

THE ADVOCATE



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March of Dimes Canada at Official Launch of the Pan and ParaPan Am Games Athletes' Village



Multi-partnership representatives at launch for Pan and ParaPan Am Games Athletes' Village



Then Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Kathleen Wynne, speaks at the official launch at the future Canary District.

In 2015, the Pan and ParaPan Am Games will be held for the first time in Toronto, and construction is now underway on the Athletes' Village, which will transform the West Don Lands into a vibrant, affordable, mixed-use residential community. During the games, the units will serve as temporary homes to athletes, coaches and sporting officials. Following the games, Wigwamen Community Housing Inc. and Fred Victor will own and operate 253 rental units, with a move-in date of spring 2016. It is estimated over 300 families will benefit from the new housing.



"We're very pleased that there is a commitment to increasing sustainable and affordable accessible housing for Torontonians in the heart of downtown after the Pan Am and ParaPan Am Games," says Jerry Lucas, Vice-President of Programs for March of Dimes Canada.

"Through our partnership with Wigwamen Community Housing, we are thrilled to be able to provide attendant care to new

residents with disabilities, in line with March of Dimes' commitment to offer opportunities for independence to the people we serve," he continues.

An additional 100 units under construction will be made available for affordable ownership in the heart of what will be known as The Canary District.

EnRich:

A National Conference about Emergency Preparedness for People with Disabilities



Chateau Laurier, Ottawa, site of the EnRich Conference.

About 100 representatives of community agencies, senior government partners, emergency responders and planners, and university researchers gathered in Ottawa

in late November at the EnRich conference -- an initiative designed to build a national agenda around emergency preparedness for targeted populations.

A key focus when considering emergency preparedness for people with disabilities, seniors and vulnerable populations was on "whole-of-society engagement" -- total inclusion and accessibility.

Steven Christianson discussed Inclusive Emergency Preparedness Canada (IEPC) and the training manuals produced as a result of that initiative with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. (AODA)

A key lesson learned from the Conference highlights the need for broad-based community and individual resiliency during emergencies and disasters, and how the legal obligations of Ontario's AODA impact emergency responders and planners. Other provinces, Manitoba for example, are in the process of considering what type of



accessibility legislation will work best in their respective jurisdictions, and how to ensure that such legislation helps advance “whole-of-society engagement”.

The importance of resiliency was explored from a variety of perspectives, as emergency responders and planners are but one pillar in the process; organizations like March of Dimes, as well as the connections through programs such as our peer support networks, become equally critical contributors to building community

and individual resiliency in the process of emergency preparedness. As fellow IEPC member, John Saunders pointed out, “Emergency staff are not actually the “first” responder. We have to remember that the “first” response in an emergency or disaster, even if for only a few minutes until emergency staff arrive, is often is the caregiver, family member or friend.”

Employment for Ontarians with Disabilities and the Social Assistance Review

The Social Assistance Review (SAR) released its report in late October with final recommendations to overhaul Ontario’s social assistance system. The Drummond Report also recommended a similar trajectory for Ontario’s social assistance system, but deferred its recommendations to the final report of the Social Assistance Review.

The recommendations of the SAR put specialized employment programs for Ontarians with disabilities potentially at risk.

While March of Dimes and the member organizations of the Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN) agree with many of the recommendations to amend the Province’s income and employment

support systems, it is felt that any potential benefits resulting from implementing such recommendations will be lost if the Province acts on the recommendation to download the disability employment support component to municipalities. Our collective approach has supported a structure in which employment supports are managed under Employment Ontario within the Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities.

ODEN and March of Dimes have met with the Minister responsible and individual Members at the constituency level. A collective outreach and communication plan is being devised and will unfold in December and/or January.



March of Dimes’ Employment Services staff and client.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities – December 3rd, 2012



How We Celebrate

People around the world came together to acknowledge, celebrate and focus on removing barriers for people with disabilities in early December. A major focus of the Day was practical action that would help to remove those barriers that limit accessibility for, and participation by, persons with disabilities in all aspects of society and development. Participants highlighted progress and obstacles in creating accessible and inclusive societies, including issues involving physical environments, information and communications technology and other areas, as well as promoting public awareness of existing barriers to the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in their societies.

This International Day of Persons with Disabilities marked the beginning of the preparatory process for the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Disability and Development (HLMDD) to be held on 23 September 2013. Other events included a panel discussion under the theme of the HLMDD: "The way forward: A disability inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond", as well as the United Nations Enable Film Festival.

Events at UN Headquarters in New York City

9.30 - 10 a.m.: Musical performance

10 - 11 a.m.: Opening ceremony and launch of the preparatory process for the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on Disability and Development

11 a.m. - 1 p.m.: Panel discussion: "The way forward: A disability inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond"

3 - 8:30 p.m.: United Nations Enable Film Festival 2012

Canada

1. In Fort Saskatchewan, an event was held at Pioneer House Club 50, 10102 - 100 Avenue that included the reading of a proclamation by the Mayor. Local recognition awards were presented, along with opportunities to greet and meet with the Ft. Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, Northeast Regional Disability Specialists, and local disability support and service organizations. Next Step Senior High conducted disability-awareness activities and developed disability-awareness posters. (cgowers@employabilities.ab.ca)

2. The Perth County (Ontario) Accessibility Advisory Committee conducted the 2nd Annual Canadian Amputee Hockey Challenge at the Perth East Recreation Complex in Milverton, Ontario in celebration of the Day.

The event also included a free skate from 7-7:30 p.m. (accessibility@perthcounty.ca)

3. In Vancouver, events for the Day included fun activities for families, film screenings, obstacle courses to go through using guide dogs and/or wheelchairs and assistive



devices, adaptive sports, and performances featuring talent from the local disability community. An acclaimed filmmaker also provided the keynote address. (<http://vancouverdisabilitiesday.ca>)

4. Toronto City Hall Rotunda – “Come Celebrate Inclusiveness Together” with exhibitors’ tables and story telling by people with disabilities about accomplishments and victories.

Italy

An NGO, POIESIS, organized a round table on “Culture and Accessibility” in collaboration with SoundMakers Festival, the first Italian art festival entirely accessible to everyone (www.soundmakersfestival.it). The meeting launched the first Italian “Guide for accessible events”

Nigeria

Alive and Active Disability Initiative commemorated the Day at Orlu Local Government Area, Imo State, with key

note speakers and by advocacy visits to construction companies contracted to draw their attention to this year’s theme as well as Article 9 of the CRPD, as well as radio talk-shows, commentaries, newspaper articles in the local media, talent shows and Story-telling of (alive.active_project@yahoo.co.uk; <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Alive-And-Active-Project-AAP/170569159702142>)

United Kingdom

An innovative exhibition touring Yorkshire and the Humber to raise public awareness of speech technology was launched on the Day. ‘Articulate: The Art and Science of Synthetic Speech’ road-show features collaborative exhibits and installations in public places, demonstrating the latest research into speech-synthesis technology. The free interactive road-show is part of a research and public engagement project by the Creative Speech Technology (CreST) Network. (<http://crestnetwork.org.uk>; admn516@york.ac.uk)

AODA Public Spaces Regulation

March of Dimes sent a response to the Deputy Minister of the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario on the Proposed Amendments to Ontario Regulation 191/11 (IASR), and specifically the Design of Public Spaces Standards, released in late summer for public consideration.

The Review and Commentary by March of Dimes stated that the proposed Standard needs greater clarity and definition. For the most part, the Standard would represent

a complementary, very good next step in making Ontario barrier-free. However, there is ambiguity around the notions of “redevelopment” versus “maintenance”. Further, there are questions around issues of responsibility, authority, compliance and enforcement.

With greater clarity and definition, not only should organizations know if they are obligated and how to comply; the Design of Public Spaces amendment to the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation could provide a significant next step in the Ontario government’s trajectory toward identifying, eliminating and preventing barriers.



L.I.V.E. Conference



Government Relations & Advocacy Assistant, Janet Macmaster, speaks with LIVE workshop group

From November 6 through 9, 65 leaders and executive members of the Peer Support groups from both Stroke Recovery Canada and Post-Polio Canada joined staff from March of Dimes and others for a conference at the Double Tree Hotel in Mississauga, just outside Toronto. Leaders In Volunteer Education

(L.I.V.E.) Conference is an annual event offering educational programs, as well as opportunities for networking, socializing and sharing with other Peer Support group leaders from different areas.

Government Relations & Advocacy conducted a workshop outlining the work of the department and explaining how advocacy issues emerge and how March of Dimes engages with government and politicians to influence policy and legislation affecting people with disabilities. Current projects were discussed and various ways of conducting advocacy outlined. Participants were keen to receive The Advocate to stay more up-to-date with what is happening with governments, March of Dimes Canada and people with disabilities.

Other workshop options included: Fundraising, Cultural Diversity, Group Facilitation, Aphasia and Supportive Conversation and Media Relations, among others.

BMO Survey:

More than Half of Small Businesses Have Never Hired a Person with a Disability



Many people with disabilities are valued employees

Of the 44 per cent of small businesses that have, 77 per cent said these employees either met or exceeded their expectations

- **56 per cent of small businesses in Canada have never hired a person with a disability**
- **One-in-four businesses (23 per cent) plan to increase the size of their workforce next year**
- **Small business owners say their biggest challenge for 2013 will be attracting and retaining talented employees, even though educated, talented and capable people with disabilities are ready to step in**
- **Not knowing how to recruit persons with a disability' is the most common reason small businesses have not hired them**



Despite the challenges small business owners say they expect to face in attracting and retaining talented employees in 2013, a growing cohort of highly educated, capable, and readily available workers is being entirely overlooked -- people with a disability.

In BMO's 2012 Commercial Study on Hiring Persons with a Disability, owners said their number-one challenge in 2013 will be finding educated, talented and capable people who can help them fill the jobs that their growing businesses will create. Business owners polled from across Canada said attracting and retaining employees ranked ahead of raising revenue, weathering through the economy, managing operating costs and improving productivity as their greatest business challenge.

At the same time, more than half of those surveyed reported never having hired someone with a disability; with the main reason cited being they didn't know how to recruit them.

These findings come in advance of Small Business Week and during National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). Now in its third year, NDEAM was introduced to increase employers' understanding of the positive outcomes of hiring persons with a disability.

According to the BMO survey, 77 per cent of small business owners who have hired people with a disability said these employees either met (62 per cent) or exceeded (15 per cent) their expectations. Yet a disproportionate

number of highly capable, educated and driven Canadians remain unemployed. On average, people with disabilities who are able to work are twice as likely to be unemployed as the general population.

"This persistent unemployment gap needs to be addressed for many reasons," said Sonya Kunkel, Director of Diversity and Inclusion at BMO. "It can take a social and economic toll on these workers and their families. It costs government and tax payers money unnecessarily, and robs Canadian businesses and our economy of the vital contribution persons with a disability are ready and able to make.

"Competitiveness, the growing knowledge-based economy and demographic shifts are changing not just the types of jobs being created across the country, but are also intensifying the need for companies to embrace innovation," said Steve Murphy, Senior Vice-President, Commercial Banking, BMO Bank of Montreal. "In fact, many of Canada's most successful and fastest-growing companies are innovation-focused and depend on the diversity of their employees' skills and knowledge to both develop new products and services and improve their productivity. People with disabilities are a vastly untapped pool of talent and can be a tremendous resource for those companies who are serious about innovation and growth."

**TORONTO, ONTARIO –
Marketwire – Oct. 2, 2012)**

Legislating Accessibility: Manitoba continues to be on the move

Ontario's enactment of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act was the first such instance in Canada of creating a separate regulatory environment to identify, eliminate and prevent barriers to the full inclusion of people with disabilities.

Other provinces are now examining their respective "basket" of disability programs and services, with at least one provincial government officially working to enact similar legislation.

Manitoba is well along the policy path towards putting their version of an AODA into law as early as next spring (although the Minister herself indicates that the date of first reading in the legislature might be several months later), a key finding of a recent trip to Winnipeg by March of Dimes' representatives, Jerry Lucas and Steven Christianson

"The major difference between the Ontario approach and that found in Manitoba is the use of their already existing 'age-friendly' initiative," Christianson explains, "which



Hon. Jennifer Howard, MLA - Minister of Family Services and Labour, Minister Responsible for Persons with Disabilities in the Manitoba government.

compels municipalities to identify where and how they are not age-friendly, and to develop measurable plans to remove barriers to become age-friendly." Manitoba will likely add on disability-specific measures in a new law, thereby building upon an existing initiative.

Status: Manitoba is at the point where Ontario was in 2003-2004: now set to create individual regulatory committees structured similar in principle to Ontario's standard development process. March of Dimes Canada has provided input and consultation to the Manitoba government and opposition caucuses.

Global Update

Seeking to advance rights of people with disabilities, UN treaty review in New York

Hundreds of advocates and experts on disability, as well as Government delegates, gathered at UN Headquarters for the start of the Fifth Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which will have a special focus on women and children.

"It is our responsibility as members of the international community and citizens of our own countries to bring about changes to more than one billion persons with disabilities worldwide," the UN Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Wu Hongbo, said in a news release.



Participants at the Fifth Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which had a special focus on women and children. UN Photo/Evan Schneider

"There is no development when so many people are without equal opportunities and excluded from society," he added.

The Conference of States Parties – the largest international meeting on disability issues – is held each year to exchange experience and ideas for implementation of the Convention, which was adopted in December 2006. There are currently 119 States that have ratified or acceded to the Convention – these States Parties are required to promote full equality and participation of persons with disabilities in society.

The theme of the Conference was 'Making the CRPD Count for Women and Children.' It brings together hundreds of delegates from Governments, UN system organizations, academia and civil society, including representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities, to review good practices and challenges in the implementation of the Convention, especially for groups with vulnerabilities.

"Women and children with disabilities face aggravated forms of discrimination and other forms of obstacles in life," said the Conference's President, Mårten Grunditz, the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the UN. "So much talent is wasted – but opportunities can be seized and created. Let's make it count for them – because it's right and it's smart."

"Albert Einstein had a learning disability and didn't speak until age three. Ludwig van Beethoven was deaf. Helen

Keller was deaf and blind. These stories tell the same simple truth: disability is by no means an inability," added Mr. Wu. "These individuals, just like many others, including the incredible athletes of the recent Paralympic Games, achieved greatness and demonstrated that by breaking down barriers, and with the right opportunities, exceptional things are possible."

The CRPD entered into force in May 2008. It followed decades of work by the United Nations to change attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities, and takes to a new height the movement from viewing persons with disabilities as 'objects' of charity, medical treatment and social protection towards viewing persons with disabilities as 'subjects' with rights, capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent as well as being active members of society.

March of Dimes receives renewed funding for Skills Link Achieving Success program



Renewed funding announcement for Skills Link Achieving Success program takes place at March of Dimes offices in Sault Ste. Marie. From left, Sault Ste. Marie MP, Bryan Hayes, Ron Goodall, Final Touch owner, program graduate Jessica McSherry, Regional Employment Services Manager, Joan Teresinski and the Honourable Dr. Kellie Leitch of Human Resources & Skills Development Canada.

March of Dimes Canada thanked the Government of Canada for their dedication and commitment to the youth of our province, with the Honourable Dr. Kellie Leitch and MP for Sault Ste. Marie, Bryan Hayes, attending the official announcement about renewed funding for the Skills Link Achieving Success program.

The Skills Link Achieving Success program has been in operation within March of Dimes several years, starting in the Northwest Thunder Bay office and expanding into the Northeast Region, which includes Sudbury, North Bay, Timmins and Sault Ste. Marie. Now in its fifth year of funding, the Timmins

and Sault Ste. Marie offices have partnered to enhance cost effectiveness and service efficiencies in deliverables and outcomes. These dollars will provide 48 youth, ages 15 to 30 - who face barriers to employment - such as lack of work experience, a learning disability, low education level, low self-confidence - with the opportunity to change their lives and make a difference in the community.

The program staff strive to find the right match between employers and youth. With a good work ethic and a willingness to learn, many youth will retain their jobs beyond the work experience opportunity; or some may



return to school - opening other doors to a successful and rewarding future.

Mr. Rod Goodall, General Manager and Owner of Final Touch Janitorial Services has been an employer partner with March of Dimes for many years. Rod has tapped into the labour pool of reliable and dependable youth. He has enjoyed the benefits and value of this program. He notes, "We've sourced many good employees, who just needed preparation help and a chance to prove themselves. There is always great communication and follow up; as well as monitoring of a new hire's progress. These and other strong efforts are providing a solid service to both client and employers alike!

Jessica McSherry is a graduate of the Skills Link Achieving Success program and has

become a "shining star" within Final Touch. Mr. Goodall describes Jessica as "reliable, enthusiastic, and tries her best at all times. We are proud to have Jessica as part of our staff". Jessica states "One of the big benefits of the Skills Link program is you get to take small, gradual steps to prepare for a job. This program has helped me get a job I enjoy and with a good company, and the satisfaction of working and earning a paycheck has greatly boosted my self-confidence and personal well-being". I would highly recommend that any young person who has some barriers to employment give it a try".

Mr. Goodall sums up the partnership as a "win, win, win situation for client, employer and March of Dimes with all being successful".

Toronto Disability Issues Committee:

Important Issues on the Table



The Committee had its third meeting in mid-September. Licensing Services Manager, Emilio Leonardis, of the Training Centre, Municipal Licensing and Standards, gave an update on Toronto's Accessible Taxicab Service, part of the larger project, Toronto

Taxicab Review. He stated the accessibility issue had become the biggest part of the review. There had been three consultations and a total of 180 participants meeting to discuss metered, on-demand, accessible cab

service for Toronto. There is a need to create an on-demand, accessible cab plan which has the potential of changing the industry and the whole taxicab culture.

John Nunziata, representing Wheelchair Accessible Transit Inc./Toronto Para Transit, spoke to his company's research on accessible taxicab services. He said the bottom line was that the City of Toronto has the capability to supply on-demand, accessible service. The Ambassador taxicab fleet could transition to standard plates with the provision of accessibility for all its cabs. There could be a dedicated brokerage to service the new fleet. Mr. Nuziata stated the opportunity exists today and basically, the cab industry needs to change. One committee member submitted all taxis should convert to "universal design."

A motion was passed and directed to the Licensing and Standards Committee that "any move to standardize Ambassador taxicab



licenses include a provision to require that their vehicles be converted simultaneously to 100 percent accessible taxis as part of the reform."

General manager of Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, Phil Brown, gave a presentation to the Committee. In the question and answer period following, a comment was made that more housing needs to be inclusive of blind and visually impaired. Also noted was that the 10 percent figure quoted as the number of accessible housing units is very low, especially for new-builds and retro-fits. Mr. Brown agreed to take this back to his colleagues.

Two motions were made: that Chair, Adam Vaughan "write to the Planning and Growth Management Committee requesting that the new Official Plan set and enforce targets for accessible housing as part of all new multi-residential development with higher standards set for areas near accessible transit and report back on accessible guidelines on new developments to ensure

accessibility." As well, that the Chair "request Toronto Community Housing Corporation to set and establish targets for all new housing developments to ensure that both rent geared to income and market units are created as accessible housing."

The three sub-committees of the Disability Issues Committee, Transportation, Housing and Outreach, submitted summaries of respective work plans. Bernita Lee of the Office of Equity, Diversity and Human Rights provided an update on the most recent AODA Standard to be released – Design of Public Spaces..

Requests for information about accessibility issues were requested by the Committee from Metrolinx; the PanAm Para Pan 2015 Games; Toronto's Wayfinding Strategy; the Auditor General of Wheel-Trans Operational Audit; General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation about inclusive programming. These are slated for the December meeting.

March of Dimes Proposes Reduced TTC Fare

Also, on Monday December 3rd, Toronto's Disability Issues Committee considered a motion by March of Dimes' representative, Janet McMaster to give people with disabilities a break.

Ms. Macmaster's motion, which was forwarded by Committee members and the Chair, Councillor Adam Vaughan, was to create a reduced TTC fare for people living on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and/or generally for people with disabilities across the board. "Much as we have reduced fares for seniors and students, I see no reason why we can't look at how to create a similar

category for someone with a disability," Macmaster explains. "The financial reality of students is recognized. The financial reality of seniors is accommodated. It's high time we gave those people with disabilities a break."

The motion will be visited again in the new year, this time by Metrolinx, the Ontario Government agency created to improve the coordination and integration of all modes of transportation in the Greater Toronto Area and Hamilton. The Committee will decide how to forward the motion to City Council and the Commissioners of the Toronto Transit Commission.

Pre-Budget consultations in Ottawa and Edmonton

The governments of Alberta and the federal government both recently completed their pre-budget consultations for their 2013 budgets. March of Dimes made formal submissions to both, focusing on The Toronto Declaration as the basis of our advice.

“Bridging knowledge, policy and practice in aging and disability are now officially on record with the Finance Committees in Edmonton and the nation's capital.

Greetings from House of Commons



Don Valley West MP John Carmichael speaks at March of Dimes AGM.

In The Next Issue

Ontario Pre-Budget

Tax Tips for Canadians with Disabilities

Coast to Coast Check-In

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