Meet the Chairwoman of the Board

By Donald Barrie

Meghan Hines, the chairwoman of our board, has demonstrated effective leadership as a member of CILT and the independent living community. She loves being able to apply her knowledge and community experience in her role as chair.

“I first learned about CILT when I was looking into the Direct Funding program (in the late 2000s)… it had the service and flexibility I needed.” She says she asked Sandra Carpenter, CILT’s executive director, how she could give back, which led Ms. Carpenter to invite her to join the board.

Born with muscular dystrophy, Ms. Hines has been a Direct Funding self-manager since 2011. Her relationship with CILT began prior to studying and living at McMaster University in Hamilton.

So why did she choose McMaster over the Toronto universities? “I wanted to get that independence and live away from home.” She credits her family for supporting her desire to be more independent.

In 2014, Hines graduated from McMaster’s Bachelor of Commerce program with honours in 2014. Upon graduation, she was hired by RBC to work at its downtown Toronto office. Now 26 years old, she works as Coordinator to the Office of the CEO.

“Our team is responsible for activities to help the CEO and other executives look at banking differently to ensure we are able to effectively service the current and future needs of our clients,” said Ms. Hines.

One of Ms. Hines’ biggest interests is wheelchair floor hockey. She has been playing since 1999 as a defensive forward. Bloorview MacMillan (now Holland Bloorview, a children’s rehabilitation hospital in Toronto) told her about the sport when she came in for an appointment.

“A player from the CEWHA (Canadian Electric Wheelchair Hockey Association) mentioned the sport to me and encouraged me to come by,” she says. “I immediately fell in love with the game, and have been playing it ever since.”

Since 2007, she has been playing for the Toronto Power Wheelchair Hockey League at Sunny View Public School. This July, she will be part of the league’s all-star team at the North American Power Hockey tournament in Philadelphia, PA.

Ms. Hines’ is also a keen supporter of the Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides program, with which she first got involved in 2000 after they gave her a service dog.

“I love to give back to Dog Guides. They provide a really good service to people with disabilities,” she says. “When I first started, they only had three guide dog programs. Now they have six programs.” It was her work with the Dog Guides that led her to nomination for the 2013 Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Meghan Hines, with her service dog, Target
Hail to the taxis

By Ing Wong-Ward

There’s an old saying in Toronto when it comes to taxis. There are too many — until you actually need one.

For people who use wheelchairs in this city, the opposite was true. Up until recently, there have been very few accessible cabs on the road and they were likely sub-contracted by WheelTrans.

Nowadays, you’ll see far more accessible cabs on the road. The industry is pushing towards “service equivalency”. This means if you’re a wheelchair-user and you order a taxi, it should reach your location in nine minutes — the same time it would take for a sedan taxi.

This means no need to book ahead for an accessible vehicle hours or even days in advance, or paying a private operator far more than the cost of a cab.

There are a number of ways to order a taxi. You can simply call or place an online order to the company of your choice. And if you have a smartphone, most cab companies have apps. You can even pay your fare through some apps, eliminating the need to hand over cash, debit or credit cards.

Uber is an app many have found useful. The technology company subcontracts its accessible services to drivers of wheelchair-accessible taxis. The cost, according to the company, is 30 per cent lower than traditional fares and comparable to its UberX service, which uses private vehicle operators.

Currently, Uber is paying the difference between typical cab fare and what its customers pay.

There’s one catch with Uber: while your chances of finding a cab through the app are much higher in downtown Toronto, it’s much more difficult outside of the core. So, you’ll likely need to rely on one of the traditional taxi companies for service if you’re not downtown.

The good news is, there are choices. People who use wheelchairs who want and afford a taxi can “hail” one, making it a little easier to get around the city.
For people who use wheelchairs, having a reliable service provider is as important to those who rely on a good car mechanic.

This past March, thousands of people across the province suddenly found themselves without a provider, when Shoppers Home Health Care pulled out of the wheelchair equipment business – with no notice.

It didn’t take long for local news outlets to hear from irate customers, who in some cases, had been waiting for repairs or new equipment for months. Many of them received wheelchairs through a program called the Central Equipment Pool, an exclusive contract Shoppers held with Ontario’s Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

As former Shoppers customers tried to find answers about what was going on, another company, Motion Specialties, picked up the Central Equipment Pool contract.

One of the largest mobility equipment providers in Canada, Motion Specialties has locations throughout the country. According to Linda Norton, Client Relations and Education Specialist, they are still working to clear the backlog of promised repairs and equipment delivery left behind by Shoppers. Ms. Norton added she has no additional information about the future of the Central Equipment Pool, which will be determined by the Ministry of Health.

Ms. Norton acknowledges there have been delays. In many cases, Motion Specialties had not been informed of outstanding orders. Customers are encouraged to get in touch if they are waiting for an order to be completed.

Individuals who have questions about their equipment can contact their local Motion Specialties location (found at www.motionspecialties.com), or contact the Central Equipment Pool line at (416) 701-1351 or 1-800-395-6661.
Canadian National Exhibition

210 Princes’ Blvd, Toronto
(416) 263-3330
The Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) has changed its admission policy for persons with disabilities for 2016. This year, it will be charging an admission fee to persons with disabilities, while their attendants will continue to be admitted at no charge. General admission is $18, or $15 for people over the age of 65. Please contact info@theex.com.

CILT Annual General Meeting

Location to be determined
Please check www.cilt.ca in the coming months for updates.

Summer 2016

JULY 2016

Diners Club event

Thursday, July 21st
The Grenadier Restaurant
1:00pm – 3:30pm
200 Parkside Drive (in High Park)
(416) 769-9870
Closest Subway Station: High Park
RSVP by Thursday, July 14, 2016

AUGUST 2016

Canadian National Exhibition

August 19 to September 5, 2016
210 Princes’ Blvd, Toronto
(416) 263-3330

No Diners Club event in August
Calendar of Events

Fall 2016

SEPTEMBER 2016

Diners Club event
Thursday, September 15
Fionn MacCool’s
5:30pm – 8:00 pm
70 The Esplanade (Church and Front)
(416) 362-2495
Closest Subway Station: Union
RSVP by Thursday, September 8, 2016

OCTOBER 2016

Diners Club event
Thursday, October 20
Red Lobster
20 Dundas St. West (Dundas and Bay)
(416) 348-8938
Closest Subway Station: Dundas
RSVP by Thursday October 13, 2016

CILT Annual General Meeting
Friday, October 14, 2016
Location to be determined

Diners Club events

The Diners Club meets once a month, at an affordable and accessible restaurant. It’s a great opportunity to meet others, while enjoying the various cuisines in and around the city of Toronto.

CILT will make every effort to have an attendant available for these events; however, we are unable to guarantee that one will be present. Those who must have an attendant with them to fully enjoy this event are encouraged to bring their own. Please note when the event ends. The attendant can only stay a short time after so please take this into consideration when booking your rides.

Members are responsible for the cost of their own meal. Pureed meals available upon request, with advanced notice.

Please RSVP by the specified date to: (416) 599-2458, ext. 222, by TTY at (416) 599-5077 or melanie.moore@cilt.ca

Supported by Toronto Community Sector Partnership Grant, and United Way
New Staff Member: Denise Emile

New Peer and Parenting Support Co-ordinator

Denise Emile

Many of you know Melanie Moore, Community Engagement Specialist at the Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT), Melanie recently accepted a new role at Springtide Resources and will continue to work with CILT two days a week. We are pleased to welcome Denise Emile as our new Peer and Parenting Support Co-ordinator. She will assume a number of Melanie’s former duties.

Denise has worked in the social services field for over a decade, after graduating from the Bachelor of Social Work Degree program at Ryerson University. Her professional experience is diverse, and includes several years as a social worker at Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Toronto, a brief stint as a residential counsellor at the National Ballet School and as a self-employed job coach. Prior to attending university, Denise spent a year living abroad in London, England, where she was a nanny and housekeeper for a family with two school-aged children.

As a single mother with a disability, Denise is aware of the challenges all parents face and the unique considerations associated with parenting with a disability. She brings a lived experience to her work with our Parenting With A Disability Network.

Denise believes one of the greatest strengths she employs in her work is her ability to develop strong and trusting relationships with those she serves, as a means of fostering dignity, self-confidence and self-sufficiency. She is committed to forwarding the Independent Living Movement and is thrilled to be a part of the CILT team. Denise looks forward to meeting and working with CILT members, its partners and its community.

Review gives thumbs up to Direct Funding program

By Leanne Larmondin

Direct Funding got high marks from independent consultants who recently completed an operational review of the program, which is more than 20 years old.

The innovative program, which provides funding to adults with permanent physical disabilities to recruit and manage their own attendants, is “responsive to participants’ needs and provides a “high level of service to (participants) with different needs,” said the consultants in their report.

The self-managed attendant services program, which is funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care through the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network (TCLHIN), has grown from a pilot project of 100 participants starting in 1994 to more than 800 today. Commissioned by the TCLHIN, the program review was conducted by a consulting company called Vision & Results Inc. to understand the impact of the additional $10 million the Ministry provided to the program over the last two years. It was also intended to examine existing processes and infrastructure to ensure the program is sustainable if it grows further.

Direct Funding program manager Leisa DeBono said she was pleased the review was so affirming. “It’s gratifying that an outside body how we do it and then was so positive and encouraging,” said Ms. DeBono, adding that staff are still reviewing the consultants’ recommendations to see which can be implemented and at what speed.

Key recommendations included streamlining or simplifying some of the program’s internal processes and improving the data collected.

The consultants’ final report to the TCLHIN notes that they interviewed major stakeholders for the review, including program staff and participants (called Self-Managers), as well as alternate service providers within Ontario and similar direct funding programs in other provinces.

Among the review’s findings:

• The program is lean, well-structured and provides funding to adults with permanent physical disabilities to recruit and manage their own attendants; it is “responsive to participants’ needs and provides a “high level of service to (participants) with different needs,” said the consultants in their report.
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We’re moving up

The Attendant Service Application Program (ASAP), formerly known as the Project Information Centre, recently moved into its own office space in the same building as the Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT). The move, just one floor above CILT’s offices at 365 Bloor St. East, was necessary due to the program’s growth and increase in staff. ASAP is the centralized point of access for individuals with physical disabilities applying for Attendant Services in Toronto and York Region.
Changes to the Municipal Elections Act may remove barriers in local elections

By Katherine Janicki

Amendments to the Municipal Elections Act may open the door to more accessible local elections. The Ontario government recently passed Bill 181, which includes a new framework for identifying and addressing barriers that affect candidates and voters with disabilities.

Voting is a fundamental right for all citizens, so it seems that accessibility should be a top priority. However, voters know that it doesn’t often feel that way. In the old version of the Act, cities were required only to ‘have regard’ for disability needs – and this regard has yielded varying results. Physical accessibility of polling stations remains uneven, while alternative methods like online voting are slow to catch on: for example, Toronto does not currently offer online voting, while some smaller municipalities like Markham and Peterborough have offered this option for years.

The bill’s changes require cities to “prepare a plan regarding the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities, and to make the plan available to the public before voting day.” This means that an accessibility plan will be mandatory rather than voluntary, and must be available for comment before and after an election takes place. While this signifies a stronger commitment to accessibility than has previously been mandated, time will tell if a plan is enough for appreciable improvements. Toronto citizen John Rae, giving a deputation to the Standing Committee before the bill passed, stressed that an accessibility plan needs follow through and thoughtful design. Mr. Rae also highlighted the importance of community consultation, reminding members of Provincial Parliament they should do “nothing about us without us” and recommending they consult extensively with the disability community to ensure inclusivity and effectiveness.

In addition to the new mandate for accessibility plans, campaign finance rules have been amended to recognize that candidates with disabilities may face unique barriers to running for office. New expense rules state that unusual costs incurred due to accommodating a disability (such as transportation costs and interpretation services) will be considered allowable campaign expenses, which may make it easier for people with disabilities to run for municipal office.

Thirteen delegates from South Korea’s Ministry of Health and Welfare and Bureau of Persons with Disabilities visited recently with CILT staff. They met with us to learn more about the types of programs we offer here and, potentially, to help them to develop their own.

New Staff Member: Adriana Gutierrez

Adriana Gutierrez is the new receptionist at the Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT). Adriana was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil but raised in Guadalajara, Mexico, where she lived until she was 19 years old. At that age she moved to Toronto where she studied Sociology and French at the University of Toronto; she graduated from her program a year ago. During her senior year, she presented in two conferences, one organized by the Canadian Sociological Association and the other by McGill University. In her last semester, she wrote an article which will be published by the end of this year by the Anthropology Journal of McMaster University. Upon graduation, Adriana worked mainly as a freelance translator while she completed a certificate in Human Resources and volunteered at Doctors Without Borders.

Whenever she is not at CILT, Adriana likes to run, read novels and political articles, write short stories, dance tango, watch soccer, listen to jazz and classical music, and watch art films.

Get a break on your electricity bill

The Ontario Electricity Support Program offers monthly credits to help low income households (for example, $28,000 or less in households of one or two people). The credit amount depends on how many people live in your home and your combined income. Apply online at OntarioElectricitySupport.ca or call 1-855-831-8151 / TTY: 1-800-855-1155 for more information.
Volunteering leads to empowerment

By Taryn Allen

I was interested in volunteering at the Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT) because I wanted to help improve the lives of people with disabilities. I also wanted to meet new people.

I did not think that by volunteering at a Centre for Independent Living, my views of my own disability would change in positive ways that would improve my sense of self and my outlook on life.

Of course, why not? It’s a Centre for Independent Living!

However, for as long as I can remember my outlook on life was positive, but I could never fully embrace my disability as part of my identity, because I struggled with how I could fully empower myself while still pursuing my dreams of a fulfilling life.

I was raised with medical model view of disability, that professionals knew more about my disability and body than I did. I agreed with the idea that my physical body could be improved and that this would improve my life. I understood this, but I also recognized the challenges that I would continue to face in society even if my physical abilities increased.

I was disheartened by these feelings because it conflicted with my own personal dreams of wanting to help change people’s perspective on the lives people with disabilities and where I could have a life of living, writing and traveling independently.

When I came to CILT, I saw the social model of disability, which is the idea that people with disabilities can empower themselves and others by taking responsibility and control over their lives. I saw this being put into action by the people around me.

I feel welcomed and accepted for what I can contribute as I volunteer: This has led to a sense of personal empowerment! Without realizing it I have incorporated the social model of disability into my life!

MY Outlook is, my life is definitely going to be fulfilling, and my dreams will happen in the future.

Thank you to all our volunteers

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