

THE ADVOCATE



Government Affairs Advisory

A Publication of March of Dimes Canada

March of Dimes and Canadian Disability Policy Alliance

ADVOCATING IN THE CANADIAN SENATE



Canadian Senate.

On Monday October 31, the university and disability group representatives who form the Canadian Disability Policy Alliance (of which March of Dimes is a founding member),

met at 10 Overlea Boulevard for their bi-annual meeting. A central outcome of the session highlighted the need of the Alliance to share more broadly and publicly the excellent research being done by the members of the Alliance. Specifically, it was agreed that whenever possible it would be ideal to communicate the results and experiences of the CDPA to legislators and other policy makers.

Not long after that meeting such an opportunity presented itself in the form of the Senate Committee on Social Affairs examination of the federal-provincial Health Accord. On November 24th, an official submission from the Alliance was delivered to the Senate Committee, calling for the application of a disability lens when considering future national healthcare agreements between Ottawa and the provinces.

continued on page 2...

In This Issue Page

Submission to Canadian Senate	1
Disability and the Legal System.....	2
Dec. 31 st Deadline for RDSP	3
Throne Speech Overview	5
Stretch Tax Credit for Charitable Giving	6

Executive Summary

The 2003 First Minister's Accord on Health Care Renewal and corresponding Ten Year Plan to Strengthen Health Care (2004) identified primary care renewal as a priority, including improved access to family physicians, multidisciplinary teams, and better management of chronic conditions. This submission asserts the particular importance of considering people with disabilities in making improvements to the health care system. To date little sustained attention has been given to the unique needs of people with disabilities within the health care system. We offer several recommendations, all of which forms a disability lens on policy analysis regarding primary health care renewal.



Background Information

Access to primary care has been a political imperative in every jurisdiction in Canada for the past ten years. Physician shortages and geographic distribution are usually cited as the main sources of access problems.

For people with disabilities, however, there are a number of additional barriers that not only delay or inconvenience access, but actually prevent it (McColl, Aiken, McColl & Smith, 2010).

LAW COMMISSION OF ONTARIO REVIEW:

Disability and the Legal System

March of Dimes recently participated in the Law Commission of Ontario's (LCO) initiative, The Law as it Affects Persons with Disabilities. The objective of the project is to "assist in the development of fairer and more effective and just laws as they relate to persons with disabilities."

The feedback we received through our internal consultation focused on the need for inclusion and participation in the process of law- and policy-making. As one respondent pointed out, "The most important thing is to have people with disabilities actually involved in the development of

People with disabilities encounter barriers at six points in the primary health care system. Like non-disabled Canadians, they may have difficulty finding a doctor or getting an appointment; however unlike their non-disabled counterparts, they also face barriers attempting to enter the practice, use equipment and facilities, receive necessary accommodations, and obtain a reasonable standard of care. These barriers may be:

- physical (such as stairs, narrow doorways, high tables and counters),
- attitudinal (such as unwillingness to assist and accommodate),
- expertise-related (lack of knowledge about disability and its complications), or
- systemic (policies and practices that differentially inhibit access) (McColl et al., 2008).

People with disabilities depend on primary care for access not only to both urgent and routine health care, but also for access to specialist care and to a number of disability supports for which the family physician is the usual authorizer (McColl & Jongbloed, 2006). Primary care is especially important for people with disabilities.

Visit <http://www.marchofdimes.ca/EN/advocacy/Pages/AdvocacyPolicySubmissions.aspx> for the complete submission.

laws and policies, to incorporate more voices. Too often representative organizations are consulted as the voice of people with disabilities, but people with disabilities need to be involved." The LCO consulted widely among disability organizations across Ontario and will issue a results paper early in 2012.

Recommending law reform measures to make the law accessible to all Ontarians.





ONTARIO PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION TO ONTARIO MINISTER OF FINANCE: *Advocating for Caregivers*

Excerpted here are official remarks delivered by Vice President, Jerry Lucas, at the Minister's Roundtable for Pre-Budget discussion held at Queen's Park on Dec. 13th.

"The goal of the health care system is to keep Ontarians as healthy as possible, in their homes and active in the community. This is facilitated by the community service sector and the Community Care Access Centres. Illness, the first level of health failure is addressed by physicians and clinics. More severe illness requires the hospital, which has the goal of returning the individual to his or her home.

Increasingly, wellness and community supports will need to form a more prominent pillar in Ontario's healthcare system. In the short term, investing in community supports and associated less expensive preventative services can reduce the high demand on expensive primary care.

Government investments must be guided by the ideal of building a culture of care, developing sufficient capacity, identifying and delivering support for caregivers, and facilitating integrated services."

REGISTERED DISABILITY SAVINGS PLAN DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 31

Speak to a representative at your bank or financial institution about this investment instrument introduced in the 2007 federal budget. The RDSP is among the Government of Canada's more generous investment instruments, and was made possible through the advocacy of many groups, including March of Dimes, during consultations with the Standing Committee on Finance during the early 2000s.

The Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) helps Canadians with disabilities and their families save for the future. If you are a Canadian resident under age 60 and are eligible for the Disability Tax Credit, you are eligible for an RDSP. Earnings accumulate tax-free, until you take money out of your RDSP. Parents or guardians may open an RDSP for a minor. With written permission from the holder, anyone can contribute to the RDSP.

Once you open an RDSP, you may apply for the Canada Disability Savings Grant and Canada Disability Savings Bond.

To learn more about how the RDSP works, see RDSP Overview at website of the Canada Revenue Agency, www.cra-arc.gc.ca.

As of January 2011, you are allowed to carry forward unused grant and bond entitlements for a 10-year period preceding the opening of the plan.

As of July 2011, the proceeds from a deceased parent's or grandparent's Registered Retirement Savings Plan, Registered Retirement Income Fund and Registered Pension Plan can be rolled over into the RDSP of a financially dependent child or grandchild with a disability.

As of June 26, 2011, a new measure allows more flexibility for those with shortened life expectancies.

Remember, the deadline for contributions this year is December 31.



MARCH OF DIMES CONGRATULATES PRIME MINISTER HARPER ON GLOBAL POLIO ERADICATION

November 2, 2011

Right Honourable Stephen Harper, PC, MP
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister:

On behalf of the Board of Directors, it is with great pleasure that I offer my sincere congratulations on the Government of Canada's commitment to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative that you announced on October 29.

Your announcement comes at a very historic time: this year, 2011, also represents the 60th anniversary of March of Dimes, an organization whose origins are closely associated with polio. It is our hope that the four remaining polio-endemic countries will soon be polio-free countries. However, the challenge won't stop there, as you are probably aware from the history of March of Dimes.

More than 60 years ago, desperate to find a cure for polio, mothers across Canada joined a North America-wide fundraising drive towards research. They were known as the Marching Mothers®, and these dedicated volunteers went door-to-door in their neighbourhoods, collecting donations for the March of Dimes under the leadership of the Right Honourable Ellen Fairclough.

March of Dimes was established in 1951. Four years later, in 1955, the polio vaccine proved effective in limited test trials, and laboratories rushed to manufacture the vaccine, including Connaught Laboratories (now sanofi pasteur) in Toronto. With the threat of polio greatly diminished, the March of Dimes in Canada began funding centres for people who had already contracted the disease, with early programs focused mostly on rehabilitation and job training.

Today, March of Dimes is dedicated to helping children and adults across Canada to lead more independent lives. In addition to the many programs and services we offer, Post-Polio Canada works with peer support groups nationwide to connect polio survivors. The program also provides education for those unfamiliar with polio and resources to caregivers helping those with post-polio syndrome. I enclose a copy of Post-Polio Canada's most recent newsletter, PoliO' Canada.

Mr. Prime Minister, please feel free to always call upon the innovation and expertise of March of Dimes, one of Canada's largest service providers to Canadians with disabilities. Our team is always available to work with your Government as we continue building a society inclusive of Canadians with disabilities.

Warmest regards,

Andria Spindel

President and Chief Executive Officer



LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR DELIVERS THRONE SPEECH

by Steven Christianson



David Onley, Lieutenant Governor.

November 22, 2011, Queen's Park – Toronto

The opening of the First Session of Ontario's 40th Parliament commenced with the reading of the Speech from the Throne by His Honour, David Onley, Lieutenant Governor.

Much of what was outlined extends the Liberal government's record from the previous Parliament and echoed commitments announced in the October 2011 election.

Economic challenges defined today's Speech. Job creation and strengthening the economic infrastructure are paramount, while emphasizing support for families and the recently introduced tax reforms.

Full-day kindergarten, 60,000 new spaces in colleges and universities, and a 30% reduction of post-secondary tuition form the cornerstone of the education plank. Three new undergraduate campuses will soon be announced.

Quality of life for families was also one of the main emphases. Seniors led the pack, as the Speech echoed the recently announced Healthy Homes renovation tax credit for seniors, as well as the increase for home care services for seniors. The Ontario government will also press for a new 10-year health accord that recognizes the needs and importance of seniors.

Balancing the budget was a key component of the Speech. The public service will be reduced by 5% by March 2012. It will be reduced by an additional 2% by 2014. Savings will be found "elsewhere" – details of which will be announced in the Fall Economic Update.

The report of Don Drummond was highlighted as a plan for immediate budget balancing as well as a proposed path for transforming the way programs and services are delivered. That report will be released and discussed in the Assembly before the end of this year. March of Dimes is currently preparing an official submission to the committee led by Mr. Drummond.

Which leads to what was perhaps the most interesting keystone of the Speech: the emphasis on working together in an age defined by uncertainty and transformation. In reflection of the recent Ontario election, an olive branch to the opposition parties was extended, ostensibly in recognition of the minority position the Liberals hold in the legislature, emphasizing cooperation, collaboration and common goals.



STRETCH TAX CREDIT FOR CHARITABLE GIVING

March of Dimes has officially endorsed the proposed Stretch Tax Credit for Charitable Giving as recommended by Imagine Canada in its pre-budget submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. (Imagine Canada is a nation organization which supports Canada's charities and nonprofits). A letter has been sent to Finance Minister Jim Flaherty urging his support for the inclusion of this innovative tax credit in the 2012 budget.

The proposed tax credit invites every Canadian to be a philanthropist. It acknowledges that charities, the Government of Canada, and Canadians can build stronger, more resilient, more economically and socially viable communities, even during financially challenging times.

Canadians are among the most generous people in the world, however in recent years there has been a noticeable decline in the proportion of taxpayers claiming the Charitable Tax Credit. This is not only troubling from a financial standpoint: there is a direct

link between donations and volunteerism. That is to say that people who make donations are much more likely to volunteer their time and efforts to causes that are important to them.

A Parliamentary Budget Office analysis of the Stretch Tax Credit anticipates that within three years, it could result in up to 600,000 new donors, and an increase of up to 26 per cent in median donations levels.

The cost of the Stretch Tax Credit would be moderate - \$10 to \$40 million after three years as estimated by the Parliamentary Budget Office. This tax credit would provide meaningful tax relief for hard-working families of moderate means, particularly younger families and younger career earners aspiring to become more active in their communities across the country, as well as more active with international charities.

Ultimately, the Stretch Tax Credit is about creating and sustaining a culture of giving.

ON JANUARY 1, 2012 BUSINESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS MUST COMPLY

The first day of January, 2012, is the deadline date for all Ontario businesses and organizations to comply with the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, the first Standard of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) to become law. Following the government's timetable businesses and organizations have had two to three years to prepare.

March of Dimes' AODA Committee was established three years ago to ensure compliance well before the January 2012 deadline.

More than 17 per cent of Ontarians have a disability and this number is quickly rising as the population ages. It is interesting to note that by 2017, for the first time, Ontarians aged 65 and over will account for a larger share of the population than children aged 0 to 14. These statistics emphasize how important accessibility, in all its forms, is becoming.

For further information about the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service visit www.ontario.ca/AccessON



QUEEN'S PARK UPDATE



Two recent government bills were introduced by the Ontario government. March of Dimes has been involved in the policy and legislative briefings in all stages for each. Bill 2, an Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007, to implement a healthy home renovation tax credit, is intended to assist Ontarians to renovate their homes to achieve greater accessibility and Bill 30, an Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, in respect to family caregiver leave, would build upon the existing Family Medical Leave to provide up to 8 weeks of unpaid job leave for employees to provide care and support to a sick or injured family member, without the fear of losing their job. The legislature adjourned on Dec. 9th and both bills will go before Committee when MPPs return in late February.

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS ANNOUNCEMENT

The team in Government Relations and Advocacy is pleased to announce the placement of Ryerson University student, Sharon Garvey Patrick. Sharon, a 4th year student of social work, will be with us throughout the 2011-12 academic year.



continued on page 8...



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.

Produced by March of Dimes Canada:

Steven Christianson, Manager,
Government Relations & Advocacy

Janet Macmaster, Assistant
Government Relations & Advocacy

Andria Spindel,
President & CEO

Contact:

jmacmaster@marchofdimes.ca

March of Dimes Canada
Government Relations & Advocacy
10 Overlea Boulevard
Toronto ON M4H 1A4
Tel: 416-425-3463 ext. 7388

www.marchofdimes.ca/advocacy[®]
March of Dimes Canada 2011