

People First for the Year 2002

People First of Ontario Newsletter

Summer 2002 Edition

Safe and At Home



in the Community

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The boxes beside the main articles are a summary of what is written in the article

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THANK YOU

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A Message from Your President

**Richard Ruston,
President of PFO**

Our conference is Nov. 22-24.

We will focus on RIGHTS, SAFETY and CONNECTIONS.

We have heard that many members do not feel safe.

We are often alone.

Sometimes we are afraid to go out.

People have hurt us.

People have made fun of us.

We need to stand together.

We need to let other people know what it feels like.

Our conference will be held on November 22-24, 2002 in Toronto at the Regal Constellation Hotel. Our focus is “RIGHTS, SAFETY, and CONNECTIONS”.

Over the last few years Peter Park, Dave Hasbury and myself have participated in Regional Meetings across the province. We keep hearing that People First members do not feel safe in the communities where they live. Our members are often alone. Our rights are violated. It can be scary.

Sometimes we are afraid to go out. People in the community harass us, they call us names, hurt us, steal from us, and even rape us.

We need to stand up together. We need to connect with other people and groups.

We are planning to bring in speakers to talk with us about safety and connections. We want them to listen to us, to

hear our stories. We want them to know how we feel. Then we can all educate each other.

This year's conference will be very important to come to so you can:

make new friends

hear about our plan for the next few years

make some connections

learn about RIGHTS, SAFETY, and COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

elect our new board

It will be a very busy weekend. I hope that lots of People First members from across Ontario, and friends of People First will come to the conference. It is more important than ever that you join us!!!

We need to work as a team to build better communities for ALL! We need to build communities where we can live and work ... and feel safe.

As your out going President I have learned so much from People First members about DREAMS and CHOICES, RIGHTS, WANTS and NEEDS.

I have shared my story with many people worldwide. MY biggest dream is to see all members have FREEDOM:

We need to teach each other.

At the conference you will:

make new friends

hear about our plan

make new connections

learn about Rights, and Safety

elect our new board

It will be a very busy event.

We need to work together.

We need to build communities where we can live and work and feel safe.

As your President I have learned so much from you.

My biggest dream is to see all members have Freedom:

Freedom with rights

Freedom from
abuse

Freedom to say
what we want

Freedom to choose

Freedom to live
where we want

Freedom to be a
part of the
community

Freedom to be safe

More than 1000 people
still live in institutions.

We must keep working
untill everyone is Free
and Safe!

Freedom with rights

Freedom from abuse

Freedom to say what we want

Freedom to choose

Freedom to live where we want

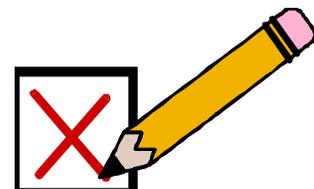
Freedom to be a part of the community

There is so much that I have learned from everyone. I am very grateful for Peter Park and Pat Worth who started this movement here in Ontario in the late 1970's. We must not forget our past. There are still over 1000 people that live in large institutions in Ontario. And there are people still living in institutional ways in the community. We must never forget. We must continue until ALL are SAFE and FREE!



PFO Board

Elections



Come to our Conference to elect the new Board for People First of Ontario.

Raising Hell:

Upset about Homelessness

by: Rhea Park

I'm very disturbed that homelessness has occurred, but even more why did we allow this human tragedy to get out of control? It degrades people, and has ways of destroying all of a person's dignity and pride.

A very large number of these people are the underdogs, the most vulnerable, those that happen to be seniors. And no one cares.

The elderly and people with disabilities are often treated like trash and just thrown away.

Veterans who fought for our country are sometimes part of this class of citizens. Veterans like all members of People First are often not recognized as citizens of Canada.

Homelessness can have many different

I am upset that people are homeless.

Why do we let this awful thing happen?

It hurts people. And no one cares.

Older people and people with disabilities are treated like trash and thrown away.

Veterans from the war are often not seen as citizens.

Homelessness can be caused by many things:

Divorce
Unemployment
Disease
Lack of friends
Sexual Behaviour
Can't deal with life

And the list goes on...

Why do we let it happen?

I pray that something will stop it.

causes. For example:

Divorce
Unemployment
Disease
Lack of friends
Sexual behaviour
Can't deal with life

And the list goes on ... You can make your own list

So why do we choose to be so cruel and allow this war of death and starvation to occur?

I pray daily that something will be established soon as this horrible tragedy has been going on far to long.



Our New Address

We have a new mailing address:

Suite 2000 Unit 6A-49 The Donway West

Toronto, ON M3C 2E8

This is not an office. It is our mail box. Our mail is picked up regularly.

Our phone number remains the same - (416) 441-6172

I Feel Safe in Perth

by: Mary Bourns

with Amy Asselstine and Tammy Hagar



There are a lot of great people in my community. You can walk down the street and receive at least ten smiles and ten hello's.

Perth always has a lot of different events from fairs to the Stewart Park Maple Festival.

These special events make Perth a friendly place. People want to see new things and meet new people.

I got to my Ladies's Night and church functions. I feel safe because these people are my friends. We share the same interests.

I work at a grocery store. The people there are friendly and outgoing.

In our community there are lots of different support groups, like YUK. It is a Youth Centre. It's great. It keeps the kids off the streets.

People First for the Year 2002

There are a lot of friendly people in Perth.

There are a lot of fairs and events.

This makes Perth a special place.

I go to Ladie's Night and church events.

I feel safe there with my friends.

We share the same interests.

There is a group that supports youth. It keeps them busy and off the streets.

I feel safe knowing people are busy and safe.

It makes me feel safe knowing there are different committees and organizations that keep people busy and safe.



Nominations for Election

“Nomination” means **naming** someone you would like to be a candidate for election.

We will be having an election for the Board of Directors. This year we will be voting for ALL positions on the Board. This means Officers and Regional Reps.

Officers of the Board of Directors are the following:

- President**
- ◆ **1st Vice President**
- ◆ **2nd Vice President**
- ◆ **Treasurer**



A person named as a candidate for Officer must:

- Be a member in Good Standing
(paid your membership fee by November 22, 2002)
- Have served as a PFO Board member for at least one year
- Be nominated by a PFO member in good standing

A person named as a candidate for Regional Rep. must:

- Be a member in Good Standing
- Be nominated by a PFO member in good standing from your region

A Nomination Form must be completed by the PFO member who is naming a person to be a candidate.

Our Conference Theme

The theme for the conference this year is:

The Right to be Safe.

We have heard many stories from our members. They do not feel safe in the community. For many of us our People First group is the only place we feel safe and respected.

We need to find ways to be a part of the community. We need to get to know people. We need people to get to know us. We are not safe when we are all alone.

We need to find other people who care about making our communities safe for everyone.

We need to let the leaders in the community know that we are not safe. We need to share our stories about why we don't feel safe. We need to talk with politicians and police officers, firefighters, ambulance attendants.

Come join us. Share your stories. Let's learn from each other about making our communities safer for us all.

WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE AS SAFE AS ANYONE ELSE!!

People First for the Year **2002**

Our theme is:

The Right to Be Safe

For many of us our People First group is the only place we feel safe.

We need to get to know people

We need others to get to know us.

We are not safe if we are all alone.

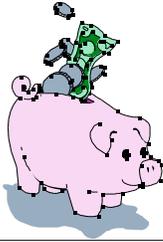
We need to let people know that we do not feel safe.

We need to talk with police officers, and firefighters, and politicians.

Come share your stories.

Help us make our communities safer for all.

We all have the Right to Be Safe.



Raise Money to come to the Conference

We have some money for our conference.

It is not enough to pay for everything.

We are charging \$45.00 for each person.

We know this is a lot.

We want you to work together to raise money to come.

You can hold events.

You can ask groups to support your members to come.

You can save money if you share a room or transportation.

It will cost between \$150 to \$250.

It will cost more for transportation.

We hope you will try.

People have been asking us when we are going to have a conference. We have some money from Human Resources Development Canada to support this conference, but it is not enough to cover all of the costs.

We decided to charge \$45 per person. We know this is a lot for our members. We ask your groups to work together to raise money to send people to the conference.

You can raise funds by holding events like car washes, dances, bake sales, chocolate bar sales.

You can ask local organizations to sponsor members from your group. Organizations like the Associations for Community Living, or churches, and service clubs, like Kiwanis and Lions.

You can save costs by sharing rooms, and traveling together.

It will cost between \$150 - \$250 per person for the conference fee, hotel room and meals. It will cost more for people who have to pay for buses, airfare, taxis.

We know it is hard but we hope you will try.

People First of Ontario

Notice of the

2002

Conference & AGM



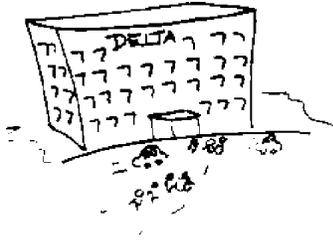
The Right to Be Safe
November 22-24, 2002

Regal Constellation Hotel

Toronto, ON

Registration 5-7 p.m. Nov. 22

Registration Fee: \$45.00/person
(includes Saturday lunch and Annual membership)



**Regal
Constellation
Hotel
900 Dixon Rd.**

**Reservations
1-800-268-4838**

**Hotel
Guest Rooms**

We have reserved 70 guest rooms for November 22 and 23. These rooms are reserved at a special conference rate.

You will have to call the hotel directly to reserve your rooms. Be sure to tell them that you are attending the **People First of Ontario Conference** so that you get the conference rate. Hotel rooms must be booked before **November 1, 2002.**

If you are unable to book before that time please call the People First of Ontario office. We will ask the hotel for an extension on our booking date.

The rates listed are for up to two people. **An extra cot can be added to these rooms for \$15.00.**

There are three types of guest rooms available:

Economy Rooms:

$\$99.00 + \11.88 (12% tax) = **$\$110.88/\text{night}$**

These rooms have 1 Queen size bed. Bathrooms have a shower only (No bathtub).

Standard Rooms:

$\$109.00 + \13.08 (12% tax) = **$\$122.08/\text{night}$**

These rooms have two double beds.

Accessible Rooms:

$\$119.00 + \14.08 (12% tax) = **$\$133.28/\text{night}$**

These are upgraded Premium rooms with two double beds. They are accessible for people who need wheelchair access.

Check In

If you will be paying in cash, you will be required to pay for your room when you check in .

A security deposit is required for people who want to use the phones and pay movies in your room. The security deposit is \$50.00/night or pre-approval on a credit card.

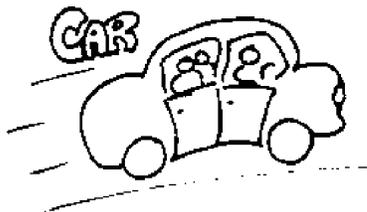
Check in time begins at 3:00 pm.. Check out 12:00 pm.

Let the hotel know if you will be arriving after 4:00 pm. on November 22

Cancelling Your Reservation:

If you need to cancel your reservation, you must contact the hotel before 4:00 pm. on the day you are scheduled to arrive. If you do not cancel before 4:00 pm., you will be responsible to pay for the room for that night.

Transportation



Parking at the Hotel is \$8.00/day

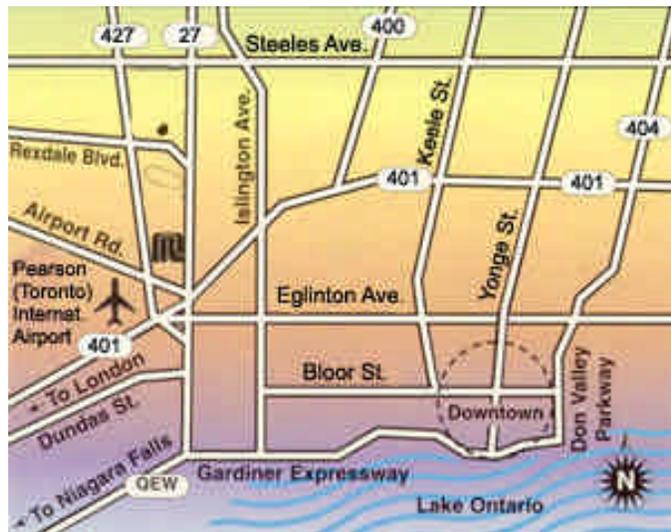
Directions:

From the West Coming north on Highway 427:

Just follow the signs for the airport, turn off at Dixon Road exit and turn right at Dixon Road to Regal Constellation Hotel.

From the East: Coming west on Hwy. 401:

Take the Dixon Road exit and go west on Dixon Road to the Regal Constellation Hotel



A hotel shuttle service (\$6.00) brings you from Toronto's Lester B. Pearson International Airport to the Hotel in less than five minutes. Taxi and limousine service is also at your disposal.

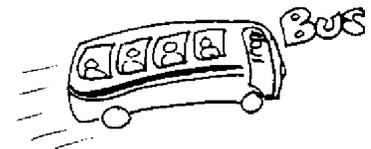


VIA Rail routes arrive in downtown Toronto at Union Station.



Bus Routes to Toronto arrive at two possible locations.

1. Yorkdale Mall – Yorkdale Mall is actually closer to the Airport. Ask the Bus company if the bus you will be taking stops at Yorkdale. This will be quicker.



2. Bay St. Terminal (Downtown) – The Bay St. terminal is right in downtown Toronto.

Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) 416-393-4636

The TTC is the bus and subway system in Toronto. Call the TTC to find out the best route to arrive at the Hotel address from where you are coming in Toronto.

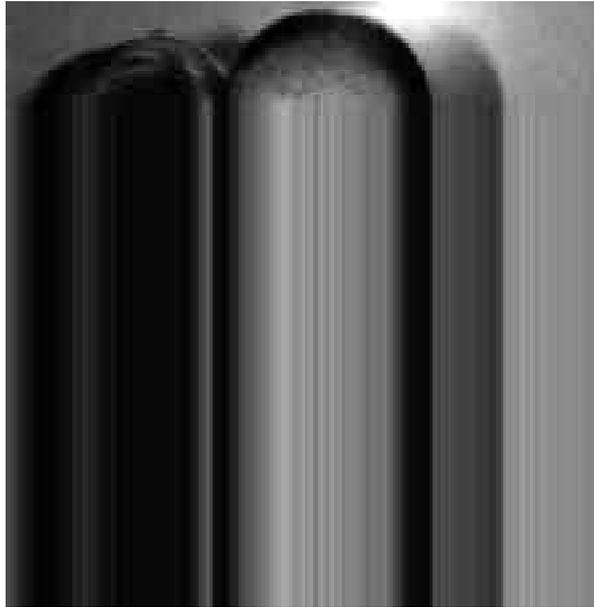


We are attempting to get support from people in the Toronto area who can help transport people from the bus and train stations to the hotel.

If you are arriving by bus or train and need help to get to the hotel please call the office and let us know.

VOLUNTEER DRIVERS NEEDED!! Please call us if you can help.

Thanks Rusty!!!



Richard Ruston has been our President for the last four years.

He has given everything.

We all want to thank him for all of his hard work.

His leadership has touched all of our lives.

He will continue on as a leader of People First of Ontario as Past President, and now as Treasurer of people First of Canada.

Thanks Rich. We could not have done it without you!!!

The best way to make a friend is be a friend

Sometimes the best way to make a friend is to be helpful.

Volunteering to help other people is a good way to make connections.

You can do this on your own, or your group can do this together.

People First:

Finding Strength with Each Other

by: Pat Worth

Some people say People First has become “too social”.

Why is this happening?

People First of Ontario used to have money.

Our Board and Staff could travel to teach our members.

Our members need to see people face to face to learn.

Our members are often very much alone.

We come together to feel connected.

During the past few years I have heard a lot of criticism about People First being too segregated and too social at the local group level. I would like a chance to address those criticisms. I have the same concern that People First groups are now becoming very much social groups. Why is this happening? This is my opinion.

Back in the eighties and early nineties, we had both the money and the leadership to travel to local groups to teach local groups about issues that affect the lives of people who are labelled as developmentally handicapped. When People First members don't have that kind of personal connection, our groups become very social because we are very isolated and disconnected.

There used to be times when we could appear at association conferences and other conferences and other events be-

cause People First Of Ontario had the money or other local agencies would pay our expenses. Today People First Of Ontario has no money and the agencies are not helping us out the way they used to. Our main supporters who were around for a long time are not around any more.

There is nobody there to coordinate the kind of support that people first members need to be able to participate with other people and groups at community events so we become isolated in our own groups. Other people have all sorts of advantages of getting to other places without it costing them. Most of our members don't have that advantage. We are poor, we have no money and therefore we cannot connect to people like other people can.

We become very social in our own groups because we are so disconnected from other people. We also very often feel the need to be social with each other. We are people who have been thrown together because other people have decided that we need to be segregated so most of the times, the only people that we get to know and trust are people who have been labelled. Very often we feel much safer with each other than we would with other people.

Is People First Segregated? We don't

Other agencies used to help pay for us to travel.

They do not help us as much now.

Some people who helped us for a long time are not around any more.

We don't have someone to help us be involved.

So we end up alone.

Most of us don't have money to travel.

We are poor.

We stay with our People First groups because we don't have other people in our lives.

We feel safer with each other than with other people.

We are like brothers and sisters.

We understand each other.

Other groups do this too.

Family groups get together.

People should not be told that they cannot be where they feel safe.

Women get together with women to feel strong.

Alcoholics get support from each other.

People find strength from other people who have been through the same things.

We need to look at ways to help each other be strong.

congregate each others lives but we do consider ourselves as brothers and sisters who understand each others pain and we do get together to mutually support each other so yes in that way, People First is segregated. When you look at it that way, is it any different from the whole community inclusion movement? Are the Family Networks not segregated?

I don't think we will ever end the whole world of segregation. We should not give people a message that you should never be in a place where you feel secure. The women's movement was a segregated movement, the Civil Rights movement in the United States.

If we are going to say to people, you shouldn't get together like this, then I guess we better start saying to the alcoholics, stop going to those meetings where you feel nurtured and supported by people who have suffered the same thing. We better start telling the victims of drunk drivers not to get together so they can talk about their losses with others who have lost someone through the same experiences.

We need to stop being so critical of people who are vulnerable and look at ways that we can strengthen and nurture people. I think that this is the most important thing for all of us to look at right now.

Locked Up- Safe and Sound?

by: Peter Park

My Mom and Dad, if you asked them several years ago, would have told you that their son was safe in the institution that he existed in for 18 years.

Although the so-called staff would have you believe that they never abused you verbally

What then would you call:

“SHUT-UP”

“HEY YOU IDIOT”

“DON’T EVER TELL ANYONE,
ESPECIALLY YOUR PARENTS”

“TAKE THIS MEDICATION”

“YOU ARE STUPID YOU CAN’T
READ”

“YOU CAN’T VOTE”

“YOU ARE NOT COMPETENT”

My Mom and Dad
thought I was safe in the
institution.

The staff would say that
they would never abuse
you.

What do you call:

“SHUT-UP”

“HEY YOU IDIOT”

DON’T EVER TELL
ANYONE, ESPECIALLY
YOUR PARENTS”

TAKE THIS
MEDICATION!”

YOU ARE STUPID. YOU
CAN’T READ”

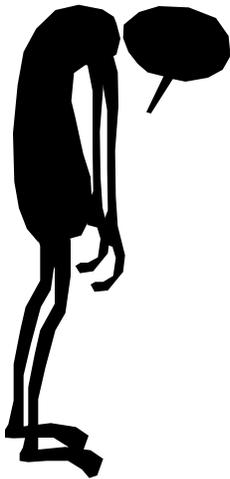
YOU CAN’T VOTE”

People would be locked up for no reason.

I would be locked up for not taking my medication.

and the list goes on...

If you did something that the staff thought was not right, people who were residents were locked up for no reason except that the staff did not like it. People like me were often times locked up for refusing to take medication that had not been tested out to control seizures.



It's enough to make you SAD... and MAD!!!



How You Can Reach Us.

- 1. Call the office -** The office phone number will connect you with Richard Ruston's office.
- 2. Call your Regional Rep. -** The Regional Rep. phone numbers are on the back page. Their job is to help your chapter get the information it needs.
- 3. Mail -** Our mail gets checked weekly. Our address is on the back page.



Update:

Sandra Crockett & AR: Who has the Right to Decide?



Sandra Crockett's son is known today as A.R.

He is almost 26 years old.

A.R. has been labelled "severely mentally disabled".

His mother believes she made the right choice, by having him castrated.

Gordon Fletcher, President of People First of Canada has made the following comments to CBC national TV as a response to the Sandra Crockett documentary which aired last evening:

People First of Canada is a National self-advocate group of members who are labelled as having an intellectual challenge. We are dismayed by the choices made for A.R. that he now has to live with for the rest of his life. People First of Canada wants all individuals to have full citizenship rights.

In the documentary A.R. was portrayed as a child, we assume that this expectation was present in his family life before the documentary. Because of what we saw we would have to assume

Gordon Fletcher is President of People First of Canada.

He wrote about AR and his mother's decision.

"We are upset about the choices made for AR.

We want all people to have full rights.

The TV show made AR look like a child.

It would make people think that he will always be a child.

But he is a 26 year old man.

If we think about him as a man, we would do things in a different way.

AR was denied his rights.

The Law says that people can't make decisions for him, without him.

He had surgery without saying yes to it.

We want people who are thinking about "sterilization", to think about other choices.

Get support from organizations like the Association for Community Living.

AR has to live with the effects of his mother's decision.

Our hearts go out to him.

the expectations were for him to stay as a child and not grow and mature into the 26 year old man he now is. When a person is seen as an adult, other options would be explored.

People First of Canada believes all people with or without a disability have equal rights as citizens. Unfortunately A.R. was denied his citizenship rights and had to undergo a procedure, which went against the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in the "Eve" case.

We want to live as full citizens as outlined in the Charter of Right and Freedoms and upheld in the Supreme Court ruling.

We encourage other persons looking at sterilization to consider other options and seek support from community-based organizations like Associations for Community Living.

We have now seen in the press that A.R. has felt the effects of the surgery in terms health issues, premature aging etc. Our hearts go out to A.R. for the life of hell he must endure because of a misguided desire to keep society safe.

Gordon Fletcher

President, People First of Canada

The Yellow and Black Ribbon Campaign and Your Chapter

Your group can help by making the ribbons and cards. Call the **People First of Ontario** office for a sample ribbon and card. It will cost your group a little bit of money to make the ribbons. One idea might be to sell them as a fund-raiser.

Instructions for local chapters

- * Each group is responsible for purchasing of materials (i.e. card stock, yellow and black ribbons, safety pins)
- * Ribbons should be cut in strips of 20 centimetres; use the ribbons on the sample card as a guide
- * Distribute the Ribbon Card to your local groups and community

Wear the Ribbons at all public meetings and events!!!

People First of Ontario Board 2001-2002

Executive

President-	Richard Ruston (Windsor)	519-974-5855	FAX: 519-974-4157
1st Vice President -	David McKillop (Smiths Falls)		613-284-9974
2nd Vice President-	Elizabeth Sahl (Dundas County)		613-774-6415
Treasurer -	Mary Bourns (Perth)		613-264-8008

Regional Reps.

East -			
Central -	Phyllis Burtch (Welland)		905-714-1091
West -	Barb Fowke (Kitchener)		519-895-1024
North Central -	Dean McKennitt (Owen Sound)		519-376-6854
North -	Nancy Upper (Sault Ste. Marie)		705-253-1885
Member at Large -	Rose Barko (Chatham)		519-354-0830

Advisors

Betsy Kappel (Toronto)	Margaret Presutti (Ajax)
Marg McLean (London)	Jim McPherson (Welland)

**Address: PEOPLE FIRST OF ONTARIO
Suite 2000 Unit 6A-49 The Donway West
TORONTO, ON M3C 2E8**

PHONE: 416-441-6172