



## Group celebrates closure of institutions

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LiveWorkPlay, a local charity that advocates for better living conditions for individuals with intellectual disabilities, stopped at Ottawa-West Nepean MPP Jim Watson's constituency office recently to say thank you.

Keenan Wellar, co-founder of the organization, was joined by president Julie Kingstone as well as Moira Fuenzalida and Linda Gray, residents of newly allocated affordable housing. The group wanted to express their gratitude for the closure of major institutions that once housed people with intellectual disabilities and for Mr. Watson's role in securing funding for new affordable housing units.

"I want to thank him for helping us with a home," Ms. Gray said.

Previously, Ms. Gray had been forced to move back to her parents' home, as her Ontario Disability Support Pension (ODSP) payment was not sufficient to cover the market rent she was being charged.

With the help of the provincial government, however, Ms. Gray and Ms. Fuenzalida now share a home that they can afford.



Moira Fuenzalida and Linda Gray stopped in to thank Ottawa-West Nepean MPP Jim Watson

In addition, Mr. Wellar said the group was acting on behalf of Community Living Ontario, presenting a plaque in recognition of the institution closures. He said Mr. Watson has always been supportive of the organization, dating back to his time in Ottawa's municipal government. "Back when he was mayor, he was the only politician to come out to our grand opening in 1997," said Mr. Wellar.

The closure of institutions has been an ongoing effort for about 20 years, Mr. Wellar explained, adding that the current government deserves recognition for completing the task on March 31, 2009.

LiveWorkPlay received a \$700,000 grant through the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program, to purchase condominiums that are rented at a "100% affordable" rate.

"It's something that people who receive the (ODSP) can afford," Mr. Wellar said.

Meeting with the group, Mr. Watson said he was very pleased to hear the happy ending to the story of these two women. "It's nice to hear the success stories," he told them. "I'm really happy that it's working out for you."