

The Advocate

A GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS ADVISORY



Special Inaugural Issue



Accessibility
Election
Coverage
2006

What Does Warren Want?

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Winter 2005 - 06



Coming to an Election Campaign Near You

He's young, bright and energetic. His name is Warren. He's also determined to change the world.



Ah, that youthful idealism and hope. But make no mistake: Warren is more than hopeful. He has a mission, a very practical one. He aims to achieve accessibility. Why? Because, in his words, "Accessibility Rocks!"

During the 2006 Federal Election Warren and film crew will be visiting randomly selected offices of the candidates running in Toronto to learn of their commitments to accessibility.

A 22-year old Ryerson University student studying real-world advocacy and government relations at Ontario March of Dimes' Toronto head office, Warren Rupnarain also happens to use a motorized wheelchair (necessary to increase his mobility as a result of the effects of Cerebral Palsy).

"The wheelchair replaces my legs. It gets

me where I need to go. But unlike my legs, it's a little bulkier, so sometimes there are challenges in getting into different facilities," explains Warren. "But people have to realize that accommodating someone who uses a wheelchair only gives organizations greater access to more talent,

go? True advocacy in action.

But this is more than the usual "will you support" exercise. Warren's World will be filming the experiences of Warren and Co. in their entirety - reality TV. Or, web TV, that is. Each day's experience, or "episode", will be posted



more volunteers, more people who want to help out and contribute."

"Can he get into the election offices?" will be the test Warren's World uses on the campaign trail. Will he be accommodated? Will candidates agree that creating national disability legislation is the right way to

the special Election Coverage section of the Ontario March of Dimes website (www.dimes.on.ca).

And what happens if he can't get into an election campaign office? "If we can raise the bar of awareness during the formidable stages of policy formation, that is

right at the grassroots level of campaigning during an election, and we get the ear of the candidates out there, then we have to give applause," explains Government Relations Coordinator Steven Christianson. "Our goal in this exercise is to demonstrate to those in elected circles that we want to work with you in creative ways, that there is always a workable solution."

Budding WebTV star, Warren, agrees. "Accessibility is more than a word or tag-line. It's something that affects me everyday, something that affects anyone with a disability, at any age. That's got to change. So we're going to have some 'advocacy fun.'"

Watch for Warren's World and complete Election Coverage on disability issues over the next few weeks.



Mark Your Calendar

Toronto City Council and Mayor David Miller have proclaimed January 2006 as Ontario March of Dimes Month.

Be part of this special celebration at Toronto City Hall on January 6 - which officially launches the kick-off to the 2006 Annual Door-to-Door Campaign. The Door-to-Door Campaign raises money to help increase the independence and community participation of people with physical disabilities.

Here We Grow Again

Welcome to The Advocate, Ontario March of Dimes' newest voice of communicating our work in government affairs and advocacy.

The Advocate represents not just a new name and look for our quarterly periodical. It's the next step in our constant evolution of refining and improving our work with government and elected officials, our role in public policy development, while always linking back to our mission of creating a society inclusive of people with physical disabilities.

Since the early 1970s, Ontario March of Dimes has been a leader in the disability field as an advocate for improved integration of people with disabilities in community life. The priorities and structures (and challenges) of government have changed since that time. But today's reality in government (at all levels) only reinforces the need to continually identify opportunities, develop policy solutions, and find new and innovative ways for us to contribute.

The Canadian Oxford dictionary defines an

advocate as "one who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy." What it doesn't spell out is that advocacy is central in helping transform good ideas into good public policy. Advocacy remains central in ensuring that good public policy leads to sustainable, meaningful and effective practices. So we feel The Advocate is an appropriate reflection of what we're doing and what now defines the essence of working with government.

Ultimately, of course, we hope The Advocate will tweak your creativity and help you discover new ways of partnering with us, reinforce how and where your donor dollars are put to use, or simply inform and advise you on the constantly changing legislative and regulatory environment in the non-profit and charitable sector – and, most importantly, how we create a Canada inclusive of people with disabilities.

National Disability Act

It was in 1996 that the recommendation was made. Ten years later, it is time for commitment and action.

In 1996, the federal government established a task force to examine the roles and responsibilities of the Government of Canada in the area of disability. The "Scott Task Force", as it became known, presented many recommendations to Parliament – a number of which have been implemented and have effected significant improvements in the coordination of federal disability policies and programs.

One recommendation that has not been put into action we feel is more critical than ever: the introduction of a Canadians with Disabilities Act.

National legislation would complement existing human rights legislation, as well as newly-introduced provincial models (AODA), to create a comprehensive framework for inclusion, equity and the elimination and prevention of barriers for people with disabilities.

A Canadians with Disabilities Act would provide for the appointment of a Minister responsible for disability issues, and require the

way to advance this objective is to designate a Minister responsible for Canadians with disabilities – both for representation and

accountability as well as securing a voice at the federal Cabinet Table.

Which political parties and which candidates

federal government to set out the powers, duties and functions of federal institutions – including private sector organizations delivering public services, on disability issues.

Therefore, consistent with the recommendation of the Scott Task Force, we recommend that the Government of Canada introduce a Canadians with Disabilities Act to ensure consistent action, coordination and accountability at the federal level for all Canadians with a disability. We further recommend that the best

endorse the introduction of a Canadians with Disabilities Act? Visit www.dimes.on.ca for Ontario March of Dimes' Election Coverage and learn what you can do to help get the politicians to commit.

Ask your candidates during this election -- Will you commit to introducing a Canadians with Disabilities Act?





Disabled Person Parking Permit

Program Becomes "Accessible"

After months of consultation and receiving feedback from stakeholder groups, including several Ontario March of Dimes representatives, Ontario Transportation Minister Harinder Takhar announced on December 1, 2005, that the government is making significant improvements to the Disabled Parking Permit Program.

The Program, which is being renamed the Accessible Parking Permit Program, includes the following key revisions:

- New measurable and observable mobility criteria that will make it easier for

medical practitioners to evaluate a person's eligibility and ensure that only qualified applicants receive the new Accessible Parking Permit

- Application and processing times will be cut in half, to approximately four weeks

- New permit security features that will reduce misuse and fraud

- The introduction of a new Traveller Permit for use at Ontario airports, that will allow permit holders to take their regular permit with them and access designated parking at their destinations

- The addition of nurse practitioners that

will be added to the list of those who can authorize the medical need for an Accessible Parking Permit

- Eliminating the need for people with permanent disabilities to renew their permits

- The introduction of a Company Permit, that will allow organizations to transport people with disabilities.

The permit program's improvements represent the first major operational change in the provincial government following the passage of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

Election 2006 Make it Yours

In a predecessor edition of *The Advocate* (then called the *Government Relations Bulletin*), we reminded readers that no minority federal government in Canada has ever lasted more than twenty months. So at least *Dimes Readers* are not surprised that we are in the midst of a national election campaign, with E-Day set for January 23, 2006.

What makes this election unique is the fact that a no-confidence motion effected the fall of the government without the presentation of a budget or other money bill. Another different feature about this election is the fact that the "campaigning period" will effectively happen in two phases. Phase One commences December, up until a few days prior to Christmas.

Then, after a nearly ten-day break, Phase Two commences at the start of January.

How will voters react this time around? In addition to the plethora of issues that typically bear on voters' minds, we hope that, if you're reading this edition, you'll be measuring performance and platforms on commitment to progressive disability policy. You'll find election updates and resources on our website, www.dimes.om.ca, to see which of the parties measures up. But in the meantime, you can become active by doing one very simple task: ask three other people to become aware of the importance of disability policy in this election, to compare which parties are committed to doing what, and vote accordingly.



Andria Spindel, *President & CEO*

Accessible parking spaces only for those who need them.

As a provider of volunteer and caregiver support, we are delighted that our drivers will be better able to assist clients. The revisions to the program go a long way toward helping achieve this. This new permit program

also signals an opportunity to advocate at the municipal level to bring in province-wide consistency in local enforcement by ensuring that accessible parking spaces are used only by those who need them.

Advancing Accessibility: Green Light Forward

"The year 2005 heralded the 15th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which was intended to provide greater access for the disabled to jobs, public services and to public areas," explains Mike O'Sullivan, Bureau Chief for the Voice of America. In a recent story on the ADA's impact, he points out that much more is needed.

"Hollywood actors say the law has had a positive impact, but that the entertainment business still offers too few roles to disabled performers," O'Sullivan said.

Professor Olivia Raynor of UCLA's National Arts and Disability Center agrees. The co-author of a recent study on the ADA's impact on California's arts and entertainment industry, Professor Raynor says that barriers still remain for disabled actors and advocates must continue their efforts.

Some industry representatives openly acknowledge this. William Schallert, who is 83, walks with a cane today, the result of an age-related disability. A former president of the Screen Actors Guild and a disability advocate himself, he says an ongoing larger effort is needed to break down the barriers that the laws [such as the ADA] are



designed to accomplish. "It's about a larger social purpose, which is to show the diversity of our society especially to the children who spend more time watching television than they do in school."

Advocacy helps identify the shortfalls, the best practices and the lessons learned as part of the process of strengthening, amending and improving legislation.

In June of 2005, Ontarians could pride themselves in the fact that one of the most socially progressive bills presented to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario (at least more progressive in this regard than many have seen in a generation) was passed into law. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, passed with unanimous consent, paving the way for what many view as the foundation for

removing and preventing barriers in Ontario. The provincial government, itself, issued press releases describing the newly passed legislation as "hallmark," "historic" and "ground-breaking" – all accurate descriptions, to be sure.

But what now?

Let's switch back to The ADA: 15 Years Later. "What now?" is precisely what American disability advocates asked themselves after the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act fifteen years ago, in 1990. That legislation, too, was regarded almost universally as "hallmark," "historic" and "ground-breaking". Interestingly, these very same adjectives can be used to describe not only the ADA, but its overall impact in America's workplaces and society in general. *If* – and significant emphasis must be placed on this conjunctive – *if* state legisla-

tion *and* community-based, organized advocacy complement the law. Herein is the real measure and success of the ADA.

Advocates realized the need for complementary state legislation to affect workplaces, building codes, employment, schools – in other words, the spectrum of policy spheres that lay outside federal jurisdiction. The result in California was the Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA). California has fairly stringent civil rights statutes, most of which are contained in the FEHA – which breathes life into state-level implementation for the nearly 6.6 million Californians with a disability. As a result of FEHA, governed by the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (the state agency charged with enforcing the ADA), California today is responsible for investigating and prosecuting 25% of the United States' total number of disability complaints. In fact, FEHA is considered by most disability and public policy advocates as broader in its provisions than the ADA.

In Ontario, advocacy was central in getting the AODA passed into law. It will be more so as the law gains definition

and the factors of implementation are inked into regulation. As the Accessibility Directorate and the Standards Development Committees take shape, implementation and sustainable compliance will be key issues. So, too, will those areas not yet covered by the legislation (where complementary laws may be needed) and in identifying barriers that still prevent anyone in any sector from fully participating in society.

Advocacy efforts such as those of the former ODA Committee, once a driving force in helping change the course of much legislation for Ontarians with disabilities, are relevant and needed perhaps now more than ever. The newly-minted AODA Alliance – the post-AODA advocacy organization – will certainly have its work cut out when advocating for appropriate implementation of the law, all the while remaining mindful that the critical role and function of any government is govern first and foremost for those without a voice. The employees of California's biggest industry, Hollywood, send a unique message about barriers and discrimination, and one we should all remember as we forge ahead on the practicalities of the AODA.

The "In" on LHINs¹¹

Queen's Park introduces integration Bill 36



Bill 36, an Act to provide for the integration of the local system for the delivery of health services, received First Read at Queen's Park on November 24, 2005.

Introduced by Health and Long-Term Care Minister, George Smitherman, the Bill outlines the legalities of how Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) will carry out their responsibilities as they plan, fund and integrate local health systems in 14 areas of the province.

Each LHIN will operate according to the priorities identified in each network region. In other words, each network is different, and so, too, will be each LHIN and how it plans, funds and integrates services.

Once the legislation is passed, the powers of the Act will allow for the creation, integration or dissolution of service

provider arrangements. LHINs will not be a provider of clinical services, but rather will coordinate service delivery.

This move by the Province represents the next step in transforming Ontario's healthcare system toward a more patient-centered, integrated system that reduces wait-times and delivers care more effectively and efficiently.

Will CCACs have a role? They will remain for now. They might not exist in some LHINs in the future. Until further legislative amendment or introduction, CCACs may or may not be one of the entities through which a LHIN might deem appropriate to operate.

Bill 36 references the Community Care Access Corporations Act, 2001, and explains that "the current designated community care access corporations are

continued." However, once Bill 36 becomes law, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations amalgamating, dissolving or dividing community care access corporations.

What else does the legislation propose? Integration may also occur through the Minister. Under Section 28 (1) of the Bill, after receiving advice from the LHIN involved, the Minister may, if the Minister considers it in the public interest to do so, order a health service provider that receives funding from a LHIN, and that carries on its operations on a not-for-profit basis, to do any of the following:

- To cease operating, to dissolve or to wind up its operations
- To amalgamate with one or more health service providers that receive funding from a LHIN
- To transfer all or substantially all of its

operations to one or more persons or entities that carry on operations on a not-for-profit basis

For some, this is all technical and policy jargon. For others, the proposed legislation encapsulates what has been issued by the Province in the form of discussion and consultation papers, and what has been contributed by stakeholders, like Ontario March of Dimes, at the consultation and planning tables. And for others still, this process evolving around healthcare transformation has forced organizations to inspect themselves to look for efficiencies, forms and potential for integration and partnership, and, essentially, how we can improve what we're doing.

Ontario March of Dimes Chief Operating Officer and Vice President Ron Kelusky explains how LHINs has affected OMOD and our sector.

"We're always looking for ways to increase efficiencies that provide even higher quality services to our consumers. Our organizational structure will adapt to the changing reality of healthcare funding. We're already well on our way. The consumer must always come first, and we look forward to working with the Province, with the individual LHINs and through possible inter-organizational partnerships to play our part in making this work."



Bill 36 still must go through Second and Third Readings, and Royal Assent, before it becomes law.

Federal Funding: HRSDC Responds



"I have instructed my officials to...make the necessary improvements based on the recommendations."
Minister Stronach

In November 2005, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Hon. Belinda Stronach, issued the official response to the report by the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

The report, *Developing New Approaches to Funding Results*, was the result of working with the Joint Service Canada/Voluntary Sector Work Group recommendations – which evaluated the many recommendations to the Standing Committee in early 2005. The Standing Committee at that time was consider-

ing how to improve the federal directives that govern contribution agreements and calls-for-proposals for selected programs on behalf of HRSDC.

The recommendations that Minister Stronach has instructed her staff to work with for implementation purposes include the following:

- that the new administrative cost framework comes into effect for all renewals and new agreements as early as January 2006, but no later than May 1, 2006. Service Canada commits to completing the full training for staff no later than May 1, 2006;
- that multi-year funding be considered

and that with respect to integrating multi-year funding into new agreements (including agreements which emerge from any remaining Call for Proposals for the 2005-2006 fiscal year), and recommends that Service Canada proceed on a regional basis as long as redress options for unsuccessful incumbent applicants are in place.

Additionally, with respect to multi-year funding and existing agreements, Service Canada may extend/renew these agreements to multi-year funding on a regional basis, as long as the following conditions are met:

- that incumbent agencies who were

unsuccessful through recent Call for Proposals may discuss with Service Canada their transition issues and service delivery gaps, until the next Call for Proposals is launched in their area/region; and

- that all new Call for Proposals be implemented on a regional basis in accordance with the national roll-out and readiness strategy, once improvements to the assessment grid have been made, as well as administrative changes and associated instruments implemented in accordance with what Service Canada has committed to in the Joint Working Group. This implies full training of project officers to understand and implement the changes effectively. This also implies that agencies are given full information and adequate notice of these changes.

"I have instructed my officials to fully explore the issues raised in the report and make the necessary improvements based on the recommendations," Minister Stronach stated. The Minister continued by describing the recommendations as "a substantive contribution towards improving the delivery of employment services to Canadians."

OMOD's main recommendations, presented in Ottawa to the Standing Committee (April 2005) by Vice President of Program Delivery, Jerry Lucas, and Government Relations Coordinator,

Steven Christianson, were fourfold:

1. Clearly articulate measures and mutually agreed outcomes that can form the basis of program evaluation;
2. Organizations with limited administrative capacity should be provided with assistance, including training and funding in establishing, monitoring, measuring, evaluating and reporting performance;
3. In circumstances where an existing provider is meeting or exceeding all performance indicators, HRSDC should have the authority to renew existing agreements; and
4. Budgets should be multi-year, and provide an opportunity for providers to earn and retain a surplus if performance goals are met.

Ontario March of Dimes has consistently pointed out that the key to the success of implementing the recommendations contained in *Developing New Approaches to Funding Results* (or any new directives in managing calls-for-proposals), will be a smooth transition to new policy directives. We are glad to report that the recommendations to the Minister, which may be found online at www.servicecanada.gc.ca, incorporate our work and deal substantively with transition issues, and recognize the importance of a strong and dynamic partnerships with the voluntary and charitable sector in delivering employment services.

Getting Services Right for Torontonians with Disabilities



During this past summer City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff held a number of public consultations and administered a survey to service providers and users of the Adapted and Integrated Programs and Services in the city to find out how to:

- Create more welcoming environments for people with disabilities
- Improve accessibility of indoor and outdoor facilities
- Develop new program ideas
- Increase opportunities for people with disabilities

The survey will help the department to optimize the programs and services that are offered to persons with disabilities by building a baseline of those that use the services and offer the opportunity for respondents to say what services they would like to see.

A total of 19 focus groups were held throughout the city as a follow up to the “Reactive Toronto” consultations that were held in the summer of 2004.

The results of the survey and the focus groups will be available as a final report by the end of January. According to Sheila Casemore of the Ontario March of Dimes Government Relations Department who sits on the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Steering Committee chaired by Lorene Bodiam, Disability Advocate for the department, “this is a big step forward and we are excited about this project. We look forward to getting the results and creating an action plan.”

Accessible Transportation in Toronto



“When you look at the issues involved in advocating for accessible transportation in Toronto, there’s a world of opportunity. We simply need the convergence of will to turn ideas into action,”

These licenses are separate from the ones that cab companies currently have for contracts with WheelTrans.

In terms of current service provision, there are multiple issues to con-

ing cabs, that run from \$40,000 - \$50,000.

The rear-loading van loads the passenger from the rear of the vehicle from a ramp that extends onto the roadway.

the sidewalk to be able to access the sidewalk, which can sometimes pose a challenge

- In the winter the passenger will be loaded and unloaded in the snow and will have snow banks to consider

to elicit feedback from users and advocates on all the issues.

Licensing officials previously met with cab owners to solicit their views. It’s abundantly clear,”
Sheila Casemore



according to Government Relations representative, Sheila Casemore.

The City of Toronto’s Municipal Licensing and Standards Division currently licenses 75 accessible vehicles and is considering licensing another 10 accessible vehicles this year and 10 more for each of the following two years, to make a total of 105.

sider: cost, availability, driver awareness and sensitivity, access to an on-demand service, to name a few.

Of equally important concern is the type of vehicle that the city is considering licensing. The city currently licenses the side-loading vans. These vehicles typically cost \$65,000 each. At issue is whether or not the City should switch to the rear-load-

However, not everyone agrees with the use of a rear-loading van. Consumers and disability advocates point out several pitfalls to this type of vehicle:

- The passenger is loaded and unloaded from the road which is a hazard especially in heavy traffic
- Once the passenger is on the road they have a find a cut in

when trying to access the sidewalk

- With this type of vehicle the passenger has to ride on the rear axle which is uncomfortable at best and painful at worst

- Once in the vehicle there is very little room to maneuver

- In the event of rear-end collision the passenger is trapped

But this process really serves as a starting point

explains, “that unless the business environment exists (that is, making a profit in providing accessible transportation), the service will not serve those who need it.”

Consultation sessions on accessible transportation options in Canada’s largest city continue, with the goal of identifying solutions for implementation sometime during 2006.

Year In Review

Increasingly organizations are seeing people with disabilities as part of mainstream hiring. More students with disabilities are graduating from postsecondary institutions, and there are more support structures in workplaces for people with disabilities. So we have a considerably expanded labour market of potential employees with disabilities, who tend to have a longer view toward a particular organization or position. But we have to encourage organizations to go out and find these potential employees, and develop supporting mechanisms to facilitate organizations to tap into this market. The AODA will certainly help advance physical accessibility -- making it possible for fuller participation of people with disabilities in the workforce.

Jim Bird
Director of
Human
Resources



Premier McGuinty, OMOD's Sheila Casemore and volunteer Kristen Calis at AODA reception



Ron Kelusky and Minister Bountrogianni at Minister's Consultation



City of Toronto 2005 Human Rights, Access & Equity Awards - OMOD reps on Selection Panel

“We have a considerably expanded labour market of potential employees with disabilities”

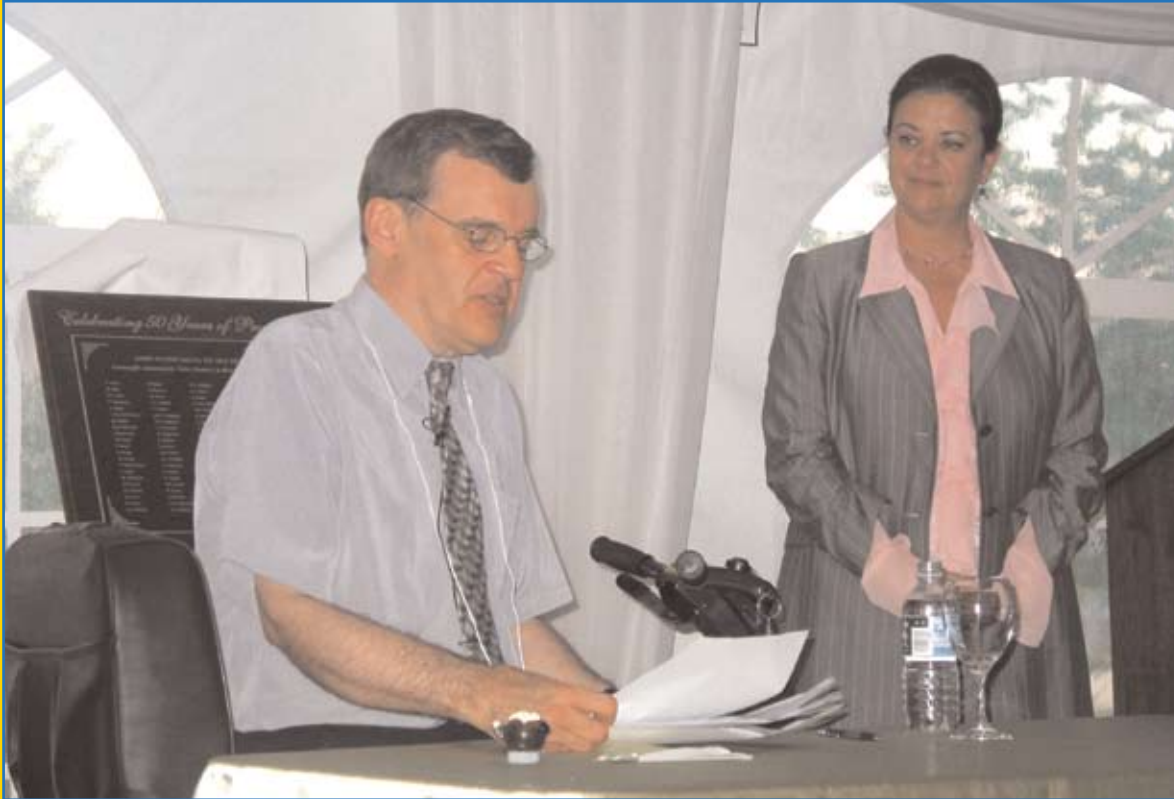


Rae Report released - contains several OMOD recommendations



Canada Post issues commemorative stamp

Year In Review



Renowned journalist, disability advocate and dear friend of March of Dimes, CityTV's David Onley was recently appointed as Chair of the new Accessibility Standards Advisory Council of Ontario.

Congratulations David!

Pictured with Hon. Marie Bountrogianni

The way the environment for people with disabilities in Canada has changed dramatically over the last 25 years, particularly from the point of view that things that were not readily accepted (such as

people with disabilities being full participants in all aspects of life), are no longer debated or questioned on principle or efficacy. It's like women's issues...there's no debate or question

over whether or not women should have jobs or enter certain professions (it's crazy to think that there ever was).

So we've certainly moved a long way, with improved services and struc-

tures, and the passage of the AODA. Now we're up to the point of figuring out how we make things happen in a structured way. So at least we're beyond the principles. They're accepted now.

Certainly in this respect there couldn't be a better time to introduce a national Canadians with Disabilities Act.

Jerry Lucas
Vice-President -
Program
Development
Chief Risk
Officer



VP Ron Kelusky and GR Coordinator Steven Christianson appear before Bill 118 hearings

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Seasons Greetings

On behalf of all of us at Ontario March of Dimes and the Government Relations Department, have a safe and enjoyable holiday seasons and

Happy New Year.

And try to find a moment this season to consider your broader community – those who, with a bit of assistance, help make our communities even stronger.



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