



For Immediate Release

Halifax, July 24, 2020

“If You Build it - They will Come”

New Institution Under Construction in Nova Scotia – People First Demands Action

On July 15, 2020, CBC News reported that the Breton Ability Centre broke ground on construction of a new “home for children who have autism spectrum disorder or intellectual disabilities” in Sydney River, NS. People First of Canada (PFC) and People First of Nova Scotia (PFNS) are outraged to read that the Nova Scotia government is supporting the construction of what is essentially a new institution for children (aged 2-18).

PFC and PFNS have been fighting for years to close institutions in Nova Scotia and educate people on the fact that people live better lives in the community. PFC’s definition of an institution is *“any place in which people who have been labeled 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 lives and their day to day decisions. An institution is not defined merely by its size.”* By this definition, this ‘home’ in Sydney River is a new institution for children with intellectual disabilities.

In response to the news of this construction, Kory Earle, President of People First of Canada stated, “This is a huge step backwards for Nova Scotia and Canadians with intellectual disabilities. It’s an embarrassment to our country. It’s unacceptable for kids to have to leave their homes because we know there are better ways to support people and their families. We demand that the Nova Scotia government stop this project – this is not the way children in 2020 should be living their lives.”

Donnie MacLean, President of People First Nova Scotia stated, “Kids with disabilities should live at home with their families, just like kids without disabilities get to do. When kids with disabilities are sent away from their families to live somewhere else, they feel left out, unwanted, and uncared for. This will be just like a smaller or mini institution instead of a real home. The money spent on this home should instead go toward helping families get the support they need to have their kids stay at home with them.”

PFC and PFNS are calling on the Nova Scotia Provincial Government, along with the Cape Breton Regional Municipality to reverse this trend and stop construction on this new institution for children with intellectual disabilities. Our organizations would like to see increased support for people with disabilities and their families, so that children do not have to leave their homes to go live in an institution at any point in their lives.

Donnie MacLean – President, People First Nova Scotia

Kory Earle – President, People First of Canada

Shelley Fletcher – Executive Director, People First of Canada

People First of Canada (PFC) is the national voice of people who have been labelled with an intellectual disability. The vision of PFC is to see all citizens living equally in the community. For further information, contact Shelley Fletcher, Executive Director for PFC. Email: sfletcher@peoplefirstofcanada.ca Find out more at www.peoplefirstofcanada.ca

People First Nova Scotia (PFNS) is a self advocacy group of members who have been labelled with an intellectual disability. The vision of PFNS is that all citizens have an opportunity to live equally in community. For further information, contact Cindy Carruthers, Provincial Coordinator for PFNS. Email: pfns2014@gmail.com Find out more at www.peoplefirstns.ca