

THE CHALLENGES

The challenges facing us are very clear.



- People with intellectual disabilities and their families must understand their rights and demand that those rights are met.
- Governments must act now and accept their obligations.
- Advocates and their organizations must demand action by their governments.
- Service providers must ensure that the services they offer do not hinder real community living by ignoring the wishes of the people they support or by violating rights legislation.



THE DEFINITION OF AN INSTITUTION

An institution is any place in which people who have been labelled as having an intellectual disability are isolated, segregated and/or congregated. An institution is any place in which people do not have, or are not allowed to exercise control over their day to day decisions. An institution is not defined merely by its size.

The above definition was created by People First of Canada/Canadian Association for Community Living Joint Task Force on the Right to Live in Community.

Please check our website institutionwatch.ca for valuable resource materials on the topics outlined in this brochure.



THE RIGHT TO LIVE IN THE COMMUNITY

People with intellectual disabilities struggle to be fully involved and valued as equal contributing members of their communities.



For many years people with intellectual disabilities have been expressing with passion and clarity what they want their lives to look like. People with intellectual disabilities want what we all want.

- Respect...as a family member, a friend, a citizen, a community member, a co-worker, a citizen.
- Choice and control...over where we live, who we live with, and how we live.
- To be treated as a unique individual and not as part of a "different" group.
- To be part of everything and not kept apart.

- To have friends of our choosing and on our terms.
- To have our voices heard and listened to.
- Assurance that our decisions and our supports will be protected.
- A paying job and financial security.
- The opportunity to grow, learn, and develop.

THE CURRENT SITUATION IN CANADA

Opportunities for Canadian citizens with intellectual disabilities have vastly improved over the past fifty years. However there are still significant challenges that the community living movement and our country must face.



- Nova Scotia, Quebec, Prince Edward Island, Alberta, and Manitoba continue to house people with intellectual disabilities in institutions that segregate and devalue people as equal citizens.
- Over the past 30 years, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, British Columbia, Ontario, and Saskatchewan have closed or

have made commitments to close their large institutions housing people with intellectual disabilities.

- Across the country people with intellectual disabilities continue to be “placed” in inappropriate facilities such as group homes, psychiatric facilities, penal institutions, long term care centres, and homes for elderly people.
- There are extraordinarily long waiting lists for people with intellectual disabilities to receive even the most basic of supports.
- Limited government funding is giving rise to an alarming narrowing of eligibility criteria for supports and services.
- Many community based supports and services have evolved with institutional like restrictions built into them.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Hundreds of people with intellectual disabilities continue to be confined and segregated away from society in large institutions.



Thousands more receive inadequate or inappropriate community supports. Peoples’ basic human rights, guaranteed under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Canadian Charter on the Rights and Freedoms and provincial Human Rights Legislation, are blatantly denied.

Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by our federal government states that the rights of persons with disabilities shall include the following:

- Equal rights to live in the community.
- Choices equal to others.
- Choosing where and with whom we live.
- Equal access to all services and facilities in the community.

There can be no grey area in human rights or in the UN Convention. There can be no varying level of binding obligations.

It is time for all levels of government in Canada to take responsibility to provide supports to people with intellectual disabilities in alignment with their international, national and provincial human rights commitments.

To do any less is neither morally nor legally acceptable.