Center Connect, representing:

- Every Woman's Centre, Sydney;
- Strait Area Women's Place, Port Hawkesbury;
- Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association;
- Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre, New Glasgow;
- The Lotus Centre; Truro;
- L.E.A. Place Women's Resource Centre, Sheet Harbour;
- Second Story Women's Centre, Lunenburg;
- The Women's Place Resource Centre, Annapolis Royal;
- Tri-County Women's Centre, Yarmouth

Nova Scotia New Democratic Party Caucus

Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project

Nova Scotia Government and General  
Employees Union Local 58  
Mobile Outreach Street Health  
Mount Saint Vincent Students' Union  
Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group  
East Coast Prison Justice Society  
Community Society to End Poverty Nova Scotia  
Affordable Energy Coalition  
Equity Watch  
Educators for Social Justice  
Solidarity Halifax  
Student Activist Law Student Association

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