

**For Immediate Release
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Institutionalization in Ontario in any form will not be tolerated

Toronto, ON – Community Living Ontario and the People First of Canada/Canadian Association for Community Living National Task Force on the Right to Live in the Community are denouncing attempts to re-institutionalize Ontarians who have an intellectual disability and are calling for greater collaboration and investment in the Developmental Services sector.

Angel Oak Communities has proposed converting the former Saint Stanislaus Novitiate Jesuit College at the Ignatius Jesuit Centre in Guelph into a 70-unit residence for people who have intellectual and physical disabilities and seniors. In a recent non-binding letter of intent, the Jesuit Province of Canada has outlined its intention to enter into a long-term lease agreement with developer Angel Oak Communities to repurpose their property.

“It wasn't that long ago we were celebrating the closure of institutions for people labelled with an intellectual disability in Ontario. Today, we were outraged to read about the proposed facility at the Ignatius Jesuit Centre in Guelph. As one institution closes, another opens. This is a huge step backwards for the province of Ontario,” said Kory Earle, President of People First of Canada.

“It is a proven fact that institutional living is not healthy or safe for us. We have a right to live in the community, with the same choices and freedoms as everyone else.”

The proposed project in Guelph and elsewhere in Ontario are indicative of a systemic housing crisis in Ontario, where there is a lack of appropriate housing, creative solutions and vision for people who have an intellectual disability and their families.

“Once upon a time, each of the institutions in Ontario was new, considered innovative and best practice. Yet, the physical, sexual and emotional abuse committed against thousands of former residents of Huronia Regional Centre in Orillia and other government-run facilities are painful reminders of the harm and negative impact that can take place when people live in large, congregated and segregated-type settings apart from the community,” said Chris Beesley, Chief Executive Office of Community Living Ontario.

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“Collectively, we must condemn all forms of institutionalization and, instead, empower people, families and communities to plan and seek out more inclusive and flexible residential options that will result in far more positive outcomes.”

Community Living Ontario and the National Task Force on the Right to Live in the Community have requested a meeting with the Jesuit Province of Canada to share their concerns regarding the proposal from Angel Oak Communities.

They are also actively engaging with the Government of Ontario and its related ministries for a formal response and a request for genuine, meaningful consultations with people who have lived experience, families and communities across the province on the importance of thoughtful, intentional and inclusive communities.

The Jesuit College proposal follows the construction of 14-unit housing project for adults who have Autism Spectrum Disorder in London and a failed attempt to make 18 units available to people who have an intellectual disability inside unused space at the Sisters of St. Joseph of Hamilton convent in Dundas.

“It is truly unfortunate that we have learned nothing from the mistakes of the past, mistakes which continue to be made to this day in some provinces. Instead, we change up some little part of it and think it will work out better this time. It won’t. People with disabilities need to live fully included in the same community as everyone else, not set aside in their own out of the way artificial community,” said Laurie Larson, Co-chair of the National Task Force on the Right to Live in the Community.

Community Living Ontario and the National Task Force on the Right to Live in the Community also intend to make affordable and accessible housing for all an election issue in 2018.

“While the Government of Ontario continues to explore different housing options through the Developmental Services Housing Task Force, and has embarked on its Basic Income Pilot Project and other initiatives to try and address the 15,000-person wait list, people deserve to live a good life in a home of their own. The province clearly needs to be much more responsive

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in providing resources and a clear multi-year plan on how it intends to achieve a more inclusive Ontario,” added Beesley.

“Many of our member organizations and their local partners, including families, are leading the way providing in appropriate and inclusive housing in their communities. Clearly, they need a say on this issue, along with representatives from People First and others who have lived experience with supportive, non-congregate housing. We also need the will of government to see how we can expedite housing options for people and provide more consistent, community-based supports and services.”

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Community Living Ontario is a family-based association assisting people who have an intellectual disability and their families to lead the way in advancing inclusion in their own lives and in their communities. We are a progressive leader in the Developmental Services sector representing more than 12,000 individuals, families, over 100 member organizations and community partners.

People First of Canada and the Canadian Association for Community Living National Task Force on the Right to Live in Community (formerly known as the Deinstitutionalization Task Force) exists because many individuals with intellectual disabilities remain in institutions – segregated, isolated, and often without their full citizenship rights. The Task Force works to raise awareness of institutions and the conditions in which our fellow Canadians live within these facilities. The goals of the Task Force include closing existing institutions and ensuring that no new institutions for individuals with intellectual disabilities are opened in Canada. The vision of the Task Force includes all Canadian citizens living and participating in their communities.

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