



**Appearance before the**  
**Standing Committee on Community Services**  
**Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia**

Chair: Patricia Arab, MLA  
Clerk: Kim Langille

Tuesday June 17, 2014  
Room 233A – Johnston Building  
1672 Granville Street  
Halifax - 1pm to 3pm

Representatives from March of Dimes Canada:  
Gail Mores, Director, Community Engagement and Accessibility  
Sue Uteck, Accessible Biz Coordinator – Atlantic Canada

## **Introduction**

In 1950, the Canadian Foundation for Poliomyelitis was formed to raise funds for research for a vaccine to end the threat of polio in Canada, and the Ontario organization was founded the next year. Our fundraising campaigns, Mother's Marches, were run under the March of Dimes name. In 1955, the Salk vaccine was discovered and in 1957, Canada became the first country to eradicate the threat of polio through a nation-wide vaccination program, and March of Dimes shifted its focus to service delivery to help polio survivors re-integrate into community life. Today, March of Dimes Canada is one of the largest rehabilitation charities serving people with physical disabilities in Canada, with an annual budget of \$92 million dollars and over 1600 employees. We provide service to more than 55,000 people each year.

In the 1990s, demand for some of our services extended beyond Ontario and we formed a national charitable organization to extend these services to other provinces. In 2006, we acquired the March of Dimes brand and operate nationally as March of Dimes Canada.

For the past six years, we have slowly been expanding our presence in other parts of Canada. The relatively slow expansion is a result of limited resources to grow as well as a desire to take the time to understand each community and province we enter, its policies and cultures, the existing services as well as service gaps. Our goal is to grow in partnership with existing organizations, with government and the private sector, and our approach is collaborative.

## **March of Dimes Canada: Our Purpose and Vision**

The Mission of March of Dimes Canada is to assist people with physical disabilities to maximize their independence, personal empowerment and community participation. Our vision is to create a society inclusive of people with disabilities.

Over the past sixty years, we have seen an evolution in our society's perception of people with disabilities, the translation of this perception into legislation and policy and a change in the expectations of people to live in the community. March of Dimes tries to be a source of a broad range of services for the person with a disability seeking greater independence. Our programs and advocacy work address a broad range of issues and barriers facing people with disabilities. The common theme is to support lifespan community living for people with disabilities, with particular focus on the key transitions people face throughout their lives—the impact of acquiring and coping with a disability, deterioration of function, moving from children's services to adult services or from adult to senior services. We support the transition from school to work, from the hospital to the family home, or from the family home to independent living.

In Ontario, the provincial government is also recognizing that lifespan community living is not only good social and political policy, but good economic policy. For example, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has shifted its funding from acute care to community services, recognizing that getting people out

of hospital earlier and keeping them in the community longer saves money. Hospitals are working with community agencies to support this move, transitioning people from chronic care beds and developing programs to facilitate faster and more successful community re-integration of stroke survivors back home.

We are seeing many of similar trends in Nova Scotia. The recent commitments in the spring budget to enhance services for seniors, shifting the policy emphasis from nursing home beds to home care funding, and transforming services for persons with disabilities to maximize their independence are commendable initiatives.

After our participation in the “Putting People First” dialogue, we were delighted to learn of the announcement to create a “clearer roadmap” aimed at improving the coordination, delivery and effectiveness of Nova Scotia’s disability programs and services. Several provincial governments across the country have embarked on similar paths, with some identifying “accessibility legislation” as a critical step in creating that clearer roadmap.

Such has been the case in Manitoba and Ontario, where the Accessibility for Manitobans Act and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act were designed, through the participation of organizations like March of Dimes, to create not just an accessible community, but an inclusive society.

### **Services of March of Dimes Canada**

Independent Living Services:

March of Dimes Canada is the largest provider of attendant care services to people with physical disabilities in Ontario. We assist over 2,000 people to live in their own homes by providing assistance with activities of daily living. Services are available 24-hours per day through our supportive housing programs and on a scheduled basis through our outreach attendant services program.

We also provide assistance to people with acquired brain injuries to improve their independence and access to the community as well as to live independently through supportive housing and outreach programs.

We have recently partnered with seniors organizations to provide wellness programs to seniors wishing to remain in their homes.

All services are funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care or on a fee for service basis with the Community Care Access Centres, the insurance and rehabilitation industries.

March of Dimes also has a Non-Profit Housing Corporation which builds and operates apartment buildings and congregate care homes for people with a range of disabilities. We are currently working with the Brain Injury Association of Canada to identify opportunities to develop and manage congregate care homes with support services in communities across Canada.

## Employment Services:

March of Dimes has been a provider of Employment Services to people with disabilities since the 1950s. Over the years, the mandate has expanded to all people with barriers to employment.

Services are provided annually to approximately 8,000 consumers who are clients of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, the Ontario Disability Support Program, Ontario Works, the Community Coordinator program of Service Canada, Employment Ontario and a variety of other funders.

In 2009, March of Dimes Canada, in partnership with two private rehabilitation companies, won the contract to provide employment services to disabled members of the Canadian Armed Forces seeking to find employment as civilians. This service operates under the CanVet brand. March of Dimes Canada has employment specialists in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Quebec and Ontario responsible for the delivery of this service. Our partners serve the provinces west of Ontario.

Programs are both grants based and fee-for-service.

## AccessAbility Services:

Mobility and accessibility were the focus of the first services developed by March of Dimes following the discovery of the Salk vaccine in 1954. AccessAbility Services include the following services:

- **Assistive Devices Program:** In Ontario, we assist people with the purchase and maintenance of assistive devices required for their mobility and independence. We also broker services, seeking to assist the applicant to secure funds from all sources to pay for their devices. In the past, we have piloted recycled equipment programs to demonstrate the need and potential to the government of reusing devices, for both environmental and financial benefits. This has led to a recent government funded pilot to reuse equipment.
- **Home and Vehicle Modification Program:** This program, funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, provided grants of up to \$15,000 to individuals requiring modifications to their home or vehicle for improved safety, accessibility and independence. Originally a component of the vocational rehabilitation system, this program is open to all Ontarians, based on financial and physical need. Each year, \$9.25 million dollars are allocated to approximately 1,000 consumers.
- **Barrier Free Design Consultation Services:** March of Dimes provides consultation services to organizations and businesses wishing to better accommodate people with disabilities or to comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) which is being phased-in Ontario. We also provide plan review services to the Ontario Trillium Fund on all applications for funds to make a community building accessible.
- **DesignAbility:** This program matches people with disabilities with volunteers who devise low-cost modifications to existing products to enhance its usability by the consumer. Most solutions cost well below \$100.

- Northern Medical Clinics: Our oldest continually operating program, Northern Medical Clinics flies specialists to northern Ontario communities to see patients unable to access these specialties locally. The program is co-funded by the physicians, the Ministry of Health and March of Dimes.
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#### Recreation and Integration Services:

This basket of services provides support to people facing life transitions, and who seek social and recreational opportunities. Through this program, we offer day trips, a six-day residential program at an accessible integrated facility, travel programs, social programs, and support to teens and young adults making the transition from children's services to adult services. Our Befriending Program matches volunteers and people with disabilities, with common interests, to develop friendships and friendly visiting.

#### Volunteer and Peer Support Services:

This program includes two major peer support networks: Polio Canada, which supports people experiencing the late effects of polio and Stroke Recovery Canada, which supports stroke survivors and their community re-engagement. Polio Canada was formed in 1999; SRC in 2004. Both now also include a component to address the needs of family caregivers in areas of education, training and peer support.

#### Conductive Education Services:

This program assists children and adults with various neurologically-based disorders to become more mobile and independent using a holistic learning system called Conductive Education. Conductive Education is based in the concept of neuroplasticity, a lifelong ability of the brain to reorganize neural pathways. No matter how disabled an individual is, people can learn and improve if motivated.

CE Conductors are specially trained professionals who work with program participants to gain or regain mobility and self-sufficiency through incremental learning. The system focuses on the whole person and recognizes physical, social, intellectual, and emotional aspects of learning, merging self-directed learning with rehabilitation.

#### Accessible Biz Connections:

Accessible Biz Connections is a wage subsidy program designed to link employers with individuals with a disability who are searching for work. The program is facilitated by March of Dimes Canada in partnership with Restaurants Canada, and Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB).

Accessible Biz Connections will also work in partnership with employment service providers seeking placements for their clients.

Accessible Biz Connections program is available to businesses, agencies and individuals in Atlantic Canada, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Specific Programs Delivered in Nova Scotia:

Conductive Education

CanVet Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Post-Polio Canada

Stroke Recovery Canada

Recreation and Integration Services

Employment Services

### **Concluding Remarks**

March of Dimes Canada is currently working with governments coast to coast – to coast, a result of a recent expansion of services in Nunavut. We are working not only to help develop accessibility legislation and contribute to each province’s dialogue, but in determining where are programs and services can help improve the lives and livelihoods of people with disabilities, seniors, their families, caregivers and communities.

We would be pleased to deliver a “Legislating Accessibility” seminar in workshop in Halifax this fall around the time of our annual Rock for Dimes initiative, something that at least a few of you have attended. We also encourage everyone to visit our website, [www.marchofdimes.ca](http://www.marchofdimes.ca), where we offer a wealth of resources and information, and to explore the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan of March of Dimes Canada to help identify where our services can serve Nova Scotians with Disabilities.

Contact:

Steven Christianson, National Manager, Government Relations & Advocacy

March of Dimes Canada - 10 Overlea Boulevard, Toronto, ON M4K 1V3

416-425-3463, ext. 7326 – [schristianson@marchofdimes.ca](mailto:schristianson@marchofdimes.ca)