

# The Advocate

A GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS ADVISORY

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# ARE YOU PREPARED?

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A huge propane gas explosion in North York on August 10, 2008 caused the evacuation of 12,000 residents including people with disabilities.

# Special on Emergency Preparedness to The Advocate When Disaster Strikes

## By Sara Best

When JP Pampena awoke in his Toronto home on the night of Sunday, August 10 to the deafening sound of the propane plant down the street exploding, his first thought was of the safety of his daughter, Nicole.

Nicole is 13-years-old and lives with cerebral palsy. She is unable to walk, talk, or feed herself. Four home care nurses support Nicole around the clock, but on the night of the explosion the nurse on duty grabbed her purse and fled the house in terror.

Pampena and his wife, Paulette Pampena, were left struggling to get Nicole in her wheelchair down the darkened staircase of their home. They weren't able to bring her medication or the equipment used to feed her. It was all they could do to get their daughter out of the house to safety.

This would have been a challenge for any parent, but Mr. Pampena isn't like just any other parent. Mr. Pampena is blind.

The story of the Pampenas is not only moving, it is an important one that raises the question of how do we best ensure the safety of people with disabilities and special needs in the event of a wide-spread emergency?

12,000 residents were evacuated on the night of the propane plant blast in that Toronto neighbourhood. Several of them were either people with a disability, like JP Pampena and his daughter, or seniors with limited mobility or acute medical conditions.

### Disability/Special Needs Registry

During a town hall meeting held a few weeks after the explosion, Mr. Pampena raised the

idea of the need for a registry of people with special needs which could be used by emergency workers in the event of an evacuation or disaster. The registry might help alert emergency crews to which houses contained individuals who needed special assistance.

South of the border, the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA) has developed a Special Needs Emergency Registry. The registry gives people who require specialized assistance during emergencies the opportunity to voluntarily provide disability and healthcare information before disaster strikes. Information received can then be used by emergency responders, such as local police or fire departments, in the event of a crisis. Other jurisdictions have similar programs in place.

Staff from the Canadian Red Cross and Toronto Fire Services who attended the meeting had reservations about the effectiveness of such a program. "One of the problems would be, is everyone going to register?" said Captain Mike Strapko, Toronto Fire Services. "There is also a privacy issue. If I have a heart condition that makes it hard for me to climb stairs, I might not want to share that information with strangers."

### 911 Flag

Another option is combining the idea of a registry with local 9-1-1 emergency services. In the City of Denver, Colorado the local 9-1-1 service has made it possible for residents to voluntarily submit information about any disabilities or special needs they might have ahead of time. Emergency workers responding to a 9-1-1 call from your home will then be notified about this special information and be better prepared to assist.

John Saunders, provincial director of disaster management for the Canadian Red Cross in Ontario points out, however, that while such a program might be helpful for individual emergency calls, when there is a disaster on a larger scale, the local 9-1-1 service is often

quickly overwhelmed. On the night of the propane plant explosion in Toronto, for example, 9-1-1 received roughly 5000 calls from area residents. Such a volume of calls makes it incredibly difficult to convey any detailed information to the front lines.

### **Buddy System**

The buddy system has always been a good way for people with disabilities or any special needs to prepare for an emergency.

Ken Jackson, a public education officer with Toronto Fire Services, explains that these kinds of informal programs have proven to be very successful. "All it takes is agreeing to meet a neighbor at a designated meeting spot in the event of an emergency. Then, if you don't show up they can easily let emergency workers know that you may be in need of help or trapped in your home. It's just about having another person out there looking out for your interests."

### **Being Prepared**

According to representatives from both the Canadian Red Cross and Toronto Fire Services, nothing beats being prepared ahead of time.

"Public education is the answer," says Captain Mike Strapko. "People have to take responsibility. Unfortunately there is a level of complacency out there. They don't think it's going to happen to them. It's got to start at the grass roots level. You have to take care of yourself and be prepared, especially if you have the responsibility for someone with a disability or a senior."

The Canadian Red Cross has recently partnered with the Ontario March of Dimes to develop a set of materials for different caregiver associations. The materials will educate caregivers on how they can assist people with different disabilities to prepare for an emergency, and what to do to help if an emergency occurs.

In 2007, Emergency Management Ontario teamed up with 20 different organizations including the Canadian Red Cross, the Canadian Hearing Society, the Ontario March of Dimes, and the Canadian Paraplegic Association to develop the Emergency Preparedness Guide for People with Disabilities/Special Needs.

The guide offers clear, practical information on how people with special needs can prepare themselves for a crisis. It includes checklists for assembling an emergency survival kit for someone with special needs, things to prepare if you rely on a service animal, as well as tips on helping a person with a disability in the event of an emergency. The guide is available at [www.ontario.ca/emo](http://www.ontario.ca/emo).

*Sara Best is a freelance writer and communications consultant. Sara previously served as communications advisor to the Honourable Sandra Pupatello, former Minister of Community and Social Services and Minister Responsible for Ontarians with Disabilities. Sara later worked as a communications planner with the Ministry of Community and Social Services where she worked exclusively on communications surrounding an accessible Ontario. To contact Sara visit [www.velocommunications.com](http://www.velocommunications.com)*

## **Editorial: Introducing "Warren's Act"?**

If that title comes as a surprise, you can imagine the looks on our faces when we received the following letter (excerpted):

*Dear Mr. Rupnarain:  
Thank you for your letter of August 13, 2007, addressed to the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, in which you express your support for national disability legislation. Please accept my apologies for the delay in replying.*

*My department is currently gathering information in support of the development of a proposal for new legislation to promote further accessibility for Canadians with disabilities. We will be*

*seeking new opportunities to engage concerned stakeholders, in gathering information and pursuing the development of a proposal for a Canadians with Disabilities Act.*

*We have received many letters suggesting that the proposed legislation be named “Warren’s Act”, and I am pleased to received correspondence from someone who has inspired so much.*

*Honourable Monte Solberg, PC, MP  
Minister of Human Resources and Social Development*



To our colleagues and friends from all political parties campaigning in this federal election, we humbly submit that it’s time to make good on the promise to introduce national disability legislation.

## **An AODA Update – Accessible Built Environment**

Most readers are by now familiar with the fact that Ontario has a new law called the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). It’s the first of its kind in Canada. Perhaps what some readers might not be aware of is the behind-the-scenes work on the regulations that form the basis of that law.

The Accessible Built Environment - Standards Development Committee (ABE-SDC) is one of many committees working out the details of how accessibility in the built environment will advance. But first, let’s define the term “built environment.” It refers to both new buildings and existing buildings, or simply put, to every aspect of the built environment, both inside and in the spaces surrounding structures.

On May 12-13, 2008, the Committee, struck in October, 2007, continued work within four

sub-committees mapping strategies for specific elements of the built environment. The sub-committees are developing standards in three major categories: building elements; common elements (inside and outside buildings); and non-building elements.

A sampling of the specific items being addressed are: entrances, elevating devices, drinking fountains, transient lodging guest rooms, balconies, service counters, temporary facilities, lockers, interior lighting, overhanging and protruding objects, ground and floor surfaces, picnic areas, curb ramps, pedestrian crossings and signals, exterior lighting and play areas. More obvious items, such as doors, washroom accessories, ramps, parking, accessible seating spaces and exterior walkways, are also being considered.

Draft recommendations from the four sub-committees will be presented and discussed by the entire ABE-SDC. The sub-committees are dealing with over 60 specific elements of the built environment.

The committee discussed a proposal submitted by the Support Unit that was intended to assist with long-term objectives for an accessible built environment by 2025 and as outlined in the ABE-SDC Terms of Reference. The Support Unit, a group of experts in the field, is there to assist ABE-SDC in completing its tasks and achieving its goals. The committee’s Members Charter, as well as its Work Plan to be submitted to the Minister of Community and Social Services, were discussed and agreed upon.

Tracking the work of this committee, and our representation on it, will be an ongoing interest of The Advocate. We can use ABE-SDC regular communiqués as a barometer to read just how accessibility in the built environment is coming to life over time.



## Disability & Intergovernmental Affairs in Canada



Jacques Boissinot / THE CANADIAN PRESS

In early June 2008 Ontario and Quebec held its first-ever joint cabinet meeting. Eighteen Quebec and fourteen Ontario ministers met in Quebec City. Quebec Premier Jean Charest and Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty co-chaired.

The provinces of Ontario and Quebec combined represent two-thirds of the Canadian population, about 20 million people, and boast the two largest economies in the nation.

The issues discussed at the meeting included economy, climate change, energy, transportation and a cooperation agreement between the two provinces on social services. A formal Cooperation Agreement on Social Services was signed outlining ways Ontario and Quebec can research and share information in four specific areas:

- improving how social assistance is delivered;
- finding ways to help people become more financially independent;  
*and particularly important to us ...*
- working with people with disabilities to help them find and keep a job; and,
- improving access to services for people with disabilities.

This is an historic partnership since it is the first

time Ontario and Quebec have worked together towards making a significant difference for people with disabilities. Ministry of Community and Social Services media spokesperson, Erika Botond commented, "It is always an advantage for two provinces, or even all Canadian provinces and territories, to work together on common issues. There is a wide variety of ministries and programs across the country." The capacity for learning from each other and adapting social programs to meet the real needs (of people with disabilities and others) is greatly increased.

A formal agreement has been signed. Under Section 2.4 of the Cooperation Protocol, "Accessibility to services for people with disabilities," the areas focused on are a) Accessibility standards, including reporting and enforcement processes, and b) Public awareness campaigns and research initiatives.

Overall, Quebec and Ontario have agreed "to share information regarding social services and to exchange best practices that can facilitate improvements in knowledge development and delivery of social services."

Government Relations Manager, Steven Christianson, suggests that supportive housing within an enlarged notion of caregiving be explicitly embraced as a priority area within the disability envelope of the Accord. "This type of intergovernmental cooperation is an ideal starting point to begin a formal discussion on caregiving legislation, an act that would ensure recognition and support for caregivers, expanded funding for home and vehicle modifications, and a system of supportive housing. You can look forward to some form of dialogue from us (March of Dimes) on this matter in the coming months," Christianson explains.

One might find it interesting to note that many organizations, like March of Dimes Canada or the Canadian Coalition of Caregivers, have long been advocating such legislation. Many jurisdictions around the world, such as the UK, already have such legislation in effect. Stay tuned for further details coming this fall.

## **Regulatory Changes Proposed by Canada Revenue Agency: A Boon or Bust for Charities in Canada?**

Earlier this year the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) proposed new guidelines as regards fundraising by Canadian charities.

The guidelines, if implemented as proposed by the CRA, would have a profound impact on charities and those who rely upon and receive our services.

It is no surprise, then, that since that time, there has been no shortage of dialogue on this matter, and March of Dimes is no exception. In fact, it is relatively accurate to say that there's been an explosion of discussion, debate, report-writing and conferencing on not only CRA's proposed regulatory changes, but the very raison d'être of raising funds for charitable organizations and accompanying impacts on the non-profit and voluntary sector as a whole, as well as our overall relationship with corporate donors and other donors.

It is quite common for "coalitions" to form, as part of a process of sharing information and gaining understanding, when sector-wide issues arise, which has been the case in this issue.

Today, there are dozens of charitable organizations part of this larger dialogue, officially through Imagine Canada, to work with CRA – not only on improving the proposed regulatory changes, but to ensure that future developments at CRA work constructively to strengthen the sector and the programs/services delivered.

Below is the essence of our communication to the Canada Revenue Agency.

*As registered charities and not-for-profits, we share a commitment to directing resources and services to meet community needs. We are proud of our work and we are particularly*

*empowered and humbled by the generous commitment of time and support by our volunteers and donors.*

*We are supportive of an overall direction which seeks to build standards and increase accountability within the charitable sector. We agree with the need to build a framework within which charities, large, medium and small, can enhance the productivity of their work and create conditions for more focused and cost effective deployment of resources. Efforts which will leverage our capacity to build an increasingly confident and supportive Canadian public are a welcome and positive direction.*

*We have concerns however, about certain sections within the draft policy which we believe may have an unintentionally negative impact on the good works of charities. While we are a sector, the diversity of size, scope and nature of the causes we support is unique. There can be no question that the charitable sector would be well served by establishing best practices and a mechanism for oversight but the broad categorization of fundraising costs, as proposed, will not meet the need for increased but equitable transparency and accountability.*

*Specifically we provide the following feedback:*

*1. Sections eleven and thirteen have placeholder statements that reflect special considerations and other unique situations that may impact charities' expenditures. Detail on this is required in order to ensure clarity and consistency relative to sector implementation. Similarly, section eight requires more detail on "third party" arrangements.*

*2. There remains a lack of clarity on the definition of what constitutes "appropriate" fundraising costs. Without this, there is a significant risk of inconsistent reporting depending on how an organization classifies its costs.*

*3. Within section ten, a five level evaluation grid categorizes costs associated with fundraising. This grid does not consider where a charity is at*

*in its maturity, development cycle or the types of fundraising programs the charity has in place. In fact it omits a significant number of factors which must be considered when assessing the appropriateness of a charity's cost factor including:*

- *The nature of the cause. Some causes are more popular than others and thus find it easier to raise funds. A children's hospital may be able to raise funds more easily than a program for the rehabilitation of offenders. As a result, the cost of fundraising will tend to be higher for less popular causes.*

- *The ways in which a charity asks individuals for support. Most organizations use a range of fundraising activities in order to reach the broadest possible audience for its cause. A special campaign to seek donations for a new building is likely to generate larger average gifts than other types of campaigns. Special events may be more costly than other types of appeals, but they are an important way to create interest and build relationships with donors, prospective donors and volunteers.*

- *Sources of fundraised income. If a charity receives most of its money from wealthy individuals, companies, foundations and government sources that make large gifts, the fundraising cost percentages are generally lower. However, many charities rely for the bulk of their funding on donations from individual members of the public who make much smaller gifts. In these cases, the cost percentages tend to be higher. Land conservation organizations making large real estate transactions will tend to have a smaller relative cost for their fundraising expenses than a community based sports organization.*

- *Age of program. The evaluation grid does not reflect or support investment spending by a charity and could prevent charities from investing in future programs that are in the early stages and not yet fully established.*

*Overall, there is a need for a complementary*

*process around educating donors to make informed choices about how they spend their time and money. Canadians support a variety of causes for a variety of reasons. A public education effort to raise awareness on the questions they should ask and the issues they should look for would not only serve to increase the accountability of charities, but would also actively promote greater engagement by donors in the process of giving and in their direct involvement as volunteers and influencers in the charities they support.*

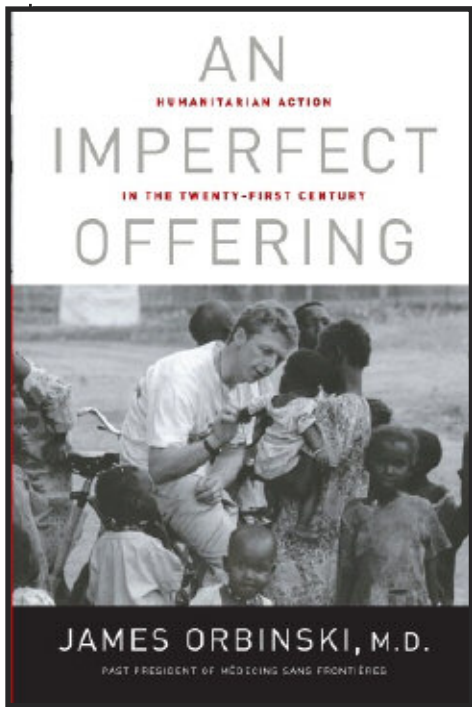
*We formally request that the CRA extend the consultation phase. We must not underestimate the impact of the proposed policy and the risk that the public and media will over-simplify a highly complex and important matter.*

This process of dialogue officially ended August 31, although March of Dimes Canada and the coalition have encouraged CRA to extend that deadline to facilitate a broader public discussion. If you have thoughts or opinions on this matter, we would love to receive them. And let us know if you feel the proposed changes will represent a boon or a bust for Canada's charitable sector.

## **Queen's Park Accessibility Expo**



On May 28, the annual Accessibility Expo at Queen's Park was held in conjunction with National Access Awareness Week. March of Dimes gave demonstrations about various programs we offer – described by many attendees as greatly beneficial to gaining a better understanding of accessibility and how to create a barrier-free world. The Expo receives visits from hundreds of staffers at Queen's Park, various Cabinet Ministers, notably Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community & Social Services, and the general public.



**Health Equity:  
From Challenges to Solutions**  
***An Imperfect Offering:  
Humanitarian Action in the  
Twenty-first Century***  
**By Dr. James Orbinski**

Report and Review by Janet Macmaster

Held at Ryerson University in early June, the Health Equity conference brought together an impressive cross-section of health care workers: health administrators, front-line workers, consumer and family networks, policy makers, social housing advocates, disability advocates, and others with a general interest in health care and the overall healthcare and social services system.

The purpose of the event was for participants to work together to create “a more equitable health system that responds to the needs of all,” ensuring barrier-free access and inclusion. An ambitious conference, to be sure.

Distinguished keynote speaker, Dr. James

Orbinski, currently working at the University of Toronto and St. Michael’s Hospital, set the tone for the event by presenting compelling and disturbing facts about health care on a global scale. He has first-hand experience with extreme human need, mainly in African countries, in his work with Doctors Without Borders, for which he was president when the organization received the 1999 Nobel Peace Prize. In addition Dr. Orbinski is the co-founder and Chair of the Board of Directors for Dignitas International, “a medical humanitarian organization working with communities to dramatically increase access to life-saving treatment and prevention in areas overwhelmed by HIV/AIDS.”

His simple message: Dignity describes the worth of every person, no matter in what circumstances, with the human right to health -- a highly transcendent message.

Health care is politically determined. Leadership defines direct and immediate action be taken to alleviate human suffering. Compassion, which moves beyond pity and sympathy, leads to solidarity which then provokes change, then effective action and finally political responsibility.

His challenge to attendees at the conference is “do not accept the unacceptable; rather, challenge the unacceptable.” To create change, reframe the debate and challenge basic assumptions to achieve workable answers.

This platform also serves as much of the basis for Orbinski’s book, *An Imperfect Offering: Humanitarian Action in the Twenty-first Century*. And while the reader will most certainly be tugged in many emotional directions, Orbinski’s work drives to the very heart of political processes and outcomes, governmental systems and structures, and the changing role and importance of the NGO towards the development of public policy and the delivery of critical social services.

For those whose task it is to navigate funding mechanisms and systems, such as LHINs, CCACs and related programs and structures,



From Challenges to Solutions was high on the relevance radar. The point not being to criticize existing systems or structures, but to find measurable improvements from which we all may benefit. Just as health care and social service systems are politically determined, so, too, are our degrees of access to, and inclusion in, those systems.

For those whose task it is to eliminate barriers to access and create inclusion, the book *An Imperfect Offering* reminds us that leadership and creativity are prime ingredients in achieving workable answers – and, given what governments can realistically do with increasingly scarce resources, the role of the NGO (the non-governmental organization) is perhaps more potent and integral than ever before.



June 5th participants at the Healthy Connections 2008 conference heard from a distinguished group of presenters, and then worked on health inequity solutions in break-out groups at Ryerson campus in Toronto

## **The New Customer Service Standard of the AODA**

### **Who it Affects and When**

As many readers know, the Customer Service Standard came into effect in January of this year.

Here we provide readers with a W5 of the AODA. Additional information may be found at the Government of Ontario's website at [www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/mcsc/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/accesson/compliance/customer/](http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/mcsc/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/accesson/compliance/customer/)

Who is not affected?

Like all other regulations in the Act, application lies solely within provincial jurisdiction. Companies and organizations that are federally regulated (eg. Airlines, military, federal premises, VIA) will not be affected. All activity and environs in foreign embassies, consul general offices, and Indian reserves will not be affected by the law.

What Must a Compliant Organization Do or Provide?

All organizations that provide a service to the public will be required to have or do the following:

1. Establish policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to customers with disabilities.
2. Use reasonable efforts to ensure that your policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.
3. Set a policy on allowing people to use their own personal assistive devices to access your goods and use your services.
4. Communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.
5. Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal – unless the animal is excluded by another law.
6. Permit people to use a support person to bring that person with them while accessing goods or services in premises open to the public or third parties.
7. Where admission fees are charged, provide notice ahead of time on what admission, if any, would be charged for a support person of a person with a disability.

8. Provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access or use your goods or services are temporarily disrupted.

9. Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who are involved in developing your policies, practices and procedures on the provision of goods or services on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.

10 Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who interact with the public or third parties on your behalf on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.

11. Establish a process for people to provide feedback on how you provide goods or services to people with disabilities and how you will respond to any feedback and take action on any complaints.



Additionally, those organizations with MORE THAN 20 EMPLOYEES must also:

- Document in writing all your policies, practices and procedures for providing accessible customer services.
- Notify customers that documents required under the customer service standard are available upon request.
- When giving documents required under the customer service standard to a person with a disability, provide the information in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

#### Who Must Comply?

Every organization that provides goods or services to the public or other third parties and has at least 1 employee. Note: Self-employed individuals, sole proprietorships, partnerships and other entities that do not have any employees do not have to comply with the Act.

No Employees = No Compliance

At least 1 employee = compliance with the 11 requirements

20 or more employees = compliance with the 11 requirements and the 3 additional

The Standard does not apply to the premises or the goods themselves, but the way in which the goods/services are provided to the public.

#### When Does Compliance Begin?

2010 and 2012

On January 1, 2010, the Legislative Assembly and the offices of persons appointed on the address of the Assembly, every ministry of the Government of Ontario, every municipality and the following sample of organizations must be in compliance with the law:

- Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Appeal Tribunal
- Agricorp
- Alcohol and Gaming Commission
- Algonquin Forestry Authority
- Assessment Review Board

- Cancer Care Ontario
- Centennial Centre of Science and Technology
- Child and Family Services Review Board
- College Compensation and Appointments Council
- All CCACs
- Consent and Capacity Board
- Conservation Review Board
- Criminal Injuries Compensation Board
- Crown Employees Grievance Settlement Board
- Custody Review Board
- Deposit Insurance Corporation of Ontario
- Echo
- Education Quality and Accountability Office
- Environmental Review Tribunal
- Financial Services Commission
- Financial Services Tribunal
- Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council
- Fire Safety Commission
- Greater Toronto Transit Authority
- Greater Toronto Transportation Authority
- Health Professions Appeal Board
- Human Rights Tribunal
- Landlord and Tenant Board
- Legal Aid Ontario
- Licence Appeal Tribunal
- LCBO
- LHINs
- McMichael Art Gallery
- Metro Toronto Convention Center
- Niagara Escarpment Commission
- Niagara Parks Commission
- Normal Farm Practices Protection Board
- Ontario Clean Water Agency
- Ontario Energy Board
- Ontario Film Review Board
- Ontario Food Terminal
- Ontario Heritage Trust
- Ontario Highway Transportation Board
- Ontario Human Rights Commission
- Ontario Labour Relations Board
- Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation
- Ontario Media Development Corporation
- Ontario Municipal Board
- Ontario Northland Transportation Commission
- Ontario Pension Board
- Ontario Place
- Ontario Racing Commission

- Ontario Securities Commission
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Ottawa Congress Centre
- Owen Sound Transportation company
- Pay Equity Office
- Royal Ontario Museum
- St. Lawrence Parks Commission
- Science North
- Social Assistance Review Board
- Social Benefits Tribunal
- Trillium Gift of Life
- Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

...Additionally

- Every district school board
- Every hospital
- Every college of applied arts and technology
- Every university that receives operating grants from the Government of Ontario
- Every public transportation organization in Ontario

All other organizations in Ontario with at least 1 employee must be in compliance by January 1, 2012.

The Province is in the process of hiring compliance officers and appointing directors of the Standard. However, the vast bulk of compliance will be expected to be self-regulatory self-compliant (much like income tax filing). In other words, the regulatory nature of this standard is not heavy-handed.

The first and ongoing step by the Accessibility Directorate will focus on communication, public education and outreach.

If you need further information about this regulation, or require our services in order for your business to comply, give us a call at 416-425-3463.

## **Our Day is Coming... What are you doing?**

Wednesday, December 3rd, 2008 has been named by the UN as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (changed from the International Day of Disabled Persons). The day also marks the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That day, people all over the world will be observing the basic human rights principle, "dignity and justice for all of us." According to UN statistics, it is astounding to realize that approximately 10 per cent of the world's population, or 650 million people, live with a disability. This is then the world's largest minority. If family members are taken into account, the number jumps to 2 billion people directly affected by disability. This represents almost a third of the world's population!



Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt of the United States holding a Declaration of Human Rights poster in English. November 1949. Dec. 3, 2008 also marks its 60th Anniversary. (Eleanor's husband, Franklin D. Roosevelt, was diagnosed with poliomyelitis in 1921. He later founded the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, which grew to be known as the March of Dimes in the U.S.)

Suggestions to observe the day include: getting involved; organizing; celebrating and taking action. These could include focusing on innovative ways to create international standards, or promoting awareness socially, culturally, politically and economically of the rights of people with disabilities. Hold forums, discussions and information sessions looking at ways by which persons with disabilities could

pursue independent living, sustainable livelihoods and financial security. Celebrate by organizing entertainment which highlights contributions to society made by persons with disabilities. Devise practical action plans for further participation in social life and development of equality by people with disabilities. Be sensitive to how the media presents the progress of people with disabilities. Is the story being told in a fair, equitable way?

Contributions by people with disabilities need to be celebrated. As well, it will be interesting to track progress on implementation of the UN Convention as it unfolds in each country.

*What will your organization be doing on December 3rd?*

Produced by:  
Steven Christianson, Manager



Government Relations & Advocacy

Janet Macmaster, Assistant  
Government Relations & Advocacy

Andria Spindel, Executive Lead

4NPC Studios, Art Direction & Design

Contact:  
jmacmaster@marchofdimes.ca  
March of Dimes Canada  
Government Relations & Advocacy  
10 Overlea Boulevard  
Toronto, ON M4H 1A4  
Tel: 416-425-3463

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