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Executive Director's Update

By: Michele Bell, Executive Director

Well what a winter that was. My third in Bruce County, and though I had heard stories of people being storm stayed, I experienced it myself for the first time this winter. I arrived on a Wednesday morning for work and was not able to return home until 8 pm on Thursday night.

I now understand the importance of a storm stay bag in the car (or a box in my office). I understand that our community really pulls together when in an emergency. There were so many examples of people supporting each other, sharing their homes with the storm stayed, staff walking long distances to work to relieve staff who had been working long hours, people sharing food, and everyone keeping in good spirits despite the challenges the weather presented. It was so good to see our community pull together.

And now it is March 20th, the first day of spring. The days are longer - thanks to daylight savings, the sun is

warmer, and the plans for the summer months are entering people's conversations.

We have had a busy winter managing through the weather. We have had a few people with health crisis who have incredible recoveries and are returning to their former active lives. The new tenants of 339 Mary Street have settled into their new routines in their homes. There are many amazing stories of independence in their new apartments.

Planning for the future has been very top of mind in this last quarter. We have been working on the Strategic Plan, exploring new locations for our Administration and Community Services departments, looking at housing needs for the future, and making plans to welcome a young man to 339 Mary Street. 2019/2020 will be another year of exciting new

Strategic Planning

The input has been gathered, the visioning has occurred, and the draft has been drafted.

The Board will be reviewing the draft with the intention of approving the revised Strategic Plan. We anticipate this to be completed before the end of April, Just in time for the beginning of a new fiscal year.

We look forward to sharing the new vision for the future in the very near future.

Changes to Special Services at Home, Passport and ODSP among Budget Recommendations

From *Update Friday*, Community Living Ontario, Feb. 1, 2019

Community Living Ontario submitted its pre-budget recommendations and is hopeful that the government will adopt the suggested changes to ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive the support they need to live full and meaningful lives in the community.

Among the recommendations that were provided to the government on January 25th was the consolidation of Special Services at Home and Passport into a single direct funding program that puts an end to the often-needless assessment and re-assessment of people.

Parents of young people who have an intellectual disability have long complained of the cliff for supports and services when their children aged out of Special Services at Home at 18 years of age and are then placed on a waiting list for Passport funding.

Community Living Ontario would like to see children's treatment centres determine people's eligibility and that occupational therapists and professional social workers be allowed to conduct more streamlined assessments, freeing up higher-cost professionals to focus on other work.

Also, the organization has asked that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services continue to provide at least \$5,000 a year to adults who are eligible for passport funding until additional dollars are made available to meet their needs. The guarantee would begin to address the long wait list for developmental services.

Community Living Ontario continues to call on the government to address the persistent levels of poverty experienced by people that rely on income support through the Ontario Disability Support program. The organization was disappointed by the government's decision in 2018 to replace the commitment of a 3% multi-year increase with a one-time hike of 1.5%.

The pre-budget submission also included requests for the government to remove the \$10,000 limit on voluntary gifts and to increase the asset limit from \$40,000 to \$100,000 for people receiving income support through the Ontario Disability Support program.

To prevent cuts to frontline services and the job losses and longer wait lists that would result, Community Living Ontario also called for the government to ensure stable funding for agencies within the developmental services sector so that high-quality supports and services remain in place.

Pre-budget consultations are taking place across the province until February 8th.

Ron Laroche, Community Living Ontario

Derek Morton Wins Multiple Medals at Special Olympics Ontario Winter Games



Derek Morton participated in the 2019 Special Olympic Ontario Winter Games that was held from January 31-February 3rd in Sault Ste. Marie.

Derek won 4 medals in Cross Country (Nordic) Skiing while at the games. He received three gold medals for the 100-metre, 500-metre, and the relay race along with a silver medal in the 1-kilometre classic.

We are so proud of Derek and all his achievements at the games. And we wish him all the best with his training for the next Special Olympic Winter Games.

Ontario Government Announces reforms to Ontario Autism Program

From *Update Friday*, Community Living Ontario, Feb. 8, 2019

Editor's Note: the following analysis of the government's changes to the Ontario Autism Program is from PooranLaw Professional Corporation, a Toronto-based law firm focused on disability rights and the developmental services sector.

The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, the Honourable Lisa MacLeod, announced reforms to the Ontario Autism Program [on February 6th] to attempt to address the approximate 75% of children with autism in the province who are currently on waitlists to receive autism supports and services. The government stated that they plan to clear the waitlist, which includes over 2,400 families waiting for a diagnosis assessment and more than 23,000 families waiting for behavioural services, within the next 18 months.

Under the government's proposed reforms, families will receive a Childhood Budget of up to \$140,000 until their child turns 18. Minister MacLeod expressed that the government is focused on making the Ontario Autism Program more "fair, equal, and sustainable," allowing families the choice and flexibility to direct funding as they wish, such as toward caregiver training, respite services, and technology aids. The government stated that they plan to double the funding provided to the five diagnostic hubs across the province to assist families waiting for a diagnosis.

The new Childhood Budget will target younger children in the 0 to 5 age range for evidence-based early intervention. Families will receive subsequent amounts as children get to age 18, where the

amount in each budget will depend on the length of the time that a child will be in the program. For example, a child entering the program at age two would be eligible to receive up to \$140,000, whereas a child entering the program at seven would receive up to \$55,000. Families will be income-tested in order to be eligible to receive funding, with a cut-off at an income over \$250,000.

While PooranLaw acknowledges that there were implementation issues still to be addressed in the program created under the previous government, we urge the Ministry to clarify and consider the uncertainty the reforms create for families supporting their children, particularly those requiring intensive services.

Families that have not had their existing contract renewed do not have clear direction on how their funding will be continued, and there is a shortage of service providers to try to clear the backlog during the time period the government is proposing. Under the new funding model, the changes appear to be based on age rather than the needs of the child according to clinical recommendations.

We will keep you informed as we learn new developments about the Ontario Autism Program reforms. In the interim, if you have any questions or wish to discuss the implications for you, your family or the people you support, please contact Brendon Pooran at bpooran@pooranlaw.com or Melanie Battaglia at mbattaglia@pooranlaw.com.

Community Participation News

Bruce Peninsula Association for Community Living's Community Participation program is in the process of finishing up the last few weeks of their Winter Session.

This winter has been beautiful with lots of snow and the Community Participation group has taken full advantage of this wonderful season by partaking in several outdoor activities. Some of the outdoor activities that the group experienced were snowshoeing, cross country skiing, skating, and curling. All participants had a lot of fun getting together, learning a new sport and enjoying all that winter sports have to offer.

There was also several other classes that took place over this session. Arts and crafts was a hit where participants made paintings, dream catchers, and crayon art on canvas.

The spring session kicks off in April and there are several new activities as well as some of the favourites that will continue. Some activities to look forward too is gardening group, photography club, and lots of outdoor sports and activities that will allow participants to take in the beautiful spring weather.



Carolyn displaying her button art.



Vicki E. getting ready to throw her stone while curling at the Warton Curling Club.

Community Living Month

May is Community Living Month. This is a province wide initiative that raises awareness and promotes the message of inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities.

Agencies, companies, and people from across Ontario will celebrate the many successes of creating inclusive communities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Watch our Facebook page and website for further details on how Bruce Peninsula Association for Community Living will be celebrating Community Living Month.

Community Living at Great Wolf Lodge

Always wanted to check out the waterpark but not sure you want to stay over?

Join us for our private Community Living waterpark experience!

- No line-ups
- Less noise
- No big crowds to get lost in
- Guaranteed fun

Come celebrate Community Living Month with us at Great Wolf Lodge on May 17th!

Waterpark After Dark will be a fun-filled night for the whole family at a great price. Tickets are limited.

P4P Planning Network Changes

From *Community Living Walkerton and District*

P4P Planning Network has just announced some new resources.

When reflecting on the future, most people want nothing more than an everyday life. But for most people with a disability, creating an everyday life requires intention. Over time, we've learned that supporting people to **imagine, plan and take action** toward finding their voice and creating their own life can be transformational for the individual, and for families too.

You Can Support Your Loved one to Build the Kind of Life THEY Want to Lead with our New Resources:

- NEW Action Guides
- NEW edition of Safe & Secure with a new step, Advocating with Empathy
- NEW and updated webcasts with live Q&A
- NEW and expanded directory of family networks across Ontario
- NEW possibilities with inspiring videos... and more

As, 2019 unfolds P4P looks forward to providing a variety of new resources specifically for people with a disability to build and enjoy their own everyday life: safe, secure, respected and connected, now and in the future.

Visit planningnetwork.ca to access their newly minted site.

What if... you could plan the best possible life
for your loved one living with a disability? **You can.**

p4p
PLANNING
NETWORK

START PLANNING →

There are some overnight deals still available.

There is a special room code for Community Living Month at Great Wolf Lodge!

The discount is from May 14-17! Use group code: 1905COMM when booking on the Great Wolf Lodge website.



Federal Budget Continues Ready, Willing and Able Across Canada

From *Update Friday*, Community Living Ontario, March 22, 2019



The Federal Budget for 2019 commits a \$12 million investment to Phase 2 of the Ready, Willing & Able program, a national employment program for persons with intellectual disabilities or Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The government of Canada has made a 3-year investment in Ready, Willing & Able to continue its work with employers and community agencies across the country to generate employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorder.

In response to the budget news, Cynthia Carroll, Chairperson of the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Alliance said, “This signals the government’s commitment to an inclusive and effective labour market with an employment rate for people with intellectual disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorder on par with the national average.”

Based on outcomes and evaluation, the award-winning Ready, Willing & Able is one of the most successful national employment initiatives of its kind in the history of the country. It has drastically changed the quality of life for persons with an intellectual disability or autism and has supported a more competitive labour market in Canada.

Krista Carr, Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Association for Community Living, declared, “We are grateful for this investment from the Federal Government, which will allow us

to continue to demonstrate that with targeted support, community involvement and employer leadership, job seekers with an intellectual disability or Autism Spectrum Disorder can obtain and retain employment within the labour market. Real work with real pay.

Ready, Willing & Able has brought real outcomes and has empowered thousands of job seekers with an intellectual disability or Autism Spectrum Disorder who previously were unable to enter or remain in the competitive labour force while providing employers with a source of talent that was previously overlooked.

Recognizing the government’s strong commitment to supporting persons with disabilities, the funding announced in the 2019 Budget for Ready, Willing & Able will ensure this critical initiative continues to contribute to an inclusive and accessible Canada. We look forward to continued conversations with the government to expand and grow Ready, Willing & Able.

Please visit <http://readywillingable.ca/> to learn more about the Ready, Willing & Able initiative and keep up-to-date as Phase 2 is rolled out across the country.

Media release from the Canadian Association for Community Living and the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Alliance

Federal Budget Zeros in on the Issue of Accessibility

From *Update Friday*, Community Living Ontario, March 22, 2019

On Tuesday of this week, the Government unveiled the 2019 Federal Budget. In addition to the many elements that have been widely reported on in the media, there were a number of specific announcements related to improving accessibility for people with disabilities.

continued

The government reiterated its commitment to the new Accessible Canada Act, introduced in June, 2018 and made a number of budget announcements to support the agenda of creating a more accessible Canada. In order to lead by example, the Federal government committed to hiring at least 5,000 people with disabilities over the next five years.

Of particular importance to Community Living and outlined in the previous story, the budget commits a \$12 million investment to Phase 2 of the Ready, Willing & Able program.

Changes were also made to the Registered Disability Savings Plan. To open an RDSP, a person must be eligible for the Disability Tax Credit. When a beneficiary no longer qualifies for the Disability Tax Credit, the Registered Disability Savings Plan rules can require that the plan be closed, and grants and bonds be repaid to the Government of Canada.

To address concerns that this treatment does not appropriately recognize the financial impact that periods of severe, but episodic, disability can have on people, Budget 2019 proposes to eliminate the requirement to close a Registered Disability Savings Plan when a beneficiary no longer qualifies for the Disability Tax Credit. Doing so will allow grants and bonds, otherwise required to be repaid to the government, to remain in the Registered Disability Savings Plan. To ensure fairness for Disability Tax Credit-eligible beneficiaries, some restrictions on access to these amounts will apply.

Additionally, unlike Registered Retirement Savings Plans, amounts held in Registered Disability Savings Plans are not exempt from seizure by creditors in bankruptcy. To level the playing field, Budget 2019 also proposes to exempt Registered Disability Savings Plans from seizure in bankruptcy, with the exception of contributions made in the 12 months before the filing.

Other measures in the budget aimed at improving community access for people with disabilities include commitments to invest:

- Funding to increase grants for disability-related services and increased eligibility for loan forgiveness for students with severe permanent disabilities;
- \$3 million in 2019-20 to produce new accessible reading materials that will be available through public libraries across Canada;
- \$22.8 million over five years, starting in 2019-20, to assist Canada's independent book publishing industry in increasing their production of accessible books for persons with print disabilities;
- \$1 million in 2019-20 to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind to connect persons with visual impairments to small and medium, -sized employers; and
- \$0.5 million in 2019-20 towards finding ways to improve the accessibility of electronic payment terminals to enable persons with disabilities to conduct daily activities, such as paying for their groceries, without relying on others.

Gord Kyle, Community Living Ontario



Jason T. sharing his tree art from art class.



Missy H. sharing her button art from art class.

BPACL Receives Generous Donations from the Community

Bruce Peninsula Association for Community Living was happy to receive generous donations from three community groups.

The Warton Rotary Club generously donated \$500.00 the Grey Bruce Health Services Warton OPSEU Local 260 generously donated \$260.00 and the Ferndale Lion's Head and District Lioness Club generously donated \$757.00.

The two donations provided the opportunity for people supported that live independently to have access to additional food resources in mid January. In addition to Foodland gift cards being purchased, the donations supported our Community Participation Program.

Bruce Peninsula Association for Community Living are so thankful for the support of our community members. Food access to those living in poverty is a critical issue at any time of year, but particularly difficult in January for people on ODSP. The gift cards that were purchased meant less reliance on the food bank for the month.

Thank you so much to the Warton Rotary Club, Grey Bruce Health Services Warton OPSEU Local 260, and the Ferndale Lion's Head and District Lioness Club for your generous donations. It was greatly appreciated and had a positive impact on the lives of people in our community.



Ferndale Lion's Head and District Lioness Club.



Grey Bruce Health Services Warton OPSEU Local 260.



Megan M. and Shawn H. preparing to bake during the Baking class.



Vicki E. enjoying winter sledding.