

THE ADVOCATE



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ELECTION ALMANAC 2011



The provincial and federal Class of 2011.

If you’re someone who enjoys elections and political campaigns, then 2011 is the year for you.

We began with the federal election on May 2nd that gave Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s Conservatives a solid majority in the House of Commons, preceded by three consecutive minority terms (representing an historic breakthrough for any minority government in Ottawa), and producing a first in Canada by propelling the NDP to the status of Official Opposition.

Since then, voters in all three territories and half of Canada’s provinces have been going to the polls locally and impacting the political landscape throughout the country, with continuity and stability characterizing the voting trend. The newly-elected MLA’s in the Northwest Territories have met and chosen Bob McLead, Premier-elected.

The Yukon Party and Premier Darell Pasloski were given a third straight majority in Canada’s northwest, while the non-party system in Nunavut and Northwest Territories will see newly elected MLAs in their respective legislatures selecting their new Premiers when they meet in November.



Prince Edward Island saw the return of Premier Robert Ghiz's Liberal government to power, while Newfoundland and Labrador voters awarded Premier Kathy Dunderdale's Conservative Party a third straight majority (Premier Dunderdale is Newfoundland and Labrador's first female Premier).

Manitobans maintained the trend by returning Premier Greg Selinger's NDP to the government benches with an added seat count resulting in their fourth straight majority. Somewhat in contrast, Premier Dalton McGuinty's Liberals were re-elected in Ontario, but with a minority government and impressive seat gains by both the NDP and Ontario PCs. This is the third consecutive mandate Ontario voters have given to the McGuinty government.

Finally, Saskatchewan voters go to the polls November 7. If that Province's election history is any indication, Premier Brad Wall's Saskatchewan Party could also benefit from the national trend of continuity with a renewed mandate to govern.

No government has yet been rejected by voters and defeated at the polls. Instead, voters throughout Canada have opted to maintain the course and avoid drastic change. ■

HENDERSON: CANDIDATES URGED TO ELIMINATE INCLUSION BARRIERS

This article published in The Toronto Star on Sept. 16th, 2011 outlines some of March of Dimes' efforts to ensure an accessible election process as well as what the AODA Alliance recommends when choosing a candidate.

By Helen Henderson
Disabilities Reporter

With less than three weeks to go before the province goes to the polls, it's worth noting that of the roughly 1.7 million people with disabilities in Ontario, about a million of them are entitled to vote. Millions more among their friends and families will rank disability issues among priorities when assessing how they will cast their ballot.

All four major parties have agreed to work with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Alliance if elected, AODA reports.

Bottom line: Candidates ignore access and inclusion at their peril.

Accessible elections start long before polling day. Indeed, they begin long before the writ is dropped, when potential candidates plan campaigns, gather supporters and set up headquarters. This is why March of Dimes Canada sent out postcards this summer urging anyone planning to enter the race to "feature people with disabilities as part of campaign activities."

It also urged its Ontario members to visit their local campaign offices, to see if they are "friendly to all constituents."

Five years ago, when it started this monitoring process, "we found that about one in every four campaign offices



was physically inaccessible,” says Steven Christianson, manager of government relations and advocacy. This year, “we’re finding a totally different outcome,” he said in an email.

“Not only is virtually every office physically accessible... but almost every campaign representative or candidate explains that accessibility was a key pillar of planning, reaching out to volunteers and selecting office space.”

Needless to say, there are exceptions, among them the “totally inaccessible” campaign office of Rocco Rossi, Progressive Conservative candidate for Eglinton-Lawrence.

“It wasn’t intentional,” says Ron Soreanu of the Rossi campaign. If Rossi wins, his constituency office would definitely be wheelchair accessible, Soreanu adds.



Maybe so. But Christianson says Rossi’s choice of campaign office “shell-shocked” him, given that Rossi has experience as a candidate (he lost the Toronto mayoral race to Rob Ford) and is a former chief executive of the Ontario Heart and Stroke Foundation.

It’s also a particularly unfortunate oversight at a time when issues of inclusion are gaining the attention they deserve.

With the passing of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the province has started on the path to recognizing that stronger, more vibrant communities emerge when we dismantle the barriers that prevent everyone contributing. That means making sure all facets of life — from education to transportation to elections — are accessible to people who move or communicate or process information differently from what society has decreed to be the norm.

Among the inclusion issues that are high on the March of Dimes’ list of priorities is strengthening community supports to help people with disabilities maintain their independence. March of Dimes is also a member of the AODA Alliance, which held a news conference earlier this month to urge all candidates to eliminate and prevent barriers to the full participation of all Ontarians.

AODA Alliance chief David Lepofsky urges voters to choose candidates who would, among other things:

- Appoint a full-time assistant deputy minister of government services for accessibility, a position established in 2009, then downgraded to part time last year.
- Strengthen the AODA’s process for developing accessibility standards.
- Launch “an open, accessible public consultation on how to effectively reform the human rights process in Ontario.”

Lepofsky said all four major parties have agreed in principle to work with the AODA Alliance if they are elected. But while the Liberals, NDP and Green Party agree they will not cut back on gains in legislation or regulations that accessibility advocates have won to date, the Conservatives don’t, he said.

“The Liberals, NDP and Green Party each commit to varying degrees to actions to enhance the implementation of the AODA; the Conservatives do not.”

Both the March of Dimes and the AODA Alliance have a wealth of material to help everyone bring issues of inclusion to the forefront in this election. Check out www.aodaalliance.org and www.marchofdimes.ca.

Helen Henderson is a freelance writer and disability studies student at Ryerson University. Her column appears Saturdays. helenhenderson@sympatico.ca ■

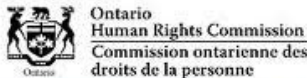
The following is an excerpt from the Ontario Human Rights Commission's Annual Report 2010 – 2011 concerning the consideration of more comprehensive disability-related obstacles before, during and after elections.

CONTINUING TO VOTE FOR ACCESSIBLE ELECTIONS:

*Ontario Human Rights Commission
Annual Report 2010-2011*

On March 12, 2010, Canada ratified the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Much more than "just another treaty," the Convention is, essentially, Canada's promise to protect, promote and advance the rights of people with disabilities. An important part of the Convention covers the right to vote.

Article 29 states:



States Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others, and shall undertake:

(a) To ensure that persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others, directly or through freely chosen representatives, including the right and opportunity for persons with disabilities to vote and be elected...

(b) To promote actively an environment in which persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in the conduct of public affairs, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others, and encourage their participation in public affairs...

This adds more weight to our work over the past two years to make electoral systems fully accessible and inclusive. We have worked with government bodies and staff to remove barriers that were hampering this goal.

With the passing of Bill 231, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act, all polling stations for provincial elections are required to be accessible. Now we are shifting our focus to barriers faced by electors and candidates beyond the voting booth.

We've asked disability advocacy groups, provincial officials and all of the political parties in Ontario to consider other disability-related barriers that electors, candidates and individuals seeking nomination can face before, during and after elections. These include:

Inaccessible facilities: political party, constituency and riding association offices as well as nomination, fundraising, campaign rally and all candidate debate events located in facilities with entrances, stairs, washrooms and other features that are inaccessible to people with mobility-related disabilities.

Communication and other services: meetings and events offering no sign language interpretation, real time captioning, deaf-blind intervention or attendant care, making them inaccessible to persons who are deaf, deafened, deaf-blind or hard-of-hearing or who have other types of disabilities.

Inaccessible print and information technology: materials produced or used by parties, riding associations, candidates or individuals seeking nomination that are inaccessible to persons with vision disabilities; this includes flyers, brochures, position papers, etc. not available in alternative formats such as electronic text, Braille or large-print publications. Websites not designed to meet international accessibility standards are also a barrier.

Disability-related expenses: expenses incurred by candidates or other individuals with or without disabilities that are not reimbursed. We will continue to monitor election accessibility issues during and beyond the October 2011 provincial election ■



GOVERNMENT RELATIONS OUTREACH

Here's what some of Canada's movers and shakers have to say about us!



...At the root of all March of Dimes endeavours is a profound respect for the dignity and worth of every person, regardless of impairment. I would like to commend the March of Dimes Board of Directors and all those who support the organization's mission for helping Canadians overcome barriers of all kinds to live more independent lives. Our entire country benefits when all of its citizens are given the opportunity to live up to their full potential.

The Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, P.C., M.P. OTTAWA, 2011

... In 2007 I was pleased to be the guest speaker at your Annual Ability & Beyond Gala Dinner in Toronto. ... I was very impressed with the diversity of programs offered and the commitment of March of Dimes to provide the much needed services for people with disabilities in Canada ... Caregiving is an area of great importance to me which is why The Princess Royal's Trust for Carers was formed. ... Congratulations on your 60th anniversary and may I wish you many more years of growth and continued success.

Anne, The Office of the HRH, The Princess Royal, Buckingham Palace, London, Eng.



March of Dimes is a wonderful example of an organization that has evolved to meet the changing needs of Canadians. For the last 60 years, March of Dimes has been committed to inclusiveness and equal opportunity for people with physical disabilities. Its leadership in this regard has been outstanding, and the services provided by March of Dimes are invaluable.

Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of Health, Government of Canada

... Tandis que le personnel et les bénévoles célèbrent cet anniversaire partout au pays, j'aimerais réaffirmer notre appui aux programmes et services variés que la Marche des dix so us mène dans tout le Canada. Votre travail et votre sollicitude continus représentent quelques-unes des valeurs les plus importantes du Canada, et le dévouement de votre organisation est véritablement inspirant. ...

L'honorable Bob Rae, C.P., O.C., député

On behalf of the Embassy of the United States, Ottawa, I congratulate March of Dimes on their 60th anniversary and thank the organization and all of its members for their efforts and for the difference they continue to make in the lives of individuals living with disabilities ... This is truly a remarkable achievement of which March of Dime should be very proud.

David Jacobson, Ambassador of the United States of America, Ottawa

Please accept this letter of congratulations from the Anishinabek Nation (also known as the Union of Ontario Indians). As the Grand Council Chief ... I wish to extend my deep appreciation for the sixty years of service and excellence, ... We often hear the phrase "our children are our future" and March of Dimes helps so many children with disabilities that it is safe to say [the organization] is a great contributor to the future.

Patrick Madahbee, Grand Council Chief, North Bay, Ont.



... Over the past 60 years, the Ontario March of Dimes has worked tirelessly to advocate and provide support for people with disabilities. This is a milestone worth celebrating. Congratulations!

Madeleine Meilleur, Ontario Minister of Community and Social Services.



On behalf of the Province of Nova Scotia, I want to recognize everyone involved over the past 60 years with March of Dimes Canada. ...Your organization is setting a strong example for all Canadians, and should be commended for the comfort and practical support you provide to society's most vulnerable citizens.

Darrell Dexter, Premier, Nova Scotia

Congratulations ... I wish to thank everyone involved with this organization, both past and present. Your selfless contributions continue to make a difference ...

Brad Wall, Premier, Saskatchewan

... I commend everyone involved with March of Dimes, over the decades, for their hard work and commitment ... that generous support has helped the organization enhance its services and enhance the lives of so many people ...

Christy Clark, Premier, British Columbia

Your organization is to be commended on the hard work and dedication that is supported by a staff of 1,600 and over 18,000 volunteers across the country. Your mission of enhancing the independence, personal empowerment and community participation of people with disabilities by offering a wide range of programs and services has served your clients well over the years and will continue to be a shining beacon for others in the future.

Robert Ghiz, Premier of Prince Edward Island

...Your work is important, not only to persons with disabilities, but to each and every one of us, whose lives are enriched by full participation of all members of society. Thank you for 60 years of valuable service to Canadians and best wishes as you continue your essential work.

Kathy Dunderdale, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador

Your history of care and compassion is important, and that commitment and inspiration has continued. ... Best wishes for ongoing success in enhancing the independence, personal empowerment and community participation of people with disabilities.

Ed Stelmach, Premier, Alberta

... I am proud to congratulate such a well recognized and respected Canadian institution on reaching such an important milestone. My parliamentary colleagues and I are all looking forward to great things from March of Dimes over the next 60 years.

Hon. Peter Kent, P.C., M.P. , Member of Parliament for Thornhill



Certainly, this is a tremendous milestone and the good work of the March of Dimes is in evidence across our country. Individuals, children and adults alike, with all types of disability, receive much needed support and advocacy thanks to your organization. You make a difference in their lives every day! We genuinely appreciate your hard work.

Carl Zehr, Mayor, Kitchener, Ontario

Thank you to the hundreds of staff and thousands of volunteers who are dedicated to providing programs that include peer support for stroke and polio survivors, conductive education, employment support, funding for mobility devices, attendance services, and advocacy.

Rick Goldring, Mayor, City of Burlington

March of Dimes continues to uphold its mandate by providing over 2.25 million hours of service to more than 50,000 Canadians. This truly is a remarkable achievement; and greatly appreciated by the City of Hamilton, whose residents benefit from the necessary services that the March of Dimes provides.

Robert Bratina, Mayor of Hamilton

... I thank all those people involved with the organization for being committed and dedicated advocates for all those living with disabilities and for making such a positive difference in their lives. Once again, congratulations and best wishes on this well-deserved recognition.

Al McDonald, Mayor, City of North Bay

Every year, through its programs and services, March of Dimes supports and provides assistance to thousands of Canadians and for this, we are truly grateful. The importance of volunteers and volunteer-led organizations to our community cannot be overstated. Volunteers have formed the backbone of the March of Dimes and they serve to strengthen their programs with their time, skills and genuine care for those they serve. My sincere appreciation and gratitude goes to all the volunteers and community members who, day after day, continue to make a positive difference to the lives of many. Your presence is a clear demonstration that the spirit of generosity is alive in the hearts and minds of everyone in our caring community.

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua, P.C., Mayor of Vaughan

The evolution of the March of Dimes into so many other areas to support children and adults with all types of disability has made a significant difference in the lives of many Canadians, giving them a meaningful and dignified life. Every Canadian deserves a right to have a fully-accessible country and the support of the March of Dimes in allowing people to not be prisoners in their homes but to participate fully in their community has given many Canadians the opportunities to succeed.

Mike Bradley, Mayor of Sarnia

The care, devotion and dedication you extend to your community enrich us all and for that we are most grateful. Thank you for your commitment.

James M. Diodati, Mayor of Niagara Falls

Congratulation to the March of Dimes, its staff, its supporters and clients for this is a significant milestone in an organization born of dire necessity and continued with vision and compassion. Polio is no longer a threat in most parts of the world, but many Canadians continue to benefit from the March of Dimes mandate. Thank you to all who chose to help and best wishes to all who face continuing challenges.

Hon. Joe Fontana, Mayor of London, Ontario



It is with sincere gratitude that we acknowledge the March of Dimes Canada. Your tireless work makes a difference in the lives of individuals living with disabilities. This work does not go unnoticed or unappreciated, and I offer my congratulations on reaching this important milestone.

Jeff Lehman, Mayor of Barrie



Thank you to all the dedicated staff and volunteers who make March of Dimes programs and services possible. Once again, congratulations to March of Dimes on this significant milestone. All the best for continued success in the decades to come!

Karen Farbridge, Mayor of Guelph

I join in giving special thanks to the staff and volunteers whose efforts make the March of Dimes programs and services such a success. Your outstanding contributions allow persons with a disability to actively participate in our communities and live independently in their own homes.

Sylvia Jones, MPP, Dufferin-Caledon

I wanted to take a moment and reflect on the extraordinary difference the March of Dimes has made in our world. I have discovered that the March of Dimes was established in 1951 to help eradicate the threat of polio. With help from March of Dimes funding, the needed vaccine was discovered in 1955! With the threat of polio greatly diminished, March of Dimes turned its mission to providing a wide range of much-needed services to children and adults with all types of disability. Again, please do not hesitate to contact my office should you need any assistance now or in the future. Good luck in your endeavors!

Dave Levac, MPP – Brant

MARCH OF DIMES 2010-2011 ANNUAL REPORT

A Few 2010-2011 Highlights from the Most Recent Annual Report

We aimed high for Conductive Education, wanting to advocate among government officials and increase awareness and appreciation of the program.



Elected officials at Queen's Park in Toronto, Province House in Halifax and the House of Commons in Ottawa delivered resolutions to all Members in each respective assembly about March of Dimes and the

importance of Conductive Education into the permanent legislative records and televised live on local and national parliamentary channels. The Nova Scotia initiative also featured a learning forum about CE which attracted more than 50 per cent of the Province's elected officials. Further national outreach was conducted through a published in-depth article about this program in The Hill Times (print and web editions) and delivered to every MP, staffer and Senator in every part of Canada, as well as reprinted in an MP's householder and delivered to approximately 45,000 households in Toronto.

This was our year to finalize the IEPC project and attract new partners.

This project produced Canada's first training tools on how to welcome and include people with disabilities at emergency reception shelters in the event of an emergency. Not only were copies requested by officials in more than 3 dozen municipalities in Ontario, the project was singled out by the Minister of Community and Social Services as the most outstanding AODA training and awareness project during 2010-2011.

As a result, our current outreach for partnerships has extended into BC and nationally in Ottawa.

We wanted to make the 2010 municipal elections meaningful for consumers and broaden the grass-roots community involvement of March of Dimes Canada during an election.

Partnering with Community Living Toronto, CNIB, Canadian Hearing Society, Holland Bloorview, CAMH and more, March of Dimes co-presented Toronto's first Mayoral Candidates Debate on Disability Issues in June 2010, which was moderated by TVO's Steve Paikin and made available through YouTube, Facebook and various traditional media. Another first saw our national office at 10 Overlea Boulevard serving as the designated fully Accessible Polling Station for the Ward and the demonstration centre for Toronto's new accessible voting terminals for the October municipal election. Government Relations also hosted a learning forum on governance and voting for consumers, lead by Dr. Neil Tomlinson, Chair of Ryerson University's Politics and Public Administration program. Our community engagement work on this front was recognized with a special plaque awarded by the City of Toronto.

To get your copy of the complete March of Dimes Annual Report visit www.marchofdimes.ca/annualreport ■

EXCERPTED FROM THE SUBMISSION TO THE COMMISSION FOR THE REVIEW OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE IN ONTARIO

September 2011

Commission for the
Review of Social Assistance
in Ontario



The Ontario Social Assistance Review Commission put out a Discussion Paper in June 2011 in which they confirmed key issues and sought input on possible solutions. The overall vision of this important review is to identify and create “a 21st century income security system that enables all Ontarians to live with dignity, participate in their communities and contribute to a prospering economy.” In December of this year, an Options Paper will be produced. In June 2012 a Final Report with specific recommendations and a concrete action plan will be released.

Below is March of Dimes’ contribution to the discussion to date.

Responding to the Commission

Shortly after the Commission’s public consultation document, “Issues and Ideas” (Discussion Paper), was released in June 2011 March of Dimes Canada solicited staff and consumer feedback throughout our offices in Ontario. Internal consultation and feedback to the Commission’s discussion paper occurred throughout the summer of 2011.

Conclusions

(excerpted from Official Submission)

As the unemployment rate for persons with disabilities is more than 40%, there needs to be a task force to review what is required of the service providers and employers in order to drastically reduce this number.

Ontarians with disabilities have a much higher rate of unemployment than the general population, especially people with lifelong disabilities who have both barriers to employment and little work experience. When the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) replaced Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the provincial government eliminated funding for front-end supports to this group – supports such as vocational assessment, career exploration, and building work skills and self confidence. Now, Employment Ontario is considering eliminating special pre-employment and placement services, and requiring the job applicant to use a generic employment centre. This will effectively strip this employment-disadvantaged group of all supports to seek, acquire and retain employment.

To successfully access and participate in the labour market, and gain meaningful employment, people with disabilities require specialized vocational services that address the nature and severity of their disability. The Ontario government must make a greater investment in the services and supports that help people who have a disability actually get into and remain in the workforce, thereby enhancing their independence and improving their standing of living.

The full report is available online at:

www.marchofdimes.ca/advocacy

http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/publications/social/sarac/toc_sarac.aspx ■

CAREGIVING, HOME MODIFICATIONS AND ACCESSIBLE, SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Pre-Budget Federal Standing Committee on Finance

In this year's Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance March of Dimes seeks to advance measures that have minimal financial impact on the Government of Canada coupled with significant reward in enhancing accessibility and inclusion for Canadians with disabilities.

The Government of Canada, and governments throughout the country, are really only at the initial stages of recognizing and understanding the need for greater accessibility and implementing a comprehensive plan that identifies, eliminates and prevents barriers to the full participation of Canadians with disabilities. As we imply in this paper, there are roles for the private sector, formal and informal caregivers, government, non-profit organizations – in short, accessibility involves everyone because it is everyone's business.

Our society depends on informal caregivers for the elderly and people with disabilities – be they your children, your parents or other family members. It is organizations like March of Dimes that complement the family, and when there is no family, we do our best to supplement with an array of services and inter-agency cooperation.

In some areas we might need to spend more; most importantly, we need to spend smarter. And our spending must be guided by the ideal of building a culture of care, developing sufficient capacity, identifying and delivering support for caregivers, facilitating integrated services, and demonstrating leadership.

We feel there are two immediate steps that can be taken that will begin making a lasting impact on the lives of Canadians with disabilities, their families and caregivers.

1. Immediately create a 6-month Working Group to Develop a Framework for a National Care Strategy for Canada that considers the needs of home and vehicle modifications, attendant care, caregiver recognition and appropriate tax support.
2. Immediately increase the existing Compassionate Care Benefit from six weeks to eight weeks. ■

REPORT OF THE CORRECTIONAL SERVICES DEPUTY MINISTER'S ACCESSIBILITY ROUNDTABLE

The following is taken from the Final Report, issued September 2011.

The context for this gathering extends back a decade. In 2001, the Government of Ontario passed the



Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) to improve access and opportunities for people with disabilities. In 2005, new legislation, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities (AODA) was legislated to develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards to achieve

full accessibility for Ontarians by 2025.

In 2010, Correctional Services Deputy Minister Jay C. Hope committed to hosting an accessibility roundtable that would offer him expert advice, support and guidance to

continued on page 8...



meet Correctional Services' objectives in implementing accessibility across its areas of responsibility.

This document reports on the accessibility roundtable held on November 24, 2010. The roundtable brought together approximately 20 advocates and experts on disability in Ontario to discuss two subjects: 1) the frustrations, issues and concerns that face individuals with a disability; and 2) examples of best practices and solutions for eliminating barriers to accessibility. The objective was to provide a solid, informed foundation for Correctional Services' senior management to continue addressing accessibility needs in the most realistic ways possible.

March of Dimes was among this expert group, and following is part of our contribution from the Final Report and Recommendations:

Issues

- There is an incredible diversity of disabilities both in the physical and non-visible realm. Our understanding is still evolving, and we do not yet even have names for some types of disabilities. Someone with varying degrees of multiple sclerosis might be able to walk through the entire mall one morning and the day after that their limbs are like jelly, so we might need a different form of accommodation.
- Accessibility in the built environment means more than having accessible entrances. Washrooms are frequently located on another floor. Even a mere one inch lip difference on the ground may become a barrier for someone in a wheelchair.

Solutions

- Have an Accessibility Committee. Examine your Customer Service standards and your compliance. What are the barriers? Ask yourself if you are compliant. If so, then have you achieved inclusion? Being compliant is a bare minimum.
- Accessibility is a continually evolving organic definition and standard. For this reason, it cannot simply be achieved within a particular time frame but needs to be worked at continually.
- Awareness training is needed to get rid of attitudinal barriers.
- Examine the fine details of policies and procedures to ensure they have accessibility in-built into them from the perspective of individuals with disabilities.

A caregiver or an attendant should not be charged a fare or fee because they provide an essential service and are not there to achieve the same degree of inclusion that the person with a disability is. ■

WHEN IT COMES TO TENANT INSURANCE FOR SOCIAL HOUSING THIS IS A REAL BARGAIN!

Did you know people who live in social housing, that is, public housing, non-profit housing and cooperative housing, have a very reasonable alternative when it comes to tenant insurance and home and auto insurance? The company offering these cost efficient rates is SoHo Insurance Inc., an affiliate of the Social Housing Services Corporation (SHSC).

"I found out about SoHo through a resource consultant who works in my building. This particular individual stressed that most of the tenants that live in my building



are already customers of SoHo. After careful research, I discovered the price was far more reasonable and manageable,” says Tina Marano. Tina is a resident of Rotary Cheshire Homes in Willowdale, Ont. Her building is specifically designed for people who are vision and/or hearing impaired. She is also a former field placement student who worked in Government Relations & Advocacy at March of Dimes Canada.

SHSC is an Ontario organization created in 2002 to provide group services for social housing providers. This happened after the shift in responsibility for over 270,000 social housing units to local municipalities. It’s a non-profit corporation with a mandate to provide Ontario social housing providers and service managers with bulk purchasing, investment and information services, as well as insurance services. SHSC has two subsidiaries of which SoHo is one, known as a sub-broker. The other is GLOBE (Green Light on a Better Environment), a program to support conservation in the social housing sector.

Today, SHSC covers more than 680 housing providers and more than 170,000 housing units. By 2008, SoHo launched its tenant insurance program. The following year, 2009, it started offering a home and auto insurance program for social housing staff and board members in partnership with the Co-Operators.

If you are a social housing resident in Ontario, or a recipient of Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program benefits, and pay your premiums, you are eligible for coverage. This insurance program is not dependent on your income or postal code. You won’t be rejected because of how much you make or where you live.

Tina points out, “SoHo Insurance is substantially better than the insurance company I was with before. That company kept increasing the premium, which I found difficult to maintain. With the SoHo, I have two options: I can pay monthly or pay the entire year upfront. I found that if I paid for the entire year at once it ended up being less expensive. This is a great feature because I can save a little money... about \$100.00 annually!

This is especially good news since I am an ODSP recipient and live on a tight budget.”

There are two insurance options to choose from based on the value of personal property:

Option 1 – Up to \$10,000 of personal possessions (actual cash value at time of loss), \$2,000 living expenses, \$500,000 liability coverage with a \$300 deductible per occurrence.

Rates – One year amount = **\$155.52** plus 8% tax.

Option 2 – Up to \$20,000 of personal possessions (actual cash value at time of loss), \$4,000 living expenses, \$1,000,000 in liability coverage with a \$300 deductible per occurrence.

Rates - One year amount = **\$192.00** plus 8% tax.

When asked about customer service at SoHo, Tina said, “I spoke with a customer service representative to clarify some of my unanswered questions. Since I had never heard about this insurance company before, I needed to feel very comfortable in my decision before making the switch. When I called and spoke to a representative, I found them to be very patient, they answered all my questions and did not rush through the conversation. I was also very pleased to find that their website was accessible with my screen reader and Braille display. A major bonus for me!” ■





Anniversary • Anniversaire 1951 - 2011

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

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

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March of Dimes Canada 2011