

**Sarnia Mayor Challenges All Other Ontario
Mayors to,
“Do the Right Thing”**

Ontario Disability
Employment Network



For Immediate Release

Sarnia, January 26, 2010- As most people are already forgetting about their New Year's Resolutions for 2010,

Sarnia's Mayor Mike Bradley is throwing out a dare out to all Mayor's in Ontario - - "to do the right thing and take up the challenge of hiring persons' who have a disability."

Mayor Bradley quoted some absolutely shocking statistics from a recent article penned by Joe Dale, Executive Director, of the [*Ontario Disability Employment Network*](#):

Statistics Canada pegs people who have a disability at 15.9% of the Canadian population. That's Canada's largest minority at almost 5.3 million people equal to the combined populations of Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Furthermore, disability is a factor of aging and 43% of seniors have disabilities growing to 56% for 75 year olds. Statistics Canada has projected that by 2021 Canadians over the age of 65 will grow from the 2006 level of 13.7% to between 20 and 24% of the population.

Currently there are almost 1.8 million working age people who have a disability in Ontario alone. According to Statistics Canada this group faces an unemployment rate of 49% although we know that if people who have never been able to access the labour

market were included this figure would be considerably higher.

Besides a 2001 Royal Bank study that showed Canadians who have a disability control over \$25 billion in disposable income we must surely be concerned that as many people who have a disability as possible contribute to the workforce and the tax base. The alternative, that these people live on social assistance payments, is untenable.

“The City has taken an active role by hiring persons’ with disabilities in Sarnia,” says Bob Vansickle of Employment Transitions, a division of Community Living Sarnia-Lambton. Vansickle is also the Co-Chairperson on the Board for the [Ontario Disability Employment Network](#). “We have a good amount of history with the City of Sarnia,” said Vansickle. “We’ve partnered on a number of employment grants over the years. The City has also hired summer students who have various forms of disabilities over the past 2 summers (5 students this past summer) to do everything from landscaping, to painting projects, to office work”

“They have also hired 3 people who have developmental disabilities to maintain beautification in 3 of the heavier business districts,” says Vansickle. “Additionally, the City’s policing service has hired a man seasonally who has a disability to care for their grounds,” he went on to say.

Sarnia’s Mayor is a long-time advocate for hiring persons' with disabilities. [Mayor Bradley was elected in 1988 and has held the office ever since](#). In addition to advocating for the hiring of persons' with disabilities via his own municipality, he's been a regular speaker at many events passionately advocating to other employers to hire (e.g., Annual Community Living Mayors'

Breakfasts, Chamber of Commerce events, and events sponsored by both government and the business community such as by the '[Ability First](#)' movement.

- 30 -

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