

Our Role in a Changing Political Landscape**Information
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Alberta Politics are about to change, as members of the Conservative, Liberal, and Alberta Parties go to the voting booth to choose new leaders. A provincial election is also coming soon. What is our role in the election process? First, we must ask ourselves: what do we want from our elected officials? What are the issues that are important to us? How will each candidate impact these issues? It is a good idea to research what politicians stand for and the issues they plan to address in the legislature if they are elected. By understanding each campaign, we will be able to determine which candidate best represents our vision for the province's future.

Alberta's political parties have their own rules regarding membership and voter eligibility for party leadership elections. Memberships cost between \$5 and \$10, and they allow people some involvement in a party's decision-making processes. To learn more about the province's political party leadership races and voter eligibility, visit the following websites:

- Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta - www.albertapc.ab.ca
- Alberta Liberal Party - www.albertaliberal.com
- Alberta Party - www.albertaparty.ca

As party leadership campaigns develop, a provincial election is also building. The proposed date for the provincial election is March, 2012, with some suggesting that it could occur earlier. It is important that the disability community learns about all of the parties that are seeking leadership of the province. We encourage people with disabilities and their families to speak with candidates who want to represent the communities where we live. In order for our voices to be heard by those whose decisions impact our lives, we must talk to candidates and let them know our vision for Alberta's future. After all, the voice of an elected official is the voice of the people whom he or she represents. In this way, politicians come to understand our unique perspectives on a variety of important issues that affect our lives.

In Alberta, every person of legal voting age has a say, and we express our views by voting. So let us educate ourselves and take an interest in the political process by casting a vote for the person with a strong vision for Alberta.

The ACCD Action News is published three times a year or when major provincial issues arise. Material may be reproduced with permission. Articles are available in alternate media format.

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Information is Power

Tax Tips

Well, it's that time of year again. As the end of April nears, Canadians rush to gather their T4s and file their tax return before the deadline on April 30th. Here are a few tax tips that will make the rush a bit easier and your return potentially more lucrative:

1. Free tax preparation service for those unable to complete their tax return and unable to pay for assistance.

Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) sponsors the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program, which provides free help to complete income tax returns. This free service is available to people with low income and a simple tax situation who are not able to prepare their tax returns. Returns will not be prepared for deceased persons, bankrupt individuals, or for people with capital gains/losses, business income or rental income. For a list of volunteer tax preparation clinics in your area, visit <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/ndvdl/vlnt/clncs/ab-eng.html>.

2. Deductions from Income.

Disability supports expenses (including attendant care expenses) may be claimed as a deduction from income on line 215 of the personal tax return, for taxpayers who have incurred the expenses in order to accomplish the following:

- Earn employment of self-employment income.
- Attend an educational institution.
- Conduct research for which a grant was received.

For more information on deductions from income, visit <http://www.taxtips.ca/filing/disabilitysupports.htm>.

3. Disability Amount Tax Credit.

To qualify for this non-refundable tax credit, a form T2201 Disability Tax Credit Certificate must be completed, certified, and submitted. This form has sections on various types of physical or mental disabilities. Each section asks for the year in which the disability began; however, in order to have the disability tax credit applied retroactively, a form T1Adj must be filed for each previous tax year in which the person qualifies.

If a qualified person (usually a medical doctor) certifies that you have a severe and prolonged mental or physical disability which markedly restricts in the ability to perform a basic activity of daily living, then a disability amount may be claimed. For 2005 and later years, eligibility for the disability amount tax credit includes persons with a severe and prolonged mental or physical disability which significantly restricts the ability to perform more than one basic activity of daily living. For more information on disability amount tax credit, visit <http://www.taxtips.ca/filing/disabilitytaxcredit.htm>.



*It's our
turn to
pass this
information
on to you*

Mailbox

“Thanks very much for your advice and help regarding income support and AISH.

Best Wishes,”

AISH Client



Project Update: Barrier-free Health and Medical Services in Alberta

For many years now, ACCD has heard from people with various disabilities who have had issues accessing Alberta’s health and medical services in a variety of situations. Because of these stories, we decided to take a closer look at the issue, to determine the specific barriers to health and medical services that people with disabilities experience.

In February of 2009, ACCD received a grant from the Government of Alberta’s Human Rights Education and Multiculturalism Fund for a project titled *Barrier-free Health and Medical Services in Alberta*. Since that time, we have completed an extensive literature review, distributed surveys to people with disabilities and medical professionals, and conducted site audits. Our final report will be available in April, 2011.

Overall, we found that people with disabilities are happy with their access to the province’s health and medical services; however, many people who took part in our project noted similar barriers occurring throughout the province, in rural and urban settings.

Transportation

The biggest transportation barriers were cost, coordination of schedules, and arranging transportation following discharge from emergency rooms. For example, some of the study’s participants talked about the strict pick-up and drop-off schedule

of specialized transit systems, such as DATS and how they do not work with doctors’ appointments that run late. There were also concerns about being dropped off at an emergency room by an ambulance and having to find a way home after being released. Often the only option for people who find themselves in this situation is to take a cab, which is expensive, especially if a person is on income support.

Communication

A lack of communications services is a common barrier. People who are deaf and hard of hearing said that their access to health and medical services in the province would improve if interpretive services were available. People felt that written instructions were not good enough, since communication barriers still existed when patients wanted to ask their doctors questions. Those who are blind and visually impaired said a lack of Braille on written materials and signage was a major barrier.

One-Issue Appointments

Doctors are not able to spend as much time with patients as they used to. Many doctors’ offices have a one-issue-per-appointment policy in place, to ensure that the largest possible number of patients can be seen. For some, this might not be problem, but for people with disabilities who have complex health issues, one-issue appointments are not enough.

ACCD's study discovered a need for a greater amount of appointment time for people with disabilities.

Access to Physicians

With a shortage of doctors (especially in rural areas), getting a doctor is hard enough. But for people with disabilities, the problem is even harder, since doctors are not always willing to take on the added work of complex health issues that people with disabilities sometimes have.

Physical Accessibility

Finally, physical barriers often prevent access to health and medical services. ACCD's study found a variety of barriers, ranging from the design of parking areas, paths of travel, and washrooms, to inaccessible medical equipment, like exam tables that cannot be lowered and scales

that cannot accommodate wheelchair users.

Based on the project's findings, ACCD developed a list of recommendations which is included in our final report. We are currently meeting with interested parties – including elected officials, professionals who work in the health system, and various organizations – to discuss the findings and to determine ways in which we can work together to improve access to health and medical services in the Alberta.

For more information on ACCD's Barrier-free Health and Medical Services in Alberta project, contact our Edmonton office at 780-488-9088 or toll free at 1-800-387-2514.



The barriers are not always big or obvious, but they can be devastating.

Call for Nominations for ACCD's Board of Directors!

Do you have a disability and would like to make a difference in your community? We are currently looking for board members from Calgary and area and from northern Alberta to represent their regions on our board of directors.

- Are you 18 years of age or older and can commit to a 2-year term?
- Do you have ready access to email and are available for face-to-face board meetings three times a year?
- Are you familiar with the activities of non-profit organizations, including projects, programs and resource development?

Why not put your name forward as a potential board member to serve on the board of directors of the Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities, a consumer-directed, grassroots organization dedicated to improving the quality of life of Albertans with disabilities?

Please call the ACCD office at 1-800-387-2514 or email us at accd@accd.net.

Certificate of Recognition for Academic Effort and Achievement

At the beginning of 2010, ACCD developed the Certificate of Recognition for Academic Effort and Achievement, and the first students to receive the award did so that spring. Now in its second year, the Certificate of Recognition's purpose remains the same: to celebrate the effort and academic achievement of students with disabilities. The program, which is available in all Alberta's post secondary institutions and open to all full- and part-time students with disabilities, enables faculty and staff to honour students who work hard to fulfill their educational goals. ACCD would like to extend congratulations to all of the recipients for the 2010 fall semester.

CCD Award
"These individuals are recognized for their dedication and integrity in the continuing pursuit of full participation in society by people with disabilities in Alberta."

In a unanimous decision, ACCD's board of directors have chosen this year's recipient of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities Award: Lois Hardy. Lois is a long-time educator, and she is currently the Superintendent of Student Services with the Lloydminster Public School Division. Throughout her career, she has been dedicated to the removal of barriers that prevent children with disabilities from accessing educational opportunities. Lois believes that learning leads to independence and that all children can grow to be as independent as they are able to be. Lois also believes that all students can learn and that each child deserves to be treated with dignity. Lois' life work embodies

Education for Life Bursary: Apply Now!

June 30, 2011 is the application deadline for ACCD's 2011-2012 Education for Life Bursary. People with disabilities who are continuing their education as first-time, post-secondary students are eligible for bursaries ranging from \$300 to \$800. Details and application forms can be found on our web site at www.accd.net, or you can contact ACCD's office at 780-488-9088 in Edmonton or toll free at 1-800-387-2514.



CCD Award 2010

the spirit of the CCD Award, and ACCD's board of directors and staff are thrilled to announce her as this year's recipient!



Around Alberta Calendar of Events



Location and dates:

The 2011 CASHRA conference will be from June 13 to June 15, 2011, at the Westin Hotel, 320 4 Avenue SW, in Calgary. For more information, visit <http://cashra2011.ca/>



Spring Conference 2011

ACDS's 25 annual spring conference runs April 27 through April 29 in Calgary. For more information, visit www.acds.ca.



Joints in Motion Information Session, Monday, April 18,

2011, at the Edmonton Public Library, Stanley A. Milner Branch, 7 Sir Winston Churchill Square. The speaker is Dr. Stephanie Keeling, Assistant Professor, Rheumatology, U of A. The Session runs from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm. Check out more information sessions and forums throughout the province at www.arthritis.ca/arthritis/home/default.asp?s=1&province=ab.



Family Conference 2011

The Alberta Association for Community Living's much anticipated annual Family Conference is scheduled to occur on April 8 and 9, 2011, at the Fantasyland Hotel at the West Edmonton Mall in Edmonton, AB. It is the longest standing and largest family conference in all of Canada. For more information, visit <http://www.aacl.org>.



The 2011 Diversity Conference is a three-day conference that will be held Tuesday, November 8, through Thursday, November 10, at the South Delta Hotel, in Calgary. For more information, visit <http://www.diversityconference.ca/>



4th Annual Disability Employment Symposium
"Sharing Perspectives"

Mark your calendars to attend the 4th Annual Disability Employment Symposium hosted by Community Futures Treaty Seven (CFT7) in Calgary at the Deerfoot Inn and Casino on May 11 and 12, 2011. For more information, please visit www.t7edc.com.



Parkinson Society Hope Conference 2011
June 3 and 4, Deerfoot Inn and Casino, Calgary.
For more information call 1-800-561-1911.



The Canadian Down Syndrome Society is excited to host the 24th National Conference at the Delta Vancouver Airport Hotel, May 20 - 22, 2011. For more information call 1-800-883-5608.