

ACTION NEWS

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www.accd.net

Provincial Election 2015

A provincial election is coming soon. At the time of this writing the election has not yet been called, but it is widely expected that Premier Prentice will have dropped the writ by the time this newsletter reaches

you. The election is spurred on by Budget 2015-2016, a budget which features tax increases and program cuts so widespread that Albertans will be demanding a vote to either validate or reject it. Anticipated to impact every person in the province, the budget brings a common question to the minds of many within the disability community: to what extent will these cuts affect programs and services for Albertans with disabilities?

We are very grateful to learn that there will be a projected maintenance of some of the important disability programs, including accommodation for growth of AISH and PDD. It remains true, however, that there could be cuts to other programs which are extremely important to people with disabilities. Alberta Health is facing its first budget cut in 20

**It's Election
Time...
People With
Disabilities**



COUNT!

years. What impact will this have on home care services? Though Minister Stephen Mandel affirms that these cuts will not affect front-line workers, can we be assured that there will not be any negative downstream effects experienced by users of these services?

These are challenging times and Albertans with disabilities need to be part of the solutions. While we always hope that these solutions will come through negotiation with affected parties, it remains true that one of the most powerful ways to ensure that one's voice is heard is at the ballot box. As such, ACCD encourages every person to vote in the coming election, and in doing so help ensure the continued support of programs for people with disabilities across the province.

The Alberta Disabilities Forum members are producing a non-partisan election strategy with two purposes: to educate the candidates about issues important to people with disabilities and to educate people with disabilities about the election process. An election kit will contain fact sheets, how to visit a candidate, party contact information

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and information about accessibility from Elections Alberta. If you wish to receive this information, once the election is called, please contact Jeremy at adf@accd.net or call 780-488-9088.

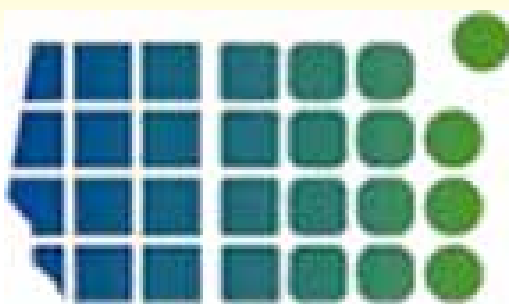
The Power of One Vote

In the first ballot for the Calgary-Elbow constituency in 1992, Liberal candidate Nancy Betkowski beat incumbent MLA Ralph Klein by a single vote. This is just one of many such instances in Canadian elections, both provincial and federal.

Every vote counts!

Information is Power

Premier's Council Celebrates 25 Years



On March 5th, 2015, representatives from across Alberta gathered at the offices of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities to celebrate its 25th anniversary. In the quarter century since its founding, the Council has promoted activities that recognize the equal status of people with disabilities as contributing citizens of Alberta, and remains committed to actions that remove barriers to full inclusion in society.

The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities holds a rich history of contributions from some of Alberta's most notable citizens, many of whom were honoured at the Council's open house. One such person is the late Gary McPherson, who chaired the Council for a decade. A member of the Order of Canada and the Alberta Order of Excellence, Gary's leadership enabled the council to further develop the network connecting government with community organizations, and strengthen policies and programs for Albertans with disabilities.

Another person honoured at the event was Eric Boyd, who played a crucial role in the formation of the Council. Originally from Newfoundland, he became the first Executive Director of the Council, a position in which he was known as a diligent and passionate crusader for the rights of people with disabilities in Canada.

Rob Lougheed was in attendance

and helped in paying tribute to the important contributions of the Council. A former chair of the Council himself, Rob is noted, especially in the disability community, for heading the MLA Review Committee on AISH where he supported and was a contributor to major overhauls to the program. These changes resulted in increases in quality of life for thousands of Albertans with disabilities. The disability community acknowledges the tremendous contributions made by Rob Lougheed as he championed disability issues when he was chair of the Council.

Over the past 25 years, the efforts of these Council leaders have been accompanied by contributions from an incredibly diverse group of Council members. Today and looking forward, the Council continues to strive toward their vision of Alberta as an inclusive and barrier free society for all.

To learn more about the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, visit www.humanservices.alberta.ca/departments/premiers-council.html.

ACCD's Annual Meeting

Please join us at ACCD's Annual Meeting to find out more about our programs and services.

The meeting is on May 30, 2015, at the Holiday Inn Express & Suites, 2440 Calgary Trail NW, Edmonton from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

If you have any questions about the Annual General Meeting, call 780-488-9088 or toll free at 1-800-387-2514. We hope to see you there.



Together. We Hold The Power

ACCD Mailbox

"This presentation was eye-opening for the students. The level of attention and awe-inspiring comments and questions for Brian that the students shared speak for themselves and demonstrate how much they enjoyed the presentation. Students' feedback to me was very positive! They learned a lot and gained a better understanding of the stigma society often has for people with disabilities. Wonderful, thank you!"

– Teacher Feedback

Did You Know?

Disability Awareness Presentation Program

As part of our mandate to increase awareness about people with disabilities, ACCD is dedicated to educating individuals, organizations, legislators, schools, decision-makers, airport personnel and employers about disability-related issues. One of our longest-running initiatives to this end is our Disability Awareness Presentation Program.

For more than 25 years, ACCD has been reaching out to communities across Alberta through our school presentations. A powerful initiative headed by ACCD employee, Brian Laird, the program gives individuals the opportunity to meet a person with a disability. This interaction helps to dispel fears and myths about people with disabilities, resulting in greater understanding and support. The impact of this program is made clear by the feedback which we often receive from students and staff, such as this comment:

“Dear Brian, Thank you so much for sharing your story. You’re probably the most inspirational, heartwarming person I’ve ever met.” – Student, D.S. Mackenzie School

If you know of a school, business, or organization that would like to have Brian come and make a presentation, please contact ACCD at 780-488-9088.



Collaboration Between ACCD and the Alberta Pharmacists' Association



The Alberta Pharmacists' Association (RxA) is a not-for-profit, membership-based organization which serves as a forum for licensed pharmacists to discuss issues related to their profession. RxA holds a vision to be the voice of a unified, innovative and inspired profession.

ACCD's mandate to provide beneficial feedback regarding the accessibility of health care service provider facilities has led us to seek collaboration with various professional organizations. In doing so, we intend to integrate strategic programming with project deliverables and create further impact on the accessibility of these services. We are happy to report that one such

collaboration is with RxA.

With the support of our Project Advisory Committee members, and with data from our Accessibility Surveys of nine pharmacies in southern Alberta, we were able to present initial findings of the project through a formal session at their biannual professional development conference. The presentation was extremely well-received by the participants at the conference. The abstract of the presentation has since been accepted by the Canadian Pharmacists' Association, which means that it will be presented at their annual conference held in

Ottawa, May 28-31, 2015.

ACCD continues to strengthen its collaborative partnerships with professional organizations, as well as to reach out into communities across Alberta to survey the current state of accessibility in health service facilities.

To stay up to date on this project, please visit www.barrierfreehealth.ca.

Did you know that you can support ACCD by donating your car? Any vehicle counts. For more information about this type of donation, please go to the Donate a Car Canada link on www.accd.net. Thank you for donating your car to ACCD.



Iris Saunders – 2014 CCD Award Recipient

Congratulations to the family of the late Iris Saunders, whose contributions to Alberta's disability community are being honoured posthumously by the Council of Canadians with Disabilities.

Iris was the driving force for EmployAbilities for over 28 years and throughout her career, Iris fought tirelessly for inclusion of people with disabilities. Iris started as a job developer in 1986 and was named executive director a short time later. EmployAbilities now employs over 40 staff and contractors, and offers seven different programs in seven different communities, including Edmonton, Bonnyville, Cold Lake, Athabasca, Vegreville, St. Paul and Lac La Biche.

Iris was recognized across Canada for her lifelong passion, dedication and innovative ideas that brought awareness to the untapped workforce of people with disabilities. She received countless awards and honours in her career with EmployAbilities. She was the first recipient of the Lumina Award; was named a Global Woman of Vision in 2003; was awarded the Lois Hole Community Award and the Marion Shipley Award by the Junior League of Edmonton in 2009; and she was nominated for the Order Canada in 2010.

Iris' passing has left a large void in the world of people with disabilities. ACCD is honoured to present the CCD Award to the Saunders family.



Meet the Board Kent Hodgins



Kent became a director on ACCD's board in 2013.

As the commercial account manager at Canadian Western Bank (where he has worked for 16 years) and a committed volunteer, Kent brings a wealth of workplace skills and community experience to his role on the ACCD board.

"Volunteering gives me a chance to give back to the community and make a difference," says Kent. And give back he does. He is president of his local Elks Club. Before joining ACCD he was the chair of the Advisory Committee on Disability Issues (ACDI) for the City of Medicine Hat, and representative for ACDI on the Social Development Advisory Board.

Kent is particularly interested in raising awareness about the employment barriers faced by many people with disabilities. To this end, he was involved with the Alberta Disabilities Forum's employment working group for two years and has served on the Employment Equity Committee at the bank for the past 13 years. He is pleased to be a part

of the ACCD board because he "wants to be involved in an organization that is set up to represent the interests of people with disabilities."

Kent has been using a wheelchair for 26 years and was involved in wheelchair sports for some of that time. When he called Edmonton home, he played basketball with the Canadian Wheelchair Basketball League and trained for field events at the Rick Hansen Steadward Centre.

Kent has been a welcome addition to the ACCD board.

Alberta Disabilities Forum Update



Mental Health Working Group

Members of the Mental Health Working Group have recently completed their position paper, titled *Access to Mental Health Care for Albertans with Disabilities*. The paper discusses the many barriers that exist for those within the cross-disability community when seeking help for mental health concerns. Informed by original surveys and an intensive literary review, the paper provides recommendations for overcoming common barriers such as stigma and discrimination. You can read the full publication at www.adforum.ca.

Home Care Working Group

The ADF Home Care Working Group has been closely observing recent developments in legislation related to home care. They are working on an update to their position paper, *Linked In: Meeting the Needs of Alberta's Home Care Clients*, to reflect the impact of legislation such as changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker program. The paper is available at www.adforum.ca.

Service Dog Working Group

The ADF Service Dog Working group is currently in the final stages of producing a discussion paper which features recommendations for the review of the service dog qualification regulations for the Service Dog Act. Among other issues, the paper addresses the need for more qualified dogs in Alberta as well as the obstacles faced by trainers in attempting to become accredited. The paper will be available shortly.

Alberta Disability Services Working Group

In October 2013, the Alberta Disability Services Working Group produced a paper titled *Non-Profit Challenges and Solutions* (available at www.adforum.ca). This paper addressed the difficulties non-profits face in operating in the province of Alberta. The working group has now created an Action Plan which proposes detailed solutions for these challenges. The Action Plan is now finished and we hope to distribute it soon.

ACCD Dental, Eye Care, & Pharmacy Accessibility Research Initiatives

As you may know, ACCD has initiated a research study on Accessible Dental, Eye Care and Pharmacy Services in Alberta, and we are collecting data using focus groups, accessibility surveys and questionnaires.



Our Questionnaire Surveys are now ready to be filled out online. There are two separate questionnaires – Please fill out the questionnaire that is most relevant to you.

People with disabilities/caregivers/guardians:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/for_people_with_disabilities

Dental, eye care and pharmacy professionals/practitioners/employees:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/for_dental_eyecare_or_pharmacy_professionals

Thank you!

ACCD on the Web

Keep up to date with ACCD's activities by following ACCD on the web.



Become a fan of ACCD on Facebook, visit:

www.facebook.com/ACCDDisabilities



Follow ACCD on Twitter, visit:

www.twitter.com/ACCDDisabilities

Around Alberta Calendar of Events



2015 Family Conference

Hosted by the Alberta Association for Community Living
April 10-11, 2015, Fantasyland Hotel, Edmonton, AB
For more information, contact mail@aacl.org



Spring Conference 2015

Hosted by the Alberta Council of Disability Services
April 29 - May 1, 2015, Calgary, AB
For more information, email acds@acds.ca



2015 Regional Hope Conference

Hosted by the Parkinson Alberta
May 23, 2015, Delta Edmonton South, Edmonton, Alberta
For more information, visit www.albertanps.com



Canadian Down Syndrome Conference 2015

Hosted by the Canadian Down Syndrome Society
May 15-17, 2015, Delta Edmonton South, Edmonton, AB
For more information, visit www.downsyndromeconference.ca



Intro and Advanced SCERTS Training Course

Hosted by the Children's Autism Services of Edmonton
May 19-21, 2015, Oasis Conference Center, Edmonton AB
For more information, visit www.childre autism.com



Collaborative Mental Health Care Conference 2015

Hosted by the Collaborative Family Healthcare Association
June 18-20, 2015, Sheraton Cavalier, Calgary, AB
For more information, email Mentalhealth@buksa.com

It's Time to Renew Your Membership

We're entering a new year at ACCD! To retain your ACCD membership we ask that you complete the membership renewal form on our website. ACCD members enjoy benefits such as the opportunity to participate in our Annual General Meeting, updates on disability issues through our newsletters and information about ACCD's bursaries and awards. Your membership fee helps to support ACCD's diverse programs that work towards full participation in society by Albertans with disabilities.

We thank you for your continued support!