

THE ADVOCATE



Government Affairs Advisory

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Minister of Health Deb Matthews (centre) meets with special guest celebrity, Debbie Reynolds, (right) and March of Dimes’ President and CEO Andria Spindel, at reception for the annual Ability & Beyond Gala Fundraiser at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel in Toronto.

Our Rights and Freedoms: A Cause for Celebration



Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms recently turned 30 years old, and to commemorate the occasion several disability advocates attended an anniversary reception hosted by the Honourable Senator David Smith.

Many of you will have heard about the Charter's anniversary through the media. However, there is another part of that anniversary that some of you might not have heard about.

We first re-visit in 1982. It was a chilly day in April, on the centre lawn of the Parliament Buildings, and a cast that included Prime Minister Trudeau and several representatives of the Privy Council participated in the Queen's Royal Assent to the Charter, that document that now guarantees the fundamental rights of freedoms of every Canadian.



Within that ceremony, though, something else, equally profound, occurred that day: the enactment of Section 15. So what is so special about this?

The year prior, 1981, was the UN's first observance that focused on disability, the international Year of Disabled Persons. The Prime Minister at the time, Pierre Trudeau, insisted that Canada be involved, and to begin, established a committee (the first in Canadian parliamentary history) to consider all aspects of living with a disability in Canada.

The Chair of that Committee, then Member of Parliament for Don Valley West (incidentally, the riding of the head office of March of Dimes), documented the Committee's work and recommendations in a report called *Obstacles* (another first in Parliament). *Obstacles* not only became a hallmark document in the realm of disability issues, it impassioned several Parliamentarians to take action.

And what action was that? Section 15 of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

David Smith insisted that Canada's equality rights also include and make specific reference to disability. The Prime Minister agreed.

Today, Section 15 reads as follows:

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or **mental or physical disability**.

The inclusion of "mental or physical disability" now had a place in the most important law of our land.

David Smith is now a Member of the Senate of Canada and the Chair Emeritus of law firm, Fraser Milner Casgrain. Closer to home, he is also a friend and supporter of March of Dimes, having co-chaired gala events, including a special reception for Warren's World on Parliament Hill.

A cause for celebration, indeed!



Then Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, with Privy Council members, look on as HRH Queen Elizabeth II signs into history the new Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in April 1982.

In our previous issue of The Advocate we featured disability advocacy on the world stage. To continue with our focus on international advocacy, let's look at the outcome of the 2011 FICCDAT conferences.

The Toronto Declaration on Bridging Knowledge, Policy and Practice in Aging and Disability.

Toronto, Canada, March 30, 2012

One outcome of the June 2011 Festival of International Conferences on Caregiving, Disability, Aging and Technology (FICCDAT) initiative is The Toronto Declaration, an action plan that bridges knowledge, policy and practice in aging and disability. It is a call to action not just for Government, but also NGOs, professionals and consumer stakeholders to meet the challenges of this increasingly important area of endeavour.

Authors:

Jerome Bickenbach, Christine Bigby, Luis Salvador-Carulla, Tamar Heller, Matilde Leonardi, Barbara LeRoy, Jennifer Mendez, Michelle Putnam, Andria Spindel.

We, as organizers and participants of the 2011 Growing Older with a Disability (GOWD) Conference, a part of the Festival of International Conferences on Caregiving, Disability, Aging and Technology (FICCDAT), held in Toronto, Canada June 5-8, 2011 forward this declaration and invite governmental, non-governmental, professional, and consumer stakeholders to join us in supporting and implementing this plan of action.

The 2011 World Report on Disability, produced jointly by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank, estimates that there are over one billion people with disabilities in the world today, of whom nearly 200 million



Living Longer Living Better
Get plugged into FICCDAT

experience significant difficulties. At the same time, in almost every country, the proportion of people aged over 60 years is growing faster than any other age group, forecast to reach 1.5 billion by 2050, according to the Global Health and Aging Report, also released in 2011 by WHO in partnership with United States National Institute on Aging. This means that in the years ahead disability will be an even greater concern to developed and developing nations due to aging populations, higher risk of disability in older people, as well as the global increase in chronic health conditions, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer and mental health disorders. Taken together, the dual



Andria Spindel, President and CEO
March of Dimes Canada



phenomena of global aging and increased longevity for individuals with disabilities represent significant advances in public health and education.

However, along with these positive trends come new challenges for the 21st century. These include: strains on pension and social security systems; preparing health providers and societies to meet the needs of populations aging with and aging into disability; preventing and managing age and disability associated secondary conditions and chronic diseases; designing sustainable policies to support healthy aging and community-living as well as long-term and palliative care; and developing disability and age-friendly services and settings.

Bridging the fields of aging and disability research, policy, and practice is critical for meeting these challenges. ... we seek common ground, in terms of the modern conception of active aging and of disability, defined as difficulty in functioning at the body, person or societal levels experienced by an individual with a health condition in interaction with the person's physical, social and attitudinal environment. Moreover, we firmly believe that, despite the distinctions between aging and disability ... the time has come to emphasize similarities in experiences and needed supports, services and policies rather than focusing on differences.

Queen's Park Committee Adopts March of Dimes' Recommendations

Michael D. Prue, MPP for Beaches – East York and NDP Finance Critic, is also a Member of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. He sent the following message to March of Dimes' regarding Bill 2, The Healthy Home Renovation Tax Credit. March of Dimes' Program Director, Jerry Lucas, and Steven Christianson, Manager of Government Relations & Advocacy presented to the Committee on April 5, 2012. Here's what Mr. Prue had to say:

Thank you for the March of Dimes contribution to the Finance Committee in its deliberations of Bill 2, The Healthy Home Renovation Tax Credit.



Michael D. Prue, MPP for Beaches-East York

The NDP amendments were taken from your presentation and, we are pleased to inform you that all 3 of our amendments passed today (May 3/12).

Again, many thanks for your valuable insight.

Click here for Ontario Hansard of March of Dimes presentation: http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/committee-proceedings/committee_transcripts_details.do?Date=2012-04-05&ParlCommlID=8957&BillID=2535&Business=&locale=en&DocumentID=26191#P131_27315



2012 Federal Budget

Delivered Hon. Jim Flaherty, PC, MP, Minister of Finance, **March, 2012**

The 2012 federal budget, delivered by Finance Minister Jim Flaherty, the first budget of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's majority government, was delivered with minimal surprises.

Minister Flaherty had suggested in the days leading up the budget that measures would be moderate and modest.

Let's consider.

The Budget provides \$30 million over three years for the Opportunities Fund, and seeks other enhancements by creating a panel that will consider labour market opportunities for Canadians with disabilities.

A review and set of improvements will be made to the Registered Disability Savings Program, including enhanced federal-provincial harmonization rules, and greater flexibility for investors and recipients.

The Budget proposes to expand the list of health care professionals who can order medical and assistive devices zero-rated under the HST. It will also expand the list of expenses an individual may claim under the Medical Expenses Tax Credit.

Legislation will be introduced to ensure that employees on long-term disability who work in federally regulated workplaces are protected should their employers become insolvent.

We see more than \$500 million dollars over two years targeted to the Employment Insurance front, to help with everything from



Federal Finance Minister, Jim Flaherty

enhanced information initiatives to the direct enhancement of certain benefits themselves.

Eligibility for Old Age Security rises from 65 to 67. The change will start April 2023, with full implementation by January 2029, and will not affect anyone who is 54 by March 31, 2012. Several other details around the OAS, GIS and CPP/QPP have been announced and are available <http://www.budget.gc.ca/2012/plan/pdf/Plan2012-eng.pdf>.

The National Research Council, created in 1916, will be renewed with an eye toward business-oriented applications.

An additional \$7 million per year will go toward the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council's industry-academic partner initiatives.

How charities report to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) will see a few changes. The Budget proposes that the CRA enhance its compliance and education activities with respect to political activities conducted by charities. The CRA will also require that charities provide detailed information about political activities, the source of donations for such, and the amount of activity dedicated



to political activities (not affecting the work we do, but during an electoral period we must carefully review the new rules once passed).

Several agencies of the Crown will be merged or have their back-office functions significantly reduced, eliminated or harmonized. A preliminary account by Finance officials reveals that the Public Health Agency of

Canada is one such target for cost savings. Nearly all Departments are affected through this measure. A total of just shy of 20,000 public service positions will be affected in this area of the Budget.

Cross-Canada Budget Round-up 2012

It is no surprise that program and spending cuts characterize most government budgets today. But how do the provinces compare in terms of projected programs and services for people with disabilities?

Let's consider a few highlights:

The governments of Ontario, Alberta and BC have introduced new income tax credits for seniors who want to renovate their homes to increase accessibility and independence in the home.

Nova Scotia, Quebec and Manitoba lead the pack on the caregiving front, adding dollars for home care, tax credits and related benefits for caregivers, and a comprehensive caregiver initiative in Manitoba. Quebec's introduction of the Growing Old at Home Action Plan recognizes the need for more home support services, informal caregivers, adapted housing and enhanced tax assistance for modifications and equipment.

Increases to disability income support are strongly featured in Saskatchewan, Ontario,

Nova Scotia and Alberta. Saskatchewan is also seeing increases to their Seniors Personal Care Home Benefit, Seniors Income Plan, and community-based organizations that provide services to people with disabilities.

In New Brunswick, "Home First" will be looking at what can be done to facilitate seniors remaining in their homes, an initiative that is complemented by additional monies for affordable housing.

But it is to Newfoundland and Labrador where we see a robust and enthusiastic disability agenda. Entitled "Access, Inclusion, Equality", Newfoundland's government has introduced an initiative that represents a cross-disability approach and is supported by \$6.5 million funding. Newfoundland's is perhaps the most comprehensive and coordinated strategy yet seen anywhere in Canada.

Visit www.marchofdimes.ca/advocacy for additional details for these and other 2012 provincial budgets.



STUDENT ADVOCACY GOES PROFESSIONAL

Leading By Example: Warren Rupnarain

(former March of Dimes Intern, now Accessibility Coordinator for the Town of Markham).



Markham's Accessibility Committee, including Warren Rupnarain, front row, right.

Markham is committed to ensuring that all residents have full and equal access to its facilities, services and information. Accessibility makes it possible for people with all levels of ability to take advantage of everything Markham has to offer.

Markham's goal is to reduce barriers for as many people as possible in terms of physical environment, customer service and communications. This includes new multilingual services and assistive communication technologies.

Markham recently implemented a \$3-million accessibility infrastructure grant from all three levels of government to provide accessibility upgrades to our most frequently used facilities. Upgrades include accessible counters, door

openers and universal accessible washrooms.

In September 2011, Markham Council endorsed the 2011 Markham Accessibility Design Guidelines. These guidelines are a best practice reference that articulates the best ways to make interior and exterior environments accessible. The guidelines go beyond the requirements of the Ontario Building Code.

To encourage and enhance public awareness, Markham created an annual accessible business award in partnership with the Markham Board of Trade, which recognizes local businesses that demonstrate an exemplary commitment toward accessibility. Markham is the proud sponsor of this award, which has been in place for two years.

Past recipients of the award are Participation House and Markham Stouffville Hospital.

The Greenprint, Markham's Sustainability Plan is a long-term plan that addresses environmental health, social and cultural well-being, and economic vitality. It is a plan to deliver positive change to help prepare Markham for future challenges, both locally and globally, and to ensure that Markham continues to be a great place to live, work and play for all residents. The Greenprint focuses on twelve Sustainability Priorities that have been developed through a systems thinking approach. Accessibility was considered throughout the development of these priorities and their 241 recommendations.

In particular, accessibility plays a significant role in the Access & Mobility Priority that aims to increase the ability of people to reach desired destinations through a variety of



modes of transportation. Accessibility also plays a major role in the Social Equity Priority that strives to ensure that all residents have equal opportunities and rights regardless of age, gender, orientation, religion, ethnicity, income level, health and physical or mental ability.

Moreover, Markham has a Diversity Action Plan – Everyone Welcome – that was passed by Council in 2010. Everyone Welcome includes a number of recommendations to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities, including purchasing accessibility tools for Markham libraries and ensuring

that Markham's website is accessible. Input from the members of the Markham Advisory Committee on Accessibility was essential to the recommendations and will be integral to the success of the plan.

<http://www.markham.ca/wps/portal/Markham/AboutMarkham/Diversity/>

If you have any questions regarding accessibility in Markham, please contact Markham's Accessibility Coordinator, Warren Rupnarain at 905-477-7000 ext: 3542, or at wrupnarain@markham.ca

GR Rep Advising Canada's Largest City on Accessibility

The City of Toronto has a reconstituted Disability Issues Committee, now under the chairmanship of Councillor Adam Vaughn (Ward 20 – Trinity-Spadina). After months of preparation and candidate selection, we are pleased to report that Janet Macmaster of Government Relations & Advocacy was chosen by a panel of Councillors and narrowed down from a field of applicants numbering in the dozens.

The Committee has been in operation since 2001, newly struck every four years. The new terms of reference for the new Committee limit the number of members to twelve, all of whom must have a passion for inclusiveness and a working knowledge of both the Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The Committee advises and reports to Toronto

City Council, meaning that Toronto's Disability Issues Committee will be advising North America's 4th largest city on accessibility and inclusion.

As Canada's largest city, Toronto plays host to countless events and festivals of considerable magnitude, and features a seemingly constant plethora of construction, filming and population growth. "I am honoured to serve on such a prominent public body, and aim to live up to both March of Dimes' vision for inclusion as well as the City's motto, Diversity Our Strength, explains Macmaster explains. "There is so much potential, and I'm really very excited to begin our work."



SENATE ADOPTS RECOMMENDATIONS

Canada's Health Accord – that agreement between the federal and provincial governments on how to fund priorities and administer Canada's health care system – is up for renewal.

The Senate of Canada recently completed its examination of what a new 10-year Health Accord should address. And in response to this, our advocacy with the Canadian Disability Policy Alliance, and our recommendations to the Senate, Canada's Upper Chamber recommends that the federal, provincial and territorial governments ensure accountability measures be built into the Canada Health Transfer agreement, to address the needs of disabled persons.

It is a significant and historic milestone that the Senate recognizes people with disabilities in this way.

The Evolving Canadian Crown

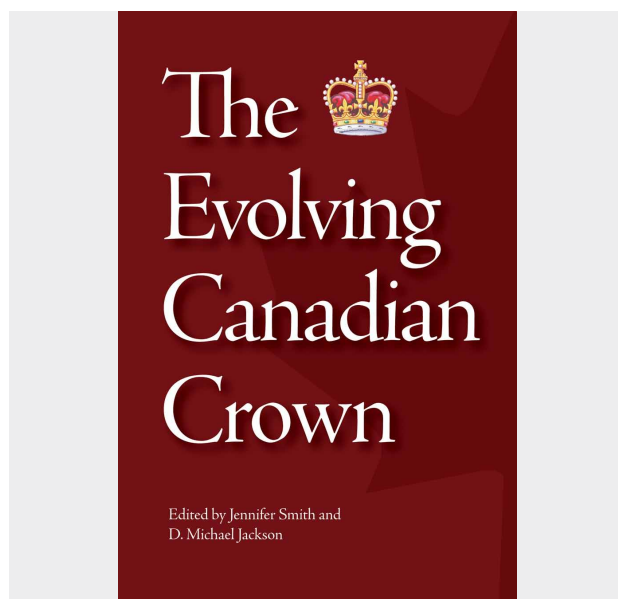
Edited by Jennifer Smith and D. Michael Jackson

Queen's University Policy Studies Series – Institute for Intergovernmental Relations

Published in January of this year, *The Evolving Canadian Crown* is a collection of papers that were presented at "The Crown in Canada: Present Realities and Future Options", a conference held in June 2010. Aside from offering a historical survey of monarchs since the 16th century (pre-Confederation British colonies and New France), it is also a fascinating perspective on what is perhaps the least understood aspect of governance in Canada.

The Evolving Canadian Crown reminds us that ours is a system of governance described as a constitutional monarchy. More often than not, our knowledge of constitutional monarchy ends there: aside from what is usually scant reference in civics classes or seminars on introductory Canadian politics and government, most of us turn our focus to what we consider to be the practical realities of elections and party politics, the workings of Parliament, the operations of government and the development of public policy.

Despite the largely symbolic reference to the monarchy in Canada (through the effigy of the sovereign on our coinage and the \$20 bill, for example) or the fact that her place of residence is roughly 5,000 kilometres away, the Crown in Canada is very real, indeed – and has very real implications on our processes of governance.





Several authors dedicate detailed analysis to the 2008 national question of prorogation by Prime Minister Harper and the role of then-Governor General Michaëlle Jean. The various authors remind Canadians that not only is there a role for the Crown, but the embodiment and institutions of the Crown are vested with considerable authority, and by no means should the Canadian Crown be considered a mere relic of Sir. John A. MacDonald's time.

Have you ever wondered exactly how royal assent occurs? Why do we need a Speech from the Throne to open the provincial and federal parliaments, and is this merely symbolic? Does a Lieutenant Governor represent Her Majesty or the Governor General? Can the reserve power of the Canadian Crown be used to deny a request by a prime minister to call an election? What is the relationship of the Crown with the First Nations? How does the Canadian Crown differ from the role of that of the UK, Australia or New Zealand?

The Evolving Canadian Crown addresses each of these issues, and does so in a rather timely way as Queen Elizabeth II marks her Diamond Jubilee this year. Most importantly, by referencing numerous current events, this volume of papers provides a thoroughly approachable discussion for anyone interested in Canada's government – and for any of us in the field who signed contracts with the government and wondered why "Her Majesty" is cited in the terms of the contract.

Steven Christianson

Federal Subsidy Granted to Ontario March of Dimes in Sudbury and North Bay



Kellie Leitch

The federal Ministry of Human Resources and Skills Development recently announced it would be investing \$920,000 in Skills Link funding in two March of Dimes projects in Sudbury and North Bay to help youth overcome barriers to employment and enter the job market.

Parliamentary Secretary Kellie Leitch, on behalf of the Honourable Diane Finley, gave notice of the grant, saying, "As we face significant demographic shifts in Canada, we must think about the future workforce and how we can ensure our programs support Canadians to be active in the workforce."

"The March of Dimes is a great organization. This will definitely aid in creating jobs here in northern Ontario," Leitch said.

Ontario March of Dimes regional manager for employment services in North Bay and Sudbury, Janine Roy, said the organization is "very excited" to receive the funding. "It will go towards our Achieving Success program, which helps youth between the ages of 16 and 30, who have barriers to employment – such as physical or cognitive disabilities – get jobs."



Government Relations & Advocacy, Update

Over the past several months we have advocated during elections and in the legislatures for improved, specialized employment services for people with disabilities, recognition of disability issues in Canada's 10-year health accord agreement between the federal and provincial governments, a shifting of healthcare resources to enhance home and community

care, and broadened access to home modifications to achieve greater accessibility in the home.

We have made significant strides in each of these areas. There is much more work to done.

[See more online and get involved.](#)

In The Next Issue

Manitoba's "AODA"

Launch of The Toronto Declaration

Disability Action Plan in New Brunswick

BC's Seniors Home Renovation Tax Credit Passes

Ontario's Social Assistance Review

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