

THE ADVOCATE



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Nova Scotia Opposition Leader, Stephen McNeil, with Zachary Kalpakchiev and his mother, Rebecca, during the Conductive Education meet and greet.

Another Great Day for Conductive Education!

**Growing and Expanding:
March of Dimes in the Nova Scotia Legislature**

November 2, 2010

As part of our Conductive Education advocacy and government relations in Nova Scotia, we recently worked through the offices of each MLA (52) to identify appropriate partnerships to promote and raise awareness of March of Dimes' Conductive Education program in the province of Nova Scotia.

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Clarrie MacKinnon, MLA (Pictou East) with Rebecca Kalpakachiev and son, Zachary.



Fifty per cent of Nova Scotia's MLAs attended the Conductive Education presentation. The applause reflected their enthusiasm for the program.



Leonard Preya, MLA (Halifax Citadel - Sable Island) with Jen Powley.



Ross Landry, MLA (Pictou Centre), Beth Brydon (right), with May Banting.



Vicki Conrad, MLA (Queens) and Leonard Preya with Jen Powley.



Hon Wayne Gaudet, host and MLA, (Clare) and Opposition Critic for Disabled Persons Commission, introduces audience to Conductive Education.



As a result, November 2nd became March of Dimes Conductive Education Awareness Day at Province House in Halifax. A reception and celebration of Conductive Education – including the Rock for Dimes event held the previous Friday in Halifax – was hosted by Hon. Wayne Gaudet, MLA and Opposition Critic for the Disabled Persons Commission. Twenty-seven MLAs from all parties (which represents roughly half of Nova Scotia's elected representation) attended or participated in the event, held in the historic Red Chamber at Province House, which featured demonstrations and a learning session coordinated by Beth Brydon of our Conductive Education office in Halifax.

“Here is a fantastic March of Dimes program delivered in Nova Scotia, for Nova Scotians with disabilities, and supported by local businesses. It delivers results and helps people with disabilities achieve greater independence. It is time to recognize

this program, and we call on the Government to position Conductive Education within the public policy fabric of Nova Scotia,” stated Mr. Gaudet.

Even before everyone had exited the Red Chamber, MLAs – particularly Opposition Leader Stephen McNeil – had posted photos and public information both on his Party's website and their Facebook pages.

The reception was immediately followed by something even more significant: the first time that March of Dimes was recognized and entered into the permanent legislative record of Nova Scotia. Hon. Stephen McNeil, Leader of the Opposition, and Health Critic Diana Whalen, delivered resolutions in the House of Assembly “recognizing the “immense benefit” of March of Dimes and Conductive Education in Nova Scotia. Perhaps equally moving was the recognition by all MLAs of the Conductive Education participants in attendance in the Visitor's Gallery. ■



HANSARD 10-36
DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS
Speaker: Honourable Charlie Parker

Sixty-first General Assembly – Second Session
2pm

NOTICES OF MOTION

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Do you mind if I do an introduction before I do my resolution?

MR. SPEAKER: Certainly.

MR. MCNEIL: I'd like to draw the attention of the House to the east gallery where we have with us today Beth Brydon, a conductor with the March of

Dimes; Mhari Watson, who is a senior conductor with the March of Dimes; and Donna Mackay, who is an associate director with the March of Dimes. In your gallery, Mr. Speaker, we have Sonja Weilgart, who has benefited from conductive education that has been supported by the March of Dimes. I would ask the House to give them a warm welcome, and also to Sonja, who is going to be 16 on Sunday, acknowledge an early birthday. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 1824

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas, established in 1951, the March of Dimes became a household name for its work in eliminating polio and then expanding its mission to serve individuals with physical disabilities who require



community supports and have limited financial resources; and

Whereas the March of Dimes provided a continuum of services for children, youth, and adults regardless of the nature of their physical disability; and

Whereas today all MLAs were invited to see the benefits of conductive education, an innovative learning system that merges education and rehabilitation to help people of all ages with neurological conditions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House extend our appreciation to the March of Dimes for their demonstration today in the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, which serves to highlight the immense benefits of this program to persons with physical disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

RESOLUTION NO. 1827

MS. DIANA WHALEN: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas the March of Dimes Conductive Education Program offers independence, life skills and hope to Nova Scotians with physical disabilities; and

Whereas since 2006 the Conductive Education Program has helped children and adults with neuro-motor disabilities, with programs offered in Halifax, Antigonish and the Annapolis Valley, to improve their mobility, independence and self confidence; and

Whereas today, Beth Brydon, a March of Dimes conductor, along with Sonja Weilgard, a 15-year old resident of Halifax, demonstrated the program and highlighted the difference conductive education makes in the lives of individuals living with cerebral palsy;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House extend our appreciation to Beth Brydon and Sonja Weilgard for joining us here in the legislature today to highlight the benefits of this innovative program and wish the conductors and the participants in Nova Scotia all the best as they continue to offer hope and independence to those with neuro-motor disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.



How We Brought the Election to You

As part of March of Dimes advocacy in this year's municipal election, we hosted a three-part series entitled, **"Bringing the Election to YOU"**.

The series commenced with a Lunch-and-Learn on September 27th, entitled "Your Vote Counts". We were honoured to have leading expert on local government, Dr. Neil Thomlinson of Ryerson University, deliver a seminar on the machinery of local government, municipal politics and the importance of voting. Several staff and Literacy Options students attended the session.

Part Two of the series, held on September 30, 2010 featured an Accessible Voting Demonstration. City of Toronto Election Services offered interactive demonstrations at 10 Overlea Boulevard of the new accessible voting terminals. This new technology assists people with disabilities to vote privately and independently. Many members of the audience were able to test the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT) during this session. Joanne Wheatley, Toronto Elections Outreach Coordinator, came to demonstrate the new voting equipment whose purpose is to allow people with



March of Dimes' offices offered an accessible voting station for the voters of Ward 26 (Don Valley West) on Toronto's election day: October 25, 2010.

varying disabilities the opportunity to vote privately and independently. (See Tina Marano's personal experience with the Voter Assist Terminal on page 5.

The 2010 election series wrapped up on October 25th, with March of Dimes' Head Office serving as a voting location on Election Day in Toronto. Eligible voters residing in Ward 26 (Don Valley West) – Poll 35 came through 10 Overlea from 10am to 8pm that day, including hundreds who delighted in learning about March of Dimes through our photo displays in hallways. Over 500 voters came to Polling Station 35 that day. The Voter Assist Terminal for Ward 26 was also located at Polling Station 35. March of Dimes was the only fully accessible voting poll in Ward 26, and was selected as such by City officials due to the accessibility of our building and our work with the City on advancing accessibility issues.





Literacy Options student Gabriel Ly learns how to use the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT) controls.



Dr. Neil Thomlinson, Chair and Associate Professor, Department of Politics and Public Administration, Ryerson University, discusses the importance of voting with Literacy Options students.



Joanne Wheatley, demonstrates the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT) to people with disabilities.



Joanne Wheatley, Outreach Coordinator at Toronto Elections, and Jennifer Stanley, Education Assistant, show student how to use the VAT controls.



Literacy Options students participate in a Q&A.



POST-ELECTION REFLECTIONS

Voting Independently for the First Time... From Tina's Diary



Tina Marano is a Ryerson 4th year Social Work field placement student working with Government Relations and Advocacy at March of Dimes. She is blind and hearing impaired.

My original plan was to vote in the Municipal Election on October 25 and to try the new accessible voting machines specifically designed for people with disabilities. Officially the machines are known as Voter Assist Terminals (VATs). Prior to this date, I did extensive research on what candidates were running for city councillor in my area, Ward 23. My neighbourhood encompasses Willowdale, between Steeles Avenue, and Highway 401, from Bathurst Street to Bayview Avenue.

However, instead of voting on Election Day, I decided to go to the advance polling station in my ward, situated at the North York Public Library. I took that opportunity to walk as it was a beautiful, sunny day. When I arrived with my intervenor (an assistant), a staff member at the front desk told me they had a Voter Assist Terminal available for me at this location to use that day. I could not hold my curiosity any longer because I was determined to examine how the new accessible voting machines worked.



Using the VAT, I challenged myself to vote independently for the first time. My experience was unpleasant because there were so many barriers and obstacles that got in my way. The staff at the advance polling station,

who were responsible for ensuring that the voting machines were functioning as they should be, did not demonstrate the important buttons I needed to use during the voting procedure. I was told that the instructions should explain everything in more detail.

First, I noticed that the names of the candidates who dropped out of the mayoral race were still on the ballot. This was both confusing and took a lot of my time. Although I decided to use audio (voice recognition only), this process made it very difficult to navigate through the instructions. While my privacy was respected, the instructions started to be read before I even put on the headsets. In fact, the headsets were not compatible to my hearing aid. Needless to say, I got lost trying to follow the instructions due to my hearing impairment. It would have been helpful if the VATs had the option for controlling playback speed and stopping and starting the instructions as necessary. Also, a Braille copy of the instructions would have been helpful to visually impaired voters.

Another helpful alternative would have been a Braille copy of the lists of candidates, city councillors, and school board trustees running in the area. The voting machines should have an the option of speech recognition. For example, some individuals with a hearing impairment may hear better with a male voice, while others may hear well with a female voice. Even with the struggles I had in familiarizing myself with the new technologies, I managed to vote independently. More work still needs to be done to streamline the process. For instance, my intervenor had to swear under oath to confirm to the electoral staff that my home address was accurate. It would have saved everyone some trouble if they eliminated that in the future. I showed them my proper identification and they saw I came with an intervenor, so I believe the swearing under oath was unnecessary. For future elections, it would be helpful to attach an electronic strip of Braille on the VAT's display for people like me. However, despite the improvements needed, I would like to acknowledge and commend the City of Toronto for investing resources in order to ensure that people with disabilities can be integrated into our society. Voting is a right for all citizens. ■

What Toronto Mayor Rob Ford had to say about disability issues

So what does the election of Rob Ford mean for accessibility issues in Canada's largest city? Mr. Ford made comments and recommendations on the following topics at two of the candidates' public debates on disability issues. Here is what he said about:

Transit

There are 21,000 city staffers who get free TTC Metro Passes. This needs to be stopped. The money saved could be used to help subsidize people with disabilities who could use financial support for transportation needs.

Employment

The City of Toronto needs to increase the number of jobs awarded to people with all types of disabilities and we need to also encourage employers to hire more people with disabilities by providing incentives. In my private sector business, I employ 300 people. Thirty to forty, (approximately 10 to 12 per cent) are people with disabilities.

Renovated buildings

I am 100 per cent angry about all the renovated buildings that should be accessible and are not. This is where we should be spending the money (to help people with disabilities), not squandering our resources (as City Hall is now doing).

City Hall's Disability Issues Committee

Membership on the Committee should be by way of a nominating committee or a civic appointments committee, not by politicians. Members should be appointed by an independent body and include people who know the issues.



Safe and Affordable Housing

There are 70,000 people on waiting lists to get into housing. Why not use the available funding and move people into private residences? There are many private rentals available. Landlords are offering free parking, one month free rent and other incentives in order to have these units occupied. We could make sure these would be accessible to the needs of the person.

Parks and Recreation

This area should be under review. People with disabilities need to have equal access to parks and recreation facilities in their own neighbourhoods. The parties involved need to meet with people with disabilities to find out what needs to be done. Public consultation is essential.

General Statements

I run a successful company with 300 employees. I understand how to create jobs. I know the value of hard-earned tax dollars. I believe in customer service. If you make a personal call to my office I will return your call. I would do everything possible to make sure buildings are accessible. You're the boss. If you make an e-mail request to my office, you will get a response within 2 days. ■

Possible Caregiver Solutions

By Tina Marano

According to The Family Caregiver web site www.thefamilycaregiver.com, there are approximately 7 million family caregivers in Canada who are currently caring for family members who are ill and in need of assistance for the duration of their illness. Some may recover, but the majority will not. Statistics show there are a growing number of people who are aging quickly in Canada. In fact, according to Statistics Canada, a record one in every seven Canadian citizens is over the age of 65 and as a result, there will be more caregivers needed to support these individuals and their family members.

The Federal Employment Insurance Act (found online at http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/ei/types/compassionate_care.shtml) says that people who are employed, but need to stay at home to care for their family members who have a serious illness are only given six weeks' paid leave of absence from their jobs. While doing my research on this sensitive topic, I discovered that there is an almost equal number of males versus females staying home to provide informal care for their loved ones.

In my personal experience I have a grandmother who is 94 years old and currently living at her own home. She receives homecare from caregivers living outside of her home in addition to the help provided to her by



her family. My dad does most things such as groceries, banking and taking her to her doctor's appointments. However, he is unable to assist with personal hygiene such as bathing, dressing, etc.

There are many partial solutions that could address the caregiver situation. For example, the Liberal party at the federal level has indicated they will bring forward a generous pledge of \$1.5 billion to Canadian caregivers on their party platform, when a federal election is called. This could positively affect those who have to stay at home to look after sick family members. Along with this package, the Liberal party is saying Canadian caregivers will be eligible to remain at home for six months to care for a family member. Not only does this allow family members to spend more time with a loved one who is severely ill without having to worry about finances, this could also mean more financial aid will be available to bring in formal caregivers for those who need it but cannot necessarily afford it. ■



Anniversary • Anniversaire
1951 - 2011

One Stop: Opportunities for Independence
Guichet unique : un monde de possibilités d'autonomie

Since 1951, March of Dimes has been on the forefront of the disability movement, dedicated to helping Canadians with disabilities lead more independent and empowered lives.

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