

PRESS RELEASE: MANITOBA'S LAST INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES NOW CLOSED PERMANENTLY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: December 10, 2024

WINNIPEG, MB – Today, the last institution for people with intellectual disabilities in Manitoba, the Manitoba Developmental Centre (MDC), closes its doors for good. The National Task Force on Deinstitutionalization joins our founding partners, Inclusion Canada and People First of Canada, in celebrating the advocacy that led to the closure of MDC and recognizes the hard work and many years it took to get here.

The closure of MDC has been pursued by self-advocates and their allies for over 30 years. People like David Weremy, an MDC survivor and member of the Task Force who led a class-action lawsuit against the institution in 2018, have devoted their lives to advancing the full inclusion of people with an intellectual disability in the community by ridding the country of this outdated and discriminatory housing model.

The National Task Force on Deinstitutionalization is grateful to David Weremy for shining a light on the physical, mental and sexual abuse people experienced at the Manitoba Developmental Centre.

“Today is a day to celebrate,” says Marcel St. Jean, Inclusion Canada’s Task Force Co-Chair, “Yet another province has closed the doors on institutionalization for good. Although there is still more work to be done, today we recognize the hard work by self-advocates, families and their allies who led the charge to close MDC. Their work cannot be understated.”

On January 29, 2021, the Manitoba Government announced that they would be closing MDC within 3 years. By making good on that promise, they have demonstrated their commitment to supporting people with an intellectual disability and their families in living inclusive lives in community.

“This is an end of a sad chapter in Manitoba,” says Gordon Fletcher, People First of Canada’s Task Force Co-Chair, “Now we hope other provinces and territories take note of this and take up the challenge of making sure that people have the freedom to live where they want to live.”

Since 2002, the Task Force has been committed to the mission of closing institutions and working with provincial, territorial and national partners to ensure people with an intellectual disability are living in community.

The institutionalization of people with intellectual disabilities in Canada remains a major barrier to full inclusion and citizenship. While the closure of MDC is a victory, we are not done. We are reminded of the words of Shane Haddad, a past chair of the Task Force, “We need to remind ourselves that we are no closer to being an institution free Canada than we were 30 years ago. The buildings are just harder to find now.”

As long as these facilities exist, people with intellectual disabilities will be at risk of being institutionalized. The closure of MDC will enable people with intellectual disabilities to take their rightful place as equal, participating Canadian citizens, living independently in community.

-30-

For more information, please contact:

Catherine Rodgers, Director of Communications; People First of Canada
Email: crodgers@peoplefirstofcanada.ca Phone: 204-784-7362 Ext. 202
Or

Marc Muschler, Senior Communications Officer; Inclusion Canada
Email: mmuschler@inclusioncanada.ca Phone: 416-661-9611 Ext. 232

About the National Task Force on Deinstitutionalization

[The National Task Force on Deinstitutionalization](#) is a joint initiative from [People First of Canada](#) and [Inclusion Canada](#). The Task Force has two goals. The first is to close institutions that house people with intellectual disabilities. The second is to make sure people with intellectual disabilities and their families have the supports they need to live fully inclusive lives in the community.