

DISABILITY RIGHTS COALITION NOVA SCOTIA
33 Tantling Crescent, Dartmouth, NS B2W 4Y4
disabilityrights@gmail.com

The Disability Rights Coalition (DRC) and the three Individual human rights complainants have filed appeals of the March 4, 2019 Nova Scotia Human Rights Board of Inquiry Decision and the Board of Inquiry's December 2019 Compensation award.

The Province of Nova Scotia has also cross-appealed—it is seeking to have all the complaints dismissed in their entirety.

The DRC complaint addressed the discriminatory systemic impacts of the Province's policies and practices that have resulted in the unnecessary institutionalization of hundreds of people with disabilities, and a growing delay in obtaining supports and services to live in the community for other people with disabilities – currently numbering almost 1,600 people.

For more information, see the DRC website: <https://www.disabilityrightscoalitionns.ca/the-drc-human-rights-complaint-before-the-nova-scotia-court-of-appeal/>

After more than 35 years of public discussion and successive government reports recommending community inclusion and deinstitutionalization of people with disabilities it continues to be the case that Nova Scotia relies, far more than any other province in Canada, on institutional care for persons with disabilities. Fully 20% of those persons with disabilities receiving supports and services are placed in large congregate living facilities – many others face a prolonged wait with no access to services in the meantime.

The Provincial “Roadmap” to transform the services for persons with disabilities programs was endorsed by the Province of Nova Scotia in 2013 with a **10 year** deadline to improve and enhance community living for persons with disabilities and their families. With less than three years to go on this commitment, the government has failed to announce any timeframes for reaching this goal.. There has been no significant movement or financial commitment. The announcement in 2016 of the creation of new small options homes has not been met - only 3 new homes are open and full, 3 are being renovated and 2 are still in the design stages, and no new small options homes have been committed to.

The Human Rights complaints, filed in 2014 and finally decided in 2019 found that this Government discriminated against 3 individuals institutionalized in an acute Psychiatric Hospital rather than providing community-based living options, BUT dismissed the complaint in 2019 of systemic discrimination filed by the Disability Rights Coalition. **The Disability Rights Coalition (DRC) is appealing this decision!**

DID YOU KNOW?

- The Premier has failed to respond to the “open letter” in support of the Roadmap signed by individuals and groups representing more than 100,000 Nova Scotians
- The Premier made a promise to meet with People First, a member of the DRC, in response to the open letter in the Spring of 2019. This meeting has **never** happened.
- Instead, the Nova Scotia government has filed an appeal of both the finding of discrimination and the compensation awarded the 3 individuals institutionalized for years in the acute psychiatric hospital
- The Province’s appeal challenges discriminatory actions against people with disabilities that resulted in what the Board described as “punishing confinement” and claims that the compensation award was excessive – a shockingly low award that amounted to less than \$5000 per year of confinement for one of the individual complainants
- During the Human Rights tribunal the then Deputy Minister of the Department of Community Services, Lynn Hartwell admitted her government was failing persons with disabilities
- Despite a public commitment to the Roadmap within a 10 year time frame, the government has made no commitment for a multi-year financial commitment to ensure its implementation
- The Waitlist has increased by more than 50% since 2010 and currently stands close to 1600 people, many of whom receive no services, or are **unnecessarily** institutionalized in publicly funded congregate care facilities, hospitals, and locked acute psychiatric and forensic facilities

TOO MANY EMPTY AND BROKEN PROMISES IS SHAMEFUL

Actions such as this are both shocking and appalling

We come to YOU—It’s time to have our voices heard again!!!

Friends, Allies, Families, & Self-Advocates please share your stories, disappointment & heartache with your MLA—write a letter, request a meeting, and share your stories – send us a copy of your letter if you wish—or tell us what you are doing!

From our MLA’s we need:

- Leadership, commitment & political will
- Partnerships and collaboration with community—agencies, families, health, education, & justice; community colleges, non-profit organizations & residential service providers—sharing experience & expertise

Our Ask to this Government remains the same—we call on this government to dedicate a legislative multi-year financial commitment to ensure the implementation of the Roadmap that will address proper planning, capacity, person-centred approach, funding that will improve the quality of life for hundreds of families and individuals stifled in institutions; and will create an infrastructure of new jobs in our communities across NS.