

ACTION NEWS

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www.accd.net

Accessible Hotel Rooms in Alberta

For people with disabilities, travelling is often fraught with uncertainty, especially when it comes to hotel accessibility. This has become more evident as ACCD is approached by individuals and organizations that are unable to find accessible accommodations. We hear from people with disabilities who travel for work or leisure, families with children with disabilities and others who have found their travels compromised by inaccessible accommodations. While some steps have been taken to provide accessible accommodation, a disparity exists between what the industry deems accessible and the diverse needs of people with disabilities. Educating the hotel industry on what constitutes an accessible hotel room would be a great benefit to people with disabilities, as well as the hotel industry.



the state of accessibility of hotel rooms and identify the gap that exists between what the hotel industry considers

accessible and what the accessibility needs are of people with disabilities.

ACCD has developed a process that informs about the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities. This process includes doing research, developing recommendations, raising awareness, impacting legislation and partnering with associations. By exemplifying the need for accessible services, hotel owners will become aware of and move towards providing more accessible services. People with disabilities will be more easily able to find accessible hotel accommodations.

ACCD plans to produce an optimum hotel room template which will be distributed widely to the hotel industry, construction industry and stakeholders. ACCD is confident that the template will be inclusive and comprehensive knowing that we have studied and researched the needs of people with disabilities pertaining to hotel rooms.

Over the next year, ACCD will take on the issue of accessible hotel rooms through a project funded by the Alberta Human Rights and Multiculturalism Grant Program. The project entitled, *Accessible Hotel Accommodations for People with Disabilities*, will bring to light

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Our advisory committee will include cross-disability participation. People with disabilities will complete the questionnaire and attend the focus groups giving their input and feedback. Any potential change to accessibility will also have an impact on the hotel, tourism and construction industries that will be represented on our advisory committee providing their professional insight, expertise and experience.

ACCD is launching the project in May 2016. If you have an interest and would like to be involved, please contact us at 780-488-9088 or 1-800-387-2514.

Information is Power

Careers: The Next Generation

Careers: The Next Generation is a student focused, industry-driven community partnership that provides career awareness, exploration and experience to enable Alberta students to discover a career passion in trades, technologies, health and occupations in high demand. There is no charge for their non-profit services and support.



The student benefits are that they are connected to mentorship and

role models, can gain experience, earn credits towards graduation and prepare for transition into the work force.

Careers supports companies by connecting them with great students, informs them of employer tools and resources and pre-screens candidates. Careers vision is “strong vibrant communities where youth develop successful careers” and their mission is “enable youth on their path to rewarding careers.”

For more information, call 1-888-757-7172 or 780-426-3414 or visit their website at www.nextgen.org.

ACCD's Annual Meeting

ACCD's Annual Meeting is a good time to find out more about our programs and services.

The meeting is on May 28, 2016, at the Holiday Inn Express & Suites, 2440 Calgary Trail NW, Edmonton from 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm.

If you have any questions about please call 780-488-9088 or toll free at 1-800-387-2514.

We hope to see you there!

Accessible Dental, Eye Care & Pharmacy Services

Research Project Completed

ACCD identified the need to raise awareness about the institutional and organizational barriers that exclude Albertans with disabilities from fully participating in dental, eye care and pharmacy services in Alberta. Our research study “*Accessible Dental, Eye Care, and Pharmacy Services in Alberta*” explored the status of accessibility of these health services for people with disabilities in Alberta.

To ensure equal access to health services in Alberta, it is crucial that people with disabilities are included in future strategies and implementation in order to provide accessible dental, eye care and pharmacy services.

There were a number of different sources of information which generated the information included in this report: literature review, an analysis of existing policy, project specific surveys, focus groups and site visits. Specific surveys were developed regarding dental, eye care and pharmacy services which were distributed to: 1) people

with disabilities and 2) health professionals.

Seven focus groups were conducted covering all regions of the province. Site visits were performed using ACCD's assessment tool to record the physical measurements at clinics and offices.

The four project recommendations point out improvements that need to be made so that people with disabilities can be equal participants in dental, eye care and pharmacy services in Alberta.

- Improve communication between dental care, eye care and pharmacy professionals, other employees and people with disabilities by including disability-awareness training in post-secondary education programs.
- Advance the skills and knowledge of existing dental, eye care and pharmacy professionals, and other

employees by introducing professional development courses, workshops and seminars focusing on removing barriers faced by people with disabilities.

- Improve the physical access of dental, eye care and pharmacy offices/clinics by adhering to the Barrier-Free Section of the Alberta Building Code and promising practices, including reception areas, counselling/ examining rooms, counters and washrooms.
- Use and promote dental, eye care and pharmacy equipment, packaging and written materials that are accessible to people with disabilities.

Thank you to the Alberta Human Rights and Multiculturalism Grant Program whose financial support, leadership and commitment gave us the opportunity to bring to the forefront issues critical to people with disabilities. The report can be accessed at www.accd.net.



Did You Know?

Long Time ACCD Executive Director Retires

Bev Matthiessen has been the executive director of the Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities since 1991. She has decided to retire and her resignation is effective May 31, 2016. Her leaving marks the end of an era at ACCD and ADF. We are indebted to her vision and commitment for propelling us to our present position as a vital non-profit organization. Her leadership and vision have kept us strong and her work has assured our success in years to come. Bev's retirement is our loss but a well-deserved respite for her.



Message from Bev

It is now time for me to hand over the reins to someone else to take up the challenge of advocating for programs and services for persons with disabilities in Alberta. My hope is that the hard work and successes that have been made will continue and that the new person at the helm will carry on the good work that has been achieved throughout the years.

I have seen many changes at ACCD and in the disability community. There are countless stories to tell about the earlier days of my job. For instance, there were 2.5 positions at ACCD when I started and there was one computer which was shared by all. There were no financial statements or filing systems. There was a room full of boxes of documents that had been passed from board member to board member. I had one day of training with the previous executive director. Soon after I started, the board members and I rolled up our sleeves and got to work. Within a very short time, everything was organized and running smoothly. I have been ever grateful to that hard working board of directors who guided me through that first year and saved the day many times.

The disability community was strong, though, and over thirty people showed up at the annual meetings. Those that came were dedicated to the independent living movement and fought hard to bring about the many programs and services for persons with disabilities that we have in Alberta today. Without them, there would be no AISH, AADL or other disability programs.

I am proud of the work that I have contributed to while at ACCD. We have made a significant impact and have grown the organization to be an important voice for persons with disabilities in Alberta. I have worked with many fine people through the years and will miss the collegial relationships that have been developed.

Little did I know that I would still be in the position twenty-five years later! For me though, it is time to do all of those things that I have been putting off "until I retire."

I wish everyone clear skies, safe journeys and many successes in the future. My heartfelt thanks goes out to all those whom I have worked with along the way.

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.



ACCD Mailbox

Students are asked what they learned during our education and awareness school outreach presentations. Here are some of the answers from the students at Ardrossan School:

"I learned the proper terminology to use when describing a person and how society still has issues respecting and treating people equally."

"I learned that people with disabilities face many barriers in their everyday lives and we can all do our part to help reduce and remove those barriers."

2015 CCD Award Recipient, Joan Nielsen

Joan was born and raised on a farm near Stony Plain, AB. When she was ten years old, a very special addition arrived at her home – one that would change her life forever! Her only brother was born with muscular dystrophy. Her family faced numerous challenges during a period of time when awareness of disabilities was minimal and acceptance was extremely limited. One highlight of her brother's life was the time he spent at Camp Health, Hope & Happiness (Camp He Ho Ha) in the early 60s. Not only did her brother benefit from the experience at this magical place, but her family was able to take a much-needed "break" from the 24 hour care that was required for her brother.



In 1990 she certainly took the path less traveled. Although Joan was private about her aspirations, she continued to thirst for a position working with people with disabilities. Joan's dream became a reality when a door of opportunity opened and she was offered a position as executive director at Camp Health, Hope & Happiness, a camp that provides adapted recreational camps to children and adults with every type and degree of disability. She has never looked back! Joan held the position of executive director for 25 years.

Since her employment at the camp, Joan has been the recipient of several awards in recognition of her service to the community and people with disabilities. They include the Award of Distinction from Kiwanis International, the Great Albertan, the Woman of Vision, the Alberta Centennial Medal, the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal, the Alberta Centennial Salute for Sports and Recreation and the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Award. She is a member of the Lions organization and has received several awards from the Lions Foundation of Canada.

The Board of Directors and staff at ACCD realize the magnitude of the contributions that Joan has made and feel that she is a most worthy recipient of the CCD award. We are proud to bestow the 2015 Council of Canadians with Disabilities Award to Joan Nielsen. Congratulations!

Meet the Board

Michelle Bissell Director (Edmonton)



Michelle Bissell came onto the board of directors of the Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities in October 2014 as an advisory board member. She has since been elected as a full board member on May 29, 2015.

Michelle has a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a Certificate in Career Development from Concordia University College of Alberta. Michelle has worked as the Education Team Leader at the Cerebral Palsy Association of Alberta. She also participates with an occupational therapy class at the University of Alberta as a panelist for their sexuality workshop. Recently, Michelle has taken an active role in ACCD's school education awareness program. She is keenly interested in talking to the students about disabilities and has spoken to the four and five year olds at kindergarten classes. Michelle takes pictures of herself as a young girl to show the students what she looked like when she was of a similar age to the students. This always starts interesting questions and gets the students more involved. Michelle loves the innocent and honest questions and comments that the kindergarten students ask her.

As a person who grew up with a disability, Michelle knows fully the challenges that people with disabilities face on a daily basis. She believes people with disabilities can contribute to their communities with the proper supports in place. Michelle is a Mutual Fund Representative with the World Financial Group, specializing in Registered Disability Savings Plans. RDSP is a specialty of Michelle's and her knowledge in this area is extensive. Michelle serves as chairperson of the DATS Advisory Board in Edmonton and has a history of volunteering in schools as a teacher's aide and also was involved with Little Bits Riding Club. Michelle enjoys horseback riding, karaoke and spending time with her partner.

Alberta Disabilities Forum Update



ADF Member Meetings

ADF's last two member meetings dealt with important issues to the disability community.

- On October 29, 2015, the topic of discussion was physician-assisted dying. David Baker, Human Rights lawyer and Dr. Eric Wasylenko, palliative care physician, presented on the safeguards that must be included in federal legislation to ensure that people with disabilities and other vulnerable people are not at risk when the legislation is enacted.
- On March 17, 2016, the topic of discussion was an Alberta Accessibility Act. Six different disability groups brought forward their accessibility challenges: physical disabilities, deaf and hard of hearing, blind and visually impaired, mental health, progressive disabilities and developmental disabilities. Ontario and Manitoba have legislation and British Columbia is preparing to enact legislation. The purpose of bringing this forward was to start the discussion in Alberta about accessibility legislation.

Housing Working Group

The purpose of the ADF Housing Working Group is to advocate for accessible, affordable, adaptable housing for people with disabilities. This working group will explore ways to document the housing needs of people with disabilities and make recommendations to the various levels of government and stakeholder organizations. Working group members are in the process of developing a position paper that can be used to present to elected officials, public servants and stakeholders. Issues include lack of accessible affordable housing stock, renovations being kept up by government on housing already available, subsidies and capital funding.

AISH Benefit Working Group

The purpose of this working group is to advocate for having the AISH benefit amount indexed to the cost of living in Alberta. Working group members are in the process of producing a research-based position paper outlining the benefits of indexing the AISH benefit amount. To accomplish this goal, members are working on a survey to collect information on the financial status of AISH recipients, as well as to research the history of increases to the AISH benefit amount and compare those increases to the yearly rise in the consumer price index in Alberta.

Transportation Working Group

ADF recently started a working group on transportation and sent out a call for working group members to study this issue. The provincial government has an ongoing provincial transit engagement to inform the development of the provincial transit strategy, which will help determine how provincial funding can best support municipal transit initiatives and rural bus services. If you are interested in joining this working group, please contact Claudette at adf@accd.net.

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, receive 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!

Disability Conferences Calendar of Events



Canadian Disability Studies Association 2016 Conference

Hosted by Canadian Disability Studies Association

May 28-30, 2016

University of Calgary, Calgary, AB

For more information, visit www.congress2016.ca/program/events/293-cdsa



Western Canada Fundraising Conference 2016

Hosted by Fundraising Pharmacy

June 1-3, 2016

Art Gallery of Alberta

For more information, visit www.fundraisingpharmacy.com/western-canada-fundraising-conference/



17th Canadian Collaborative Mental Health Care Conference

June 17-18, 2016

Kelowna, BC

For more information, visit www.ubccpd.ca/course/CCMHCC2016



Fighting Stigma, Promoting Resiliency and Positive Mental Health

Hosted by Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
September 18-22, 2016

TELUS Convention Centre, Calgary, AB

For more information, visit www.iacapap2016.org/registration/



Grey Matters 2016

Hosted by: Alberta Seniors & Housing, City of Grande Prairie, County of Grande Prairie and Northern Alberta Development Council

September 20-21, 2016

Grande Prairie, AB

For more information, visit www.greymatters2016.com/



Self-Regulation and Problem Solving

Hosted by the Autism Awareness Centre Inc.

October 28-29, 2016, Calgary, AB

For more information, visit www.autismawarenesscentre.com/