

THE ADVOCATE



Government Affairs Advisory

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Left, Steve Paikin, host of TVO's The Agenda, acts as moderator while mayoral candidates address questions from the floor at the June 29th Candidates Debate on Disability Issues at Innis College at U of T campus.

They're Off and Running to the Polls

This year's municipal elections in Ontario are shaping up to have a little more spice than many in recent memory. Although Election Day is on October 25, in politics, 24 hours is a lifetime during which almost anything can happen.

Let's take a brief look at some of the interesting races:

Former Ontario Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Jim Watson, is running to fill the Mayor's chair in Ottawa. Watson resigned his provincial seat earlier this year.

Down around the Lake in The Hammer is incumbent Hamilton Mayor, Fred Eisenberger, running for re-election – against a slate of



individuals that includes a marijuana advocate, a representative of the Church of the Universe, and an electrician whose last name is...you've got it, "Hamilton".

London also sees a former senior politician on the candidates list. Former Minister of Labour in the Paul Martin government, Joe Fontana, is running for Mayor.

Barrie's election might see another Dunlop in office. Jane Dunlop, wife of Simcoe North MPP, Garfield Dunlop, is running for Council.

Newsworthy Vaughan might just be even more newsworthy by the time October 25 rolls around. The list of candidates already reveals that former MPP, Mario Racco, is challenging incumbent, Linda Jackson, for the Mayor's seat as is Maurizio Bevilacqua.

In Toronto we have a wide open field. Two-term Mayor, David Miller, is not running for re-election. Upwards of 30 candidates are registered to replace him. Among what most consider to be the "front runners" are (alphabetically) Councillor Rob Ford, Councillor Joe Pantalone, Rocco Rossi (former Heart and Stroke executive), former McGuinty government Cabinet Minister George Smitherman who is now supported by Sarah Thompson (publisher of Women's Post). Councillor Georgio Mammoliti withdrew from the Mayoral race on July 5 and is re-registered to run for Council.

Disability Issues Make an Impact

Quick to ensure that accessibility and all issues around the municipal jurisdiction on disability issues are well-placed on the radar, several organizations joined recently to coordinate an all-candidate debate featuring the front-running mayoral candidates.



Mayoralty candidate Rocco Rossi (right) speaks to a member of the audience who is visually impaired.

On June 29, at the University of Toronto, March of Dimes worked with Community Living Toronto, CNIB, Community Living Ontario, Holland Bloorview, Canadian Hearing Society, and Surrey Place Centre to hold 2010's first disability-focused election debate.

The debate was moderated by TVO's Steve Paikin, and was attended by a capacity crowd of roughly 300 people. Front-runners at the time, Rob Ford, Georgio Mammoliti, Joe Pantalone, Rocco Rossi, George Smitherman and Sarah Thompson answered six pre-screened questions submitted by the coordinating organizations and close to one hour of Q&A from questions from the floor.



Local media, including CBC Radio and CTV, delivered evening coverage of the debate. As well, the entire debate was filmed and is available for viewing in individual segments at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHzqnoANSc>.

This was one of the few instances in which candidates in Canada's biggest city spent

an evening comparing commitments and solutions to make Toronto accessible to people with disabilities in every possible way.

Special thanks to Karen Bell at Community Living Toronto for her work as Team Captain for this initiative.

YOU Have the **Ability** to Make Disability an Issue

Every municipality in Ontario, big and small, is run by an elected body of representatives. Municipalities take care of things like garbage pick-up, road maintenance, local public transit, emergency services, schools, building permits, local parks and recreation, taxis, and hydro and water services. In other words, on a day-to-day basis, your local government has the greatest immediate impact on your life – including accessibility. Yet, most people don't bother to vote in their municipal elections. In fact, it's usually fewer than 30% who do!

Here are a few things you can do to help make a difference in putting disability issues on the radar – and, more importantly, getting a committed agenda from those who want your vote.

- Host an all-candidate meeting. Seek others in your community to help partner with you, organizations like

schools, universities and colleges, churches, Business Improvement Area boards, Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade, service groups, and local chapters of charitable organizations.

- Start an online blog or website to discuss issues and compare platforms.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. The more that other people read about disability, the more that disability becomes everyone's issue.
- Contact the candidates in your municipality and ask each of them specific questions about disability issues in your community. Try to place your questions in a manageable framework. For example, instead of asking, "How would you make

the community centre accessible?” consider asking “What steps would you take in your first six months of being in office to ensure that the community centre is accessible to people with disabilities?”

- Ask three people you know to consider disability issues and accessibility when they cast their vote.
- Most importantly, make sure you vote on October 25.

EDITORIAL

By Tina Marano

Disability community engages Toronto mayoralty candidates



Tina Marano

A Mayoral debate of six candidates of Rob Ford, Georgio Mamoliti, Joe Pantalone, Rocco Rossi, George Smitherman and Sarah Thomson was held at Innis College at the University of Toronto on June 29, 2010. The

theme was disability issues in the city. Steve Paikin, the host of a television show “The Agenda with Steve Paikin”, was the mediator. It was a two-hour talk on the candidate’s opinions of what they would do to improve conditions for the disability community as the new Mayor.

At the beginning, the meeting was a success. The candidates answered the first six (6) questions from different organizations before the audience had an opportunity to ask their own questions. It was unfortunate that there were so many people who were unable to ask questions, even though they wanted their concerns to be heard. At the middle of the second half of the meeting, I asked the this question: Automated called stops on the public transit are an excellent example of how the city has used technology to improve

the rider experience for both customers with vision loss and also the general population. What else would you do to make the transit system more accessible to Toronto’s people with disabilities?

This was my first mayoral debate, and while I was very honoured and excited to be there, I was expecting more direct and detailed answers to my question. It felt like the question was so simple, yet none of the candidates were able to answer in a satisfactory manner. Perhaps the question was not very clear to them, maybe they did not understand it, or maybe they did not give any thought to this question. However, the result was very frustrating and disappointing. My hope was to listen precisely and specifically as to how they would make the transit more accessible. I wanted to find out which candidate was going to invest resources into the transit system’s accessibility well before the 2025 AODA deadline.

The candidate that answered the question closest to what I had in mind was Georgio Mammoliti. His vision was to install more technologies in our city saying there was no reason why new technologies should



not be in place. Aside from what he said during the debate, Mammoliti is a member of the New Democratic Party and has served in both municipal and provincial levels of government. Part of his platform was to reduce government spending so that this money could be divided up among community groups, such as persons with disabilities. However, since Georgio Mammoliti has decided to quit the mayoral race, the next best answer to the question was from



Rob Ford and Georgio Mammoliti listen and respond.

George Smitherman, who was in favour of installing braille signs, and felt that Wheeltrans can make use of new technologies where services could be better used and become more reliable and punctual. I like George Smitherman's idea incorporating terminology that the disabled community would use such as braille signs, Wheeltrans, etc. To me this indicated he has some knowledge of the difficulties people with disabilities face.

On the other hand, Rocco Rossi has had some experience in the disability field as he indicated he has a brother who has an intellectual disability and has first-hand

knowledge of all the issues that his brother faces in his life. Rossi supports the idea that public and private sectors can work together to provide better services for the citizens of Toronto. It remains to be seen as to whether or not this would benefit the community of persons with disabilities.



Tina Marano poses question from the audience to all candidates.

At the end of the debate, I felt that George Smitherman and Rocco Rossi both had the most knowledge of our community and both understood the needs of persons with disabilities. This was a new experience for me, and I found it frustrating that politicians tend to attack each others' platforms instead of answering the question at hand. At this time it is still difficult to make effective decisions on which candidate to vote for to be our next mayor. Who do you think?

Tina Marano is a Ryerson field placement student working at Government Relations and Advocacy at March of Dimes.



Caregivers Roundtable in Toronto

Federal MPs, Dr. Carolyn Bennett, who is Liberal Health Critic, and Dr. Kirsty Duncan, Liberal Public Health Critic, invited members of agencies serving people with disabilities to meet for a roundtable on July 28th to discuss the crucial issue of caregiving in Canada.

The majority of attendees were also members of the Ontario Caregiver Coalition (OCC). Caregiving is part of the Liberal Party's current concerns. During his travels on the Liberal Express, a cross-country summer tour initiative, Liberal leader, Michael Ignatieff said,



"We want our seniors to have the option of receiving care in the dignity of their own homes instead of in the hospital. Home care is less costly to the taxpayer, and if we can ease the financial hardship on families, it's a net benefit to our economy."

Not only seniors benefit from caregiving in the home. Many people with a variety of disabilities and special needs also depend on family and friends to take care of them.

Mr. Ignatieff went on to say, "Organizations like the Canadian Cancer Society, MS Society, Alzheimer Society of Canada, and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada have called for greater leadership to support family caregivers and home care. Measures they recommend include improving the Compassionate Care Benefit, improved tax benefits for caregivers, more training of homecare professionals, support to help renovate homes, and programs to provide respite for family members."

These measures matched the avenues suggested by Ms. Bennett and Ms. Duncan in their opening remarks. However, they were also very interested in expanding on these ideas and finding out more about specific issues facing agencies and individuals who face caregiving challenges every day.

There will be a renegotiation of the federal-provincial-territorial health accord in 2014,

outlining the future of Canadian health care. And now is the time when important issues such as caregiving should receive careful attention by politicians and governments so it is seen as a growing issue that needs legislation, tax initiatives and funding.

Ideas outlined by Ms. Bennett included: setting a quality standard and supplying appropriate care; creating choices for persons needing care and for their caregivers, i.e. family directed care; creating public awareness programs about caregiving, its various roles, the diversity of patients as well as the diversity of caregivers (in some cases, children).

Participants at the roundtable had a wide range of hopes for caregiving in Canada. Most agreed that respite care was near the top of the list. "Hands-on relief both inside and outside the home" is sometimes desperately needed by primary caregivers. It was suggested new government funding could be allotted and used at the caregiver's discretion for respite services and other essentials. Topping up the Guaranteed Income Supplement specifically for caregivers could be one way of delivering funding.



Public awareness education and caregiver training were seen as important elements in understanding and effectively treating those who need care. The federal government's Health Canada web site was seen as a vehicle for education and caregiver training. It could list agency sites for the various diseases and conditions, as well as provide resources on burnout, grief and loss and respite care, etc. The Health Canada site could become a virtual clearing house where anyone signing up for a caregiver tax credit would automatically get a brochure and overview information.

March of Dimes Canada stated its support for a nationally coordinated caregiver policy and offered its services in creating a caregiver framework, including the aspects of health, housing and income support.



Increased accessibility a positive for Ontario's economy, says U of T study

Provides both economic opportunity and benefits

By Ken McGuffin

Improving accessibility and inclusivity, as mandated by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act should be beneficial to the financial health of the province, says a new study from the Rotman School of Management.

In 2005, the Ontario Legislature passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act to improve accessibility across the province. The disability community saw the

legislation as a milestone in the government's commitment to creating a level playing field for all Ontarians. But many businesses and municipalities across the province responded with skepticism, believing the act would result in increased costs and result in few benefits.

However, the new study by the Martin Prosperity Institute at the Rotman School of Management, the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity and the



Increasing the number of jobs for people with disabilities has significant potential for raising employment income of up to \$4.8 billion per year.

Adaptive Technology Resource Centre, titled *Releasing Constraints: Projecting the Economic Impacts of Increased Accessibility in Ontario*, finds that improving inclusivity and accessibility in Ontario provides both economic opportunity and benefits, which could increase the size of the provincial economy by almost \$5 billion.

The need to improve accessibility is becoming more pronounced in Ontario as the population ages and the labour force shrinks. Between 2001 and 2006, the percentage of Ontarians with a disability grew from 13.5 per cent to 15.4 per cent, and more than half of this increase is directly attributable to the aging population. Disability tends to increase with age, with the highest incidence occurring among individuals 45 and older.

As Ontario's economy comes out of recession, the demand for educated and skilled workers will increase. The looming labour shortage from retirements in Ontario, with a predicted shortage of over one million workers by the year 2030, is adding additional pressure to

ensure that skilled workers will be available to meet this demand. Improving the accessibility of education for individuals with a disability, and improving their skills to meet the demands of the emerging knowledge economy, can help to overcome part of this labour shortage, say the report's authors, **Kevin Stolarick** of the Martin Prosperity Institute, **Alison Kemper**, a PhD student at the Rotman School, **Jutta Treviranus** of the Adaptive Technology Resource Centre and **James Milway** of The Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity.

Currently, persons with disabilities tend to have lower labour force participation rates than persons without a disability. In addition, the average employment income for persons 15 years of age and older with disabilities is lower than persons without disabilities and has declined between 2001 and 2006.

The report finds that the participation rate of individuals with a disability could increase anywhere from between two per cent to 15 per cent, thanks to improvements in accessibility. The report also finds that the increased productivity could increase the province's per capita GDP anywhere from \$49 to \$653 as a result of these changes. In fact, increasing employment among individuals with a disability could result in a total increase in employment income of up to \$4.8 billion per year.

The complete report is online at <http://martinprosperity.org/research-and-publications/publication/releasing-constraints>



Government Relations Update: Emergency Preparedness and the AODA's Customer Service Standard

Inclusive Emergency Preparedness Canada is already making an impact. Requests are coming in for the training materials that we have been developing and testing – even before final completion.

Inclusive Emergency Preparedness Canada (IEPC) is a collaboration of March of Dimes Canada, Canadian Red Cross and the Inclusive Preparedness Center (Washington, D.C.).

IEPC has developed training materials for emergency reception centres, shelter staff and volunteers on applying the AODA's Customer Service Standard. The materials include both advance preparedness and Just-In-Time training tools for shelter staff and volunteers to help them provide customer-friendly and disability appropriate assistance to people with disabilities in the event of an emergency or disaster.

We recently completed successful field testing of the training materials in Kingston and Kapuskasing to receive feedback based on local emergency experiences from a southern and northern perspective. The workshops held in each community were attended by local emergency and other municipal staff, partner organizations, and elected officials such as the Mayors of Kingston and Kapuskasing

as well as the local Member of Provincial Parliament, John Gerreston.

All feedback from the two field tests were incorporated into both the French and English training materials. Final copies are expected by the end of August with an official release in late summer or early fall with our project partners, including representatives from the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario and the Minister of Community and Social Services.

IEPC is one of this year's featured projects funded through the EnAbling Change partnership program of the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario.

Read more information about this and other initiatives in The Advocate at www.marchofdimes/advocacy.

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March of Dimes speaks out on long-form census survey

Following is a letter from March of Dimes President and CEO, Andria Spindel, to the federal Minister of Industry, Tony Clement, who is responsible for the recommendation to replace the long-form census survey with a voluntary household survey in the next Canadian census scheduled for 2011.

This issue has caused great controversy and debate since it was introduced in many quarters, including disability communities.

July 21, 2010

*Honourable Tony Clement, PC, MP
Minister of Industry
235 Queen Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0H5*



Dear Minister Clement:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of March of Dimes, I am writing to convey our serious concern over your government's decision to replace the long-form census survey with a voluntary household survey.

Canada has many public policy challenges, notably the development of long-term solutions around aging, the increasing incidence of disability, caregiving, accessibility, and supportive housing, to name a few.

Without detailed information that is commonly accepted and universally regarded as reliable and valid, the quality of the public policy options we devise is seriously diminished. In effect, your government's measure will result in an added challenge imposed on a sector that is already working within significant constraints for resources.

March of Dimes is in the business of improving the lives and livelihoods of Canadians with disabilities – upwards of 40,000 households in Ontario alone – and we have survived for nearly 60 years by knowing our consumer base and keeping abreast of emerging trends. Your decision to eliminate the long-form census survey and the representative data it provides puts into question how we gather the data that informs our corporate decisions, and ultimately the livelihoods of the people we serve.

We urge you to immediately reconsider your decision to eliminate the long-form census survey, as the impact of this decision on Canada's non-profit and charitable sector may very well have unintended consequences on the quality and caliber of Canada's public policy foundation.

I would be delighted to meet with you or your colleagues should you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,
Andria Spindel
President and Chief Executive Officer