

# THE ADVOCATE



## Government Affairs Advisory

A Publication of March of Dimes Canada

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## MARCH OF DIMES CANADA REACHES ACROSS THE NATION AND AROUND THE WORLD

**MP ROB OLIPHANT RISES IN THE HOUSE OF  
COMMONS TO ENDORSE THE CONDUCTIVE  
EDUCATION® PROGRAM**

**Thursday 17 February, 2011**



*Below is an excerpt taken from  
Conductive World, a U.K. web  
site managed by Andrew Sutton,  
that highlights international  
developments in Conductive  
Education.*

**Rob Oliphant represents  
Don Valley West, ON**

“Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today to commend March of Dimes Canada and recognize next Thursday, February 24, as March of Dimes Conductive Education Day.

March of Dimes, headquartered in Don Valley West, has been delivering programs and services to Canadians with disabilities since 1951. This is its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of working to improve the lives and livelihoods of Canadians with disabilities, advancing accessibility and creating a society inclusive of people with disabilities.

Conductive education is an innovative learning system that maximizes the independence and mobility of children and adults with neurological motor disorders like cerebral palsy, Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis and those who have had a stroke or brain injury. The conductive education program has the potential to make a life-changing impact on the mobility and independence of close to nine million people in North America.

I ask all members to please join me in congratulating March of Dimes Canada and recognizing and supporting the conductive education program, a cornerstone of our ongoing efforts in Canada to achieve full inclusion of Canadians with disabilities."

<http://openparliament.ca/hansards/2352/97/>

*The kudos continued with Sutton concluding with this statement:*

## Great awareness

"Great wording, that hits just the right buttons: '...inclusive... learning system... potential ... life-changing...!' You can't get much more psycho-social than that. Such members' statements are allowed just one minute. Try to do better, it's a good exercise. Congratulations, March of Dimes Canada Congratulations and thanks, Mr. Oliphant." ■



Canadian Coat of Arms

## THE HILL TIMES

**Reprinted from *The Hill Times*, Canada's premier political newspaper straight from Parliament Hill.**

### March of Dimes Canada: helping people with disabilities learn their way to independence

*In Canada, conductive education is not yet formalized into our rehabilitation and educational systems as it is in other countries. In fact, relatively few policy makers and legislators in Canada are even aware of conductive education, let alone the immense benefits the program delivers.*

By LIBERAL MP ROB OLIPHANT

Published February 28, 2011

Do you have a friend, work colleague or family member who lives with cerebral palsy, Parkinson's, or multiple sclerosis? Do you know someone who has had a stroke or brain injury? Odds are you do.

And if your answer is "yes," you are in common company. Statistics on such incidence of disability inform us that at least 17 per cent of Canada's population has a disability. And that number is projected to grow as our population ages. Inclusion and accessibility will necessarily press on the minds of Canada's legislators as never before. Increasingly, disability issues will be everybody's business.

Increasingly, the work of Parliament will be measured by how compassionate, accessible and inclusive Canada becomes. Our social and economic viability will depend on how well we integrate those with disabilities into the main stream of life.

*continued on page 3...*



Civil society is well ahead of Parliament in leading the way on disability issues.

Directly across the street from my constituency office in Don Valley West, Ont., is the national head office of March of Dimes Canada. Here is an organization that has been delivering programs and services to Canadians with disabilities from coast to coast since 1951, having originated through the volunteer efforts of mothers raising funds to find a cure for polio. This year, in fact, represents the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this very special organization dedicated to improving the lives and livelihoods of Canadians with disabilities.

One of those programs not only helps increase mobility and achieves greater inclusion, it offers hope to the individual, the family and community, and colleagues in the workplace. This program is known as conductive education.

Developed over 60 years ago in Hungary by Dr. András Peto, conductive education (CE) maximizes the independence and mobility of children and adults with neurological motor disorders like cerebral palsy, Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis, or those who have had a stroke or brain injury.

Conductive education takes advantage of the brain's neuroplasticity; the lifelong ability of the brain to reorganize neuro-pathways based on new experiences. So no matter how severe the disability, people can learn and improve when they are motivated. Conductive Education helps individuals learn their way to independence.

Jennifer Zubko lives with cerebral palsy in London, Ont. According to Zubko, "conductive education has not only given me freedom from my wheelchair. It has made me realize that dreams do come true if you work diligently to attain them."

Justin Bower is a young boy with CP who lives in Nova Scotia. The mobility restrictions resulting from CP can be profound. Bower's mother, Shannon, describes the effects of conductive education on her son in the

following way: "What you have done for our son in just two short weeks is nothing short of miraculous. I'm still in shock that you have been able to transform him this much!"

And Michelle Davies of Etobicoke, Ont., mother of Kalea, who is also a participant in conductive education, says that she "cannot imagine where Kalea would be today without the support of the conductors who work with our daughter."

Conductive education has the potential to make a significant, life-changing impact on the mobility and independence of close to nine million children and adults in Canada and the United States. Millions more will also indirectly benefit—spouses, parents and caregivers—by having their loved ones become more independent, motivated and self-sufficient.

With increased independence, motivation and self-sufficiency comes greater inclusion and a more accessible society for everyone.

Conductive education is widely accepted and practised with proven success in Europe. Two university programs there graduate qualified conductors/teachers. It operates a professional network and is integrated into the community rehabilitation and educational systems in Hungary, Israel, Germany, and Great Britain, to name a few.

In Canada, conductive education is not yet formalized into our rehabilitation and educational systems as it is in other countries. In fact, relatively few policy makers and legislators in Canada are even aware of conductive education, let alone the immense benefits the program delivers.

We need greater awareness, understanding and recognition of programs like conductive education. With the incidence of disability and aging as high as it is—and it is growing—part of Canada's vision for inclusion must include March of Dimes' Conductive Education Program.



I will be rising in the House of Commons on Thursday, Feb. 17 during the Statements by Members, encouraging all MPs from all parties to join with me in recognizing, celebrating and supporting both the wonderful work of March of Dimes Canada and its conductive education.

I encourage all of you to learn more about March of Dimes' Conductive Education Day by visiting [www.marchofdimes.ca](http://www.marchofdimes.ca). ■

*Liberal MP Rob Oliphant represents Don Valley West, Ont.*



*Conductive Education in practice*

## “Nature Unleashed” raises the disability question

Earthquakes. Volcanoes. Hurricanes. Tornadoes. What do they all have in common? Depending on the intensity, they are all earth-shattering events and, depending on where they occur, they can have life-shattering consequences for those of us who are close by. These phenomena are the spectacular results of the forces that drive our evolving planet.

Nature Unleashed: Inside Natural Disasters, the Ontario Science Centre's (OSC) latest temporary exhibition reveals the dynamic relationship we have with the Earth by exploring the science behind these cataclysmic forces. By examining the science, people can gain a better understanding of natural disasters in all parts the world and how we can better prepare for them, and in some cases minimize, the impact of nature's fury.

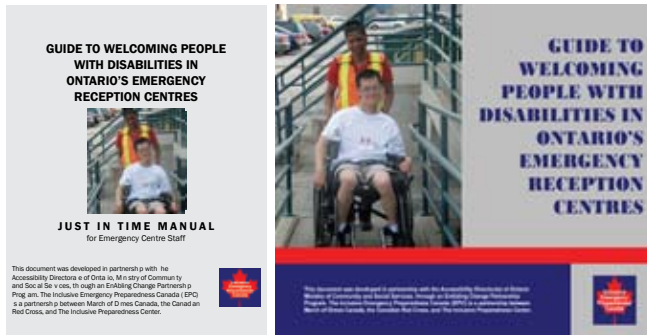
A recent poll conducted on behalf of the OSC indicated that one-third of Canadians feel they don't know what supplies they would need to get through an emergency. One-fifth indicated they would not have adequate supplies to get them through the recommended 72 hours. These numbers need to improve.

The Hon. Michael Chan, Minister of Tourism and Culture, attended the exhibit launch on Feb. 9<sup>th</sup>. He commended the OSC as a world-class attraction bringing “science to life” and enriching the knowledge and lives of over 1 million annual visitors.

A class of Grade 5 students from Grenoble Public School attended the launch, full of enthusiasm and questions, especially for Mark Robinson, “storm chaser.” Mark has witnessed 11 hurricanes, including Katrina and Ike, has been chased down roads by tornadoes, been pounded by hail the size of baseballs, nearly struck by lightning, knocked over by waves and nearly frozen by winter storms. He had dramatic videos of Katrina and several tornadoes - up close.

Chris Kiah, President and CEO of Allstate Insurance Company of Canada and sponsor of the exhibit's national tour, remarked, “Helping people prepare for and recover from natural disasters is a huge part of our business.”

We hope that a part of that preparation and recovery includes effective management of the special needs of people with disabilities. The scale of natural disasters can be overwhelming; therefore, careful planning of evacuation procedures has to be taken into account. What will people with various types of disabilities need to survive – in the short term, and in the recovery period?



*Inclusive Emergency Preparedness Canada guides*

This is where March of Dimes and two other agencies, Canadian Red Cross and the Inclusive Preparedness Centre, Washington, D.C., come onto the scene. The partnership has developed important guidelines for Emergency Reception Centres and for all those involved in caring for people with disabilities during a disaster or emergency. The project, Inclusive Emergency Preparedness Canada, has delivered three manuals for training people to be able to deal with special needs survivors, including the ever-increasing number of disabled seniors. These documents have been very well received by the emergency management sector. Distributed throughout Ontario, the March of Dimes and its two partners are working to give this project a national scope. It is the first of its kind to be developed.

When we consider natural disasters close to home, there are two that stand out. On Oct. 15, 1954,

Southern Ontario was struck by two storms, a rainstorm from the west and Hurricane Hazel from the east. The result – 210 mm of rainfall from the hurricane flowed directly into the river systems creating massive flooding, the worst in Toronto on record. On May 31, 1985, a tornado crashed through the suburbs of Barrie, Ont., destroying over 300 homes. Weather conditions produced 13 confirmed tornadoes throughout Southern Ontario that evening. And did you know tornadoes occur most often during evening rush hour, between 3:00 and 7:00 p.m.?

“Nature Unleashed” is a fascinating, large-scale exhibit. Really worth a visit. ■



## Are we truly seeing the barriers?

Tina Marano – Intern Student, Government Relations & Advocacy

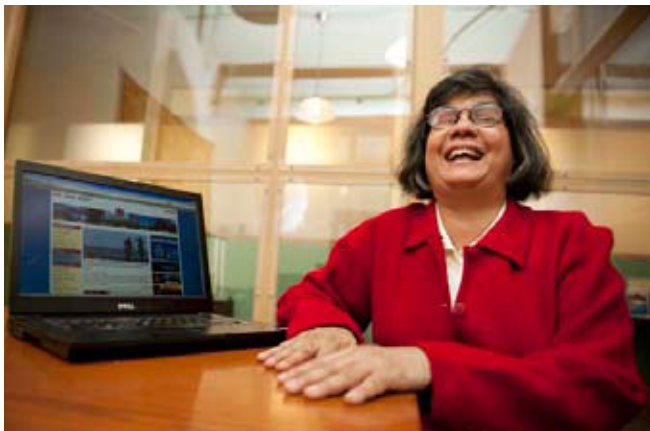


Imagine you are unable to see; imagine you are trying to access information on the internet with the use of JAWS (Job Access with Speech) speech synthesizer. The JAWS speech synthesizer is a screen reader, which is a software program for the visually impaired that is produced by the blind and low vision group at Freedom Scientific of St. Petersburg, Florida, USA. It accomplishes this by providing the user with access to the information displayed on the screen.



Over the years when the world of the Internet became more popular, there have been rapid changes to many applications like PDF files or visual character images. A PDF file is an Adobe portable document format, which secures documents from anyone changing its context. Since these applications have become so popular in the internet for most populations, people with disabilities (particularly for JAWS users) have been forgotten. It made it much more challenging for blind or vision impaired users to manoeuvre certain web sites.

Donna Jodhan, a Toronto blind woman, experienced difficulties navigating the Canadian government's web site when she tried to apply for a job online due to inaccessible PDF files. I spoke with Donna by telephone on February 24 regarding what was difficult about navigating the government's web sites when she tried to apply for a job online. She said, "The federal government web sites are difficult to navigate, particularly in the job bank page, because of the way the forms are setup. I couldn't access the information."



*Donna Jodhan celebrates accessibility.*

Donna fought to raise awareness for this issue in order to make it accessible; however, until recently her battle failed. During her fight, together with lawyer, David Baker, over four years, Donna finally made her way to court in September and won the case in November 2010. The judge of the federal court ruled in Donna's favour. Now the government has 15 months from that

time to make their web site accessible to all Canadian citizens.

Is your workplace web site been tested for the blind and visually impaired? Do you agree that it should be? Can't alternate formats be used to compliment PDF files?

Like Donna's experiences, I face similar challenges because I am blind and hearing impaired.

I have gone to many web sites where I require a sighted person, if I am lucky, to assist me with certain information that I am unable to access. To me, it is so frustrating and tedious to constantly have to ask for assistance. Asking for help is not an issue here, but it makes me feel less independent. Since Donna initiated the process of making the government's web site accessible to all people with disabilities, perhaps this will open the door for other blind or visually impaired individual populations to follow in her footsteps. If we are successful, universal accessibility will become a reality to persons with disabilities sooner rather than later.

I am very impressed that Donna was able to fight this issue without fear. However, this issue is larger than just those web sites designed and operated by the Government of Canada.

Donna's fight speaks to accessibility and inclusion universally. The government is now required by law to identify, eliminate and prevent barriers as regards to online information, products and services.

One would think that this represents an ideal starting point for the government to apply an "accessibility lens" across all departments, activities and areas of jurisdiction.

After all, this is what is happening in Ontario with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)! ■

## Order of Ontario goes to first person to reach the North Pole in a wheelchair

Well-known disability activist, Thunder Bay lawyer and honoured guest at the 2009 March of Dimes Canada's Ability & Beyond Gala, Dave Shannon has received the Order of Ontario, the province's highest honor.

As a lawyer, Dave is committed to policy and legal advocacy for the protection of human rights and community inclusion for people with disabilities. In 2009 he made headlines as the first quadriplegic to ever reach the North Pole, where he placed a disabled parking sign. David said, "This sign represents all peoples who have faced challenges or adversity in their lives and have dreamed of overcoming them. If we as people, work together in our homes, our cities, our countries and in our global village, there is no dream that cannot be realized."

The Order of Ontario was created in 1986 and recognizes the highest level of individual excellence and achievement in any field. Nominations are made

by members of the public. In 2012, the award will mark its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. ■



David Shannon (left) and companion at the North Pole

## United Nations Review

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities update
- Disability rights need to be spelled out and acted upon - Millennium Goals

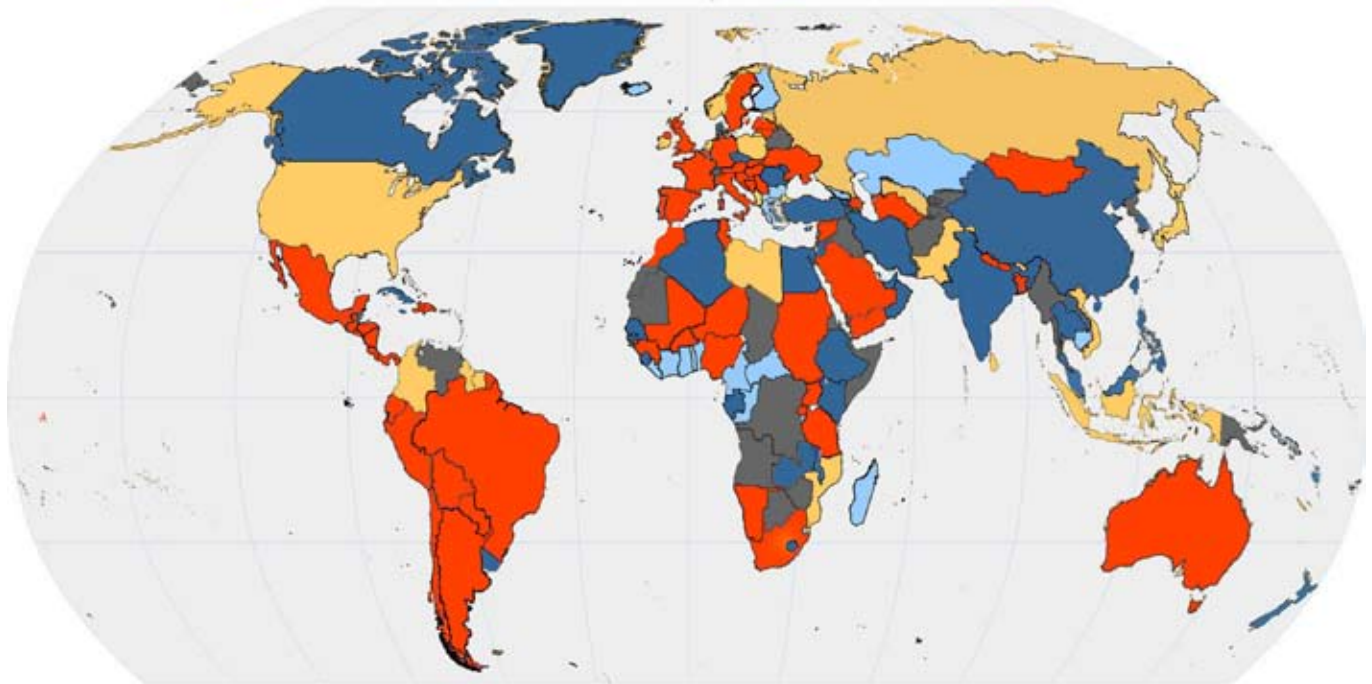
### Convention

There are now 147 signatories to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities world-wide and 98 ratifications. (See map next page). The "Optional Protocol" to the Convention has 90 signatories and 60 ratifications. The Optional Protocol, simply put, states the right of an individual or group to protest a violation by a country of the provisions of the Convention in front of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (Canada has not signed the Optional Protocol.)





Not Signed
  Signed Convention
  Signed Convention & Protocol
  Ratified Convention
  Ratified Convention & Protocol



When you look at the map, it is clear that there are very few countries that have not at least signed the Convention. This is good news for people with disabilities, however, there is still a lot of work to be done and educational programs needed to inform the average person about what it means to be disabled, and how to relate to people with all types of disabilities.

### Millennium Goals

In the year 2000 the United Nations compiled a set of eight universal Millennium Development Goals. (MDG) for all member nations to be a part of. Below are the 8 abbreviated millennium goals, short forms in bold:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.  
**End poverty and hunger**
2. Achieve universal primary education.  
**Universal education**
3. Promote gender equality and empower women.  
**Gender equality**

4. Reduce child mortality.  
**Child health**
5. Improve maternal health.  
**Maternal health**
6. Combat HIV/AIDS malaria and other diseases.  
**Combat HIV/AIDS**
7. Ensure environmental sustainability.  
**Environmental sustainability**
8. Develop a global partnership for development.  
**Global partnership**

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) established a unifying set of developmental objectives for the global community. Bringing together United Nations agencies, governments and civil society around eight key development issues, the MDGs foster collaborative action. The MDGs are specifically designed to address the needs of the world's poorest citizens and the world's most marginalized populations. MDGs will not be achieved however if their policies, programs, monitoring and evaluation do not





include persons with disabilities. While persons with disabilities make up 10% of the world's population, disability is associated with 20% of global poverty according to the World Bank's findings. Currently, there are no references to persons with disabilities either in the MDGs themselves or in the accompanying body of guidelines and policies, programs and conferences that are part of the on-going MDG efforts. In addition, the new revisions of the MDGs currently in process do not include persons with disabilities.

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – all by the target date of 2015 – form a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and all the world's leading development institutions. They have galvanized

unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world's poorest.

The international community needs urgently to act to mainstream disability in the MDG processes. This requires policy makers and technical experts specifically tasked with the programming, monitoring and evaluation of current MDG programs to begin to consider disability so that the next phase of the implementation of the MDGs will include disability as an important component of its core mission.

We will continue to track the integration of disability issues into the Millennium Development Goals. ■

## Advocacy Update

### March of Dimes Board Member Appointed to New Queen's Park Committee

We are pleased to announce the appointment of March of Dimes' Board Member, Elizabeth Lounsbury, to the Elections Ontario Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer, Greg Essensa, announced the creation of the new committee in September 2010, and a call for public nominations was put out at that time.

This move came on the heels of Committee appearances at Queen's Park by representatives of March of Dimes and other organizations regarding last spring's electoral reform legislation. As part of our presentation to MPPs, Elizabeth and Government Relations intern, Tina Marano, provided additional testimony on their challenges in voting and how to improve Ontario's election system.

The newly-established Committee will provide advice to the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario to enhance access

to the electoral process by voters with disabilities. The main purposes and activities of the Accessibility Advisory Committee are to:

- Advise the Chief Electoral Officer on the development, implementation and effectiveness of Elections Ontario's Accessibility Program;
- Provide insight into the requirements of persons with disabilities with regard to the electoral process;
- Advise on possible implications and Elections Ontario's response to emerging regulations made under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005;
- Provide options and advice on other accessibility related issues within the organization;
- Advise on future public consultation on accessibility, including recommendations on the structure and membership of a permanent Advisory Committee.

The work of the Committee should help foster greater accessibility in the forthcoming provincial election on October 6, 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.



For more information about tickets please visit [www.marchofdimes.ca/gala](http://www.marchofdimes.ca/gala)

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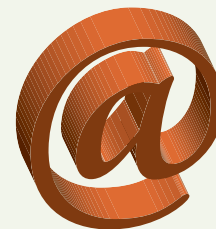
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## Supporting Family Caregivers

Coming Soon



[www.marchofdimes.ca/  
advocacy](http://www.marchofdimes.ca/advocacy)