



Citizens With Disabilities – Ontario

www.cwdo.org

“Together We Are Stronger”

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Accomplishments Report

2017-18

Introduction

CWDO is pleased to share this report of our accomplishments since our last Annual General Meeting.

CWDO has a [5-Year Strategic Plan](#) in place covering 2016-2020. The plan was approved at the 2016 Annual General Meeting, and priorities are to be reviewed and updated by the board year over year.

In 2017, our focus was reviewed and refreshed as follows:

1. Income security
2. Resources for members
3. Making Ontario more accessible

This report outlining actions taken and results achieved toward our strategic plan, and other areas of activity.

Progress Toward Our Strategic Plan

1. Income Security

Commitment:

Put research into action as it relates to employment opportunities and opportunities to improve the status of living for people whose primary source of income is ODSP.

Actions taken:

- Continued work on research investigating employment programs available in Ontario, and the experience of people with disabilities in accessing those programs with support from the researcher we hired to lead the project.
- Focus groups with people having various disabilities were held in Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Toronto, North Bay (Indigenous focus) and London with a final one planned for Woodbridge (ethno-racial focus).
- Six reports have been posted on the CWDO website, as well as a plain language summary.
- Our reports have been shared with the Accessibility Directorate to help inform their employment strategy and the CCD to share with other provincial affiliates.
- In March, CWDO hosted a webinar to support people using or considering using voice-to-text software, Dragon Naturally Speaking.
- In May, 2018 CWDO hosted a webinar in collaboration with Flemington Community Legal Services to share information on ODSP and employment rights and benefits; and aging with a disability in relation to ODSP, Canada Pension Plan (CPP), and Old Age Security (OAS).
- The ADM responsible for Access Talent, Ontario's employment strategy, attended our AGM to provide a presentation.
- CWDO applied for an Enabling Change Project in December 2016 to provide awareness raising and information sessions for employment service providers. This project would have directly responded to what people with disabilities told us about employment service providers' lack of awareness and low expectations of people with disabilities. Unfortunately, our project was not selected.

Results achieved:

- 18 people participated in one-on-one key informant interviews.
- 44 people participated in focus groups.
- Over 50 people registered for webinars.
- Research findings were illuminating regarding the experiences of people with disabilities using ODSP-related employment programs and other employment services: employment support

- programs are generally missing the mark when it comes to needs and expectations of people with disabilities.
- Because our research was funded by the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD), we were able to connect with several members and organizations as outlined below.

2. Resources for members

Commitment:

Offer webinars to members on a range of topics to engage, inform and support each other. CWDO will continue our work to publish on its website a guide for people who are newly disabled. This guide, written from the perspective of people with disabilities will highlight information and resources that people wish they would have known about when they first became disabled. Work will begin on a similar guide for parents of children with disabilities.

Actions taken:

- CWDO's website was refreshed with a new look and feel. All content posted continues to be accessible.
- On January 2017, CWDO facilitated a community forum for members to share their views on what should be included in the federal government legislation to address accessibility.
- Jeffrey Stark, a subject matter expert on accessible technologies and CWDO board member, set up an online platform for members to respond to questions about technology, adaptive technology, android, phones, apps, and accessibility. Community and CWDO members can ask their questions at <https://ask.fm/mysticjeff>.
- In August 2017, representatives from CWDO met with ministries from the federal and provincial government to offer information that could be used by the government to promote better supports for Ontarians with disabilities.
- We have hired a freelancer to create a database which will allow us to do queries. This functionality will enable us to better engage members by connecting them to CWDO projects which match their expressed interests and skills.
- The guide for people who are newly disabled continues to be a work-in-progress. Selected members have been invited to review and add content.

- CWDO has been intensively engaged with Talking Communities to make our online conference room equally accessible to people regardless of the device they use – android, cell phone, telephone, Mac and PC.
- CWDO is supporting a funding application to enable a Canadian non-profit corporation to have authoring rights for the Talking Communities operating software.
- CWDO sends newsletters to members across Ontario as well as specialty newsletters to members in specific locations, and/or those interested in certain topics, such as technology and attendant services.
- We switched to a more accessible e-mail client, MailChimp.
- CWDO assisted in planning a local event for International Day of Persons with Disabilities held in Toronto and provided promotional materials to those in attendance.
- CWDO invited Susan Picarello, Assistant Deputy Minister, Accessibility Directorate, as a guest speaker to the online AGM to share information about Ontario's employment strategy.
- CWDO receives inquiries from members through our website and respond promptly with information or referral to other community resources.
- CWDO has formally partnered on three projects:
 - Research on work disability policy, income security and work reintegration in Canada;
 - D-Net Digital Archive project, to catalogue and index digital media (images, clips and reflections) for ease of use by educational institutions, libraries, sport, media, and arts organizations; and
 - Research on developing disability studies scholars teaching in non disability studies academic spaces
- CWDO is supporting Courageous Companions by providing free access to the accessible online conferencing system. Courageous Companions works to match blinded war vets with service animals.

Results achieved:

- Feedback from newsletters has been very positive, and one member made a suggestion about vetting the position of news articles we share.
- Nine people attended the 2017 AGM.

- Over 80 people attended the IDPD event Toronto on December 2nd.
- 696 people currently subscribe to our newsletters with varying open rates (22% for Ontario newsletters; 25% for Toronto newsletters; 35% for Technology newsletters and 24% for London Technology newsletters).
- CWDO strengthened its community alliances with the Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT), University of Toronto, Ryerson University and Fireweed Media through our collaborative partnerships.

3. Making Ontario more accessible

Commitment:

Provide input to new AODA standards and participate in reviews of accessibility legislation. An important part of this work will be connecting with our members so that we can reflect their views. In addition, we will continue to support efforts to enact a strong and effective accessibility act for Canadians.

Actions taken:

- CWDO developed and shared a survey with members to obtain their input in November, 2016. 19 people responded by January, 2017.
- CWDO submitted a brief to the federal government in February, 2017. It was informed by member responses and views of the current CWDO Board of Directors.
- CWDO attended a town hall in several locations hosted by the federal government to get public input into national accessibility legislation.
- In February 2018, CWDO supported **the AODA Alliance's** concerns about the appointment of the Honourable David Onley to conduct the next mandatory Independent Review of the implementation and enforcement of the 2005 Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

Results achieved:

- Pending release of draft national accessibility legislation expected in February/March, 2018

Additional Activity

Partnerships and Alliances

- Through the course of information gathering for CWDO's Employment project, CWDO reached out to the **ODSP Action Coalition** and met with members from its Earnings and Employment Supports Working Committee.
- CWDO has also made new connections with members of the **Ontario Disability Employment Network** including service providers, regional employment networks and advocacy organizations.
- CWDO's research process is working to foster knowledge and resource sharing with the **Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians**, and the **Ontario Centre for Workforce Innovation** who are conducting related projects on the employment of Ontarians with disabilities.
- Terry Green represented CWDO at Minister Kent Hehr's reception for International Day of Persons with Disabilities on November 30. MP Kent Hehr was the Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities at the time.
- CWDO collaborated with the **Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians, Canadian Hearing Society, Centre for Independent Living in Toronto, Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Magnet, and the National Educational Association of Disabled Students** to assist in the coordination of the City of Toronto's International Day of Persons with Disabilities Event on December 2, 2017.
- In March, 2018, CWDO presented an overview of its employment research to policy advisors at the **Accessibility Policy, Employment Strategy and Outreach Division of the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario**.
- Over the course of our employment research project, CWDO has collaborated with several organizations who have generously donated meeting space and assisted with coordination of participant recruitment, accessibility and accommodations. These organizations include:
 - [Accessibility for All](#)

- [North Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre](#)
- [Centre for Independent Living in Toronto](#)
- [Independent Living Centre London and Area](#)
- [ATN Access for Persons with Disabilities Inc.](#)
- [Spinal Cord injury Ontario – Thunder Bay](#)
- [City of Ottawa](#)

Human Rights

- CWDO board member, Melissa Graham, was a key organizer of the 7th Annual Toronto Disability Pride March on September 23, 2017. The March aims to bring recognition of the struggles and value of people with disabilities as they fight against ableism and other forms of oppression. This brings diverse people with disabilities together to celebrate and take pride in themselves as a community of people with disabilities.
- On November 30, 2017, CWDO board member Terry Green participated in a national meeting facilitated by CCD to discuss strategies for advancing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Canada.
- CWDO continues to monitor and report on Ontario Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) statistics.
- CWDO's newsletters were also used as an opportunity to share perspectives on living and loving with a disability. From a human rights perspective, the CWDO Ontario newsletter celebrated people with disabilities as sexual beings. This newsletter also offered resources from people with disabilities giving advice on relationships and dating.

Financial Development and Sustainability

- CWDO continues to focus on keeping its operational costs low while working to sustain the organization. For instance, CWDO is reaching out to various partners to share its accessible conferencing system. This system is shared either as donation or for a fee for service to generate some revenue when possible.

Together we are stronger.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michele Gardner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Michele Gardner, President