

## Battling the Human Resources Shortage

Alberta's current human resources shortage has the disability community reeling. Every week, ACCD hears how difficult it is for persons with disabilities to recruit and retain caregivers, how challenging it is to meet staffing requirements at assisted-living complexes, and how safety and health needs of persons with disabilities are at risk. Larry Pempeit, Managing Director of the Canadian Paraplegic Association Alberta Division says,

*The labour shortage in Alberta has made many individuals who have severe disabilities feel vulnerable and afraid of losing our independence. Many times we do not know whether our caregivers will be there to help us get up in the morning or to go to bed at night, and the lack of trained attendant care has restricted our abilities to lead normal lives. We do not want to give up our independence, yet many of us face the prospect of moving into an institution.*

In response to the situation, a number of grassroots and government initiatives have been undertaken:

- » A coalition of community-based human services organizations called Who Cares, Alberta? is working to raise awareness about the impact of the human resources shortage on the social services sector. The Who Cares, Alberta? website provides news about the issue, a mail-in campaign, and the opportunity to share how the labour shortage is affecting you.
- » On November 5, the Stelmach government announced a \$26.1 million investment to assist agencies that support children and youth, adults with developmental disabilities, and other vulnerable Albertans in recruiting and retaining staff.
- » The Alberta Council of Disability Services has published and is distributing a *Careers that Matter* newsletter. The newsletter encourages

readers to consider working with people with developmental disabilities, emphasizing the opportunity for a meaningful career helping people with developmental disabilities achieve their potential.

While individuals and groups are taking steps to address the labour shortage, the crisis is far from over. The City of Calgary, for example, called on the provincial government for "at least \$100 million in Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) funding by 2010." (Who Cares, Alberta? website). As well, Jan Reimer, Provincial Coordinator of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, states: "Our contracted agencies are in an absolute crisis - funding has not risen to match the growth in population and need for services or with the pressures of the current labour market, and if agencies cannot find or retain staff, our communities will lack vital human services." (Who Cares, Alberta? website)

If you'd like to learn more about this issue, visit the Who Cares, Alberta? website at [www.whocaresalberta.com](http://www.whocaresalberta.com).

### Education for Life Bursary: Apply Early!

*"Attending college energized my desire to attain a degree and become financially independent, specifically, the English class helped me decide on English as my major."*

*2007 Education for Life Bursary Recipient*

Are you planning to attend college or university in September? If so, ACCD might be able to help.

Each year, ACCD presents its Education for Life Bursary to individuals with disabilities who are upgrading their education. With this award, we support first-time, post-secondary students with bursaries ranging from \$300 to \$800. In 2007, ACCD awarded bursaries to seven students attending post-secondary campuses across the province.

Details and an application form can be found on our website at [www.accd.net](http://www.accd.net). Or you can contact us at the

ACCD office by calling (780) 488-9088 in Edmonton or toll free at 1-800-387-2514. The application deadline is June 30, 2008. We look forward to hearing from you!

## ADF to Address Cabinet Policy Committee

On January 21, the Alberta Disabilities Forum (ADF) Low Income committee will address the provincial Cabinet Policy Committee in an attempt to encourage the government to consider annual increments to the AISH program.

A delegate of ADF representatives, including three individuals who currently receive AISH benefits, will share personal stories about living on the AISH benefit amount at a time when the costs of housing, food, clothing, medical needs, transportation and other necessities are soaring. The ADF position paper on this topic notes:

Sustainability is an important factor for any government program. Sustainability is also a vital factor for people with disabilities. When people with disabilities live on limited incomes, below the poverty level, any rise in the cost of living can have dire effects on their health, safety, and quality of life. The AISH program must be designed to protect people with disabilities from the impacts of these rising costs.

Bev Matthiessen, executive director of ACCD and chair of ADF's Low Income Working Group, will ask the committee to consider the following recommendations:

1. Alberta Disabilities Forum members urge the Government of Alberta to recognize, in principle, the critical importance of an annual increase in the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped benefit rate, including the modified AISH benefit rate.
2. Alberta Disabilities Forum members urge the Government of Alberta to increase the AISH benefit rate annually, by an increment of no less than the increase in the cost of living.
3. Alberta Disabilities Forum members recommend that the Government of Alberta establish a permanent body of equal representation from stakeholders such as elected officials, government representatives, and AISH recipients. We recommend that this body conduct annual (rather than bi-annual) income support amount reviews, and that it establish a process for annual adjustment of the AISH benefit.

ADF is hopeful that it will receive a positive response to its appeal. Paula Murphy from the AISH Network Society of Alberta says, "Many of our members are struggling to house, feed, and clothe themselves. To maintain even a basic level of existence requires more than \$1,050 per month."

## All Star Hockey Fun-Raiser Just Weeks Away!

Come cheer on the Eskimos Alumni and the Edmonton Police Faded Blues with help from the U of A Pandas as they battle it out at the All Star Hockey Fun-Raiser! This year's event promises to be better than ever with prizes, raffles, auction items—and, of course, some terrific hockey! All proceeds support ACCD's programs and research.

**Monday, February 18, 2008**  
**Clare Drake Arena**  
**University of Alberta**  
**1:30 p.m.**



*Tickets are just \$8.00 each or \$32.00 for a family. Call Tammy at 488-9088 in Edmonton or toll free at 1-800-387-2514 in the rest of Alberta. We look forward to seeing you there!*



*Together, We Hold The Power!*

**Full Participation - Accessibility - Equity**