

New Directions

Winter 2021

GUELPH
Independent LIVING

Quarterly Agency Newsletter

www.guelphindependentliving.org



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**KEEP
HEALTHY
AND
STAY
SAFE**

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK...

“If you want to see the sunshine, you have to weather the storm.”

~ Frank Lane

Recently I heard Dr. Ostrowska, an Infection Disease specialist in Toronto, describe the status of COVID-19 as the **‘perfect storm’**. She explained that this perfect storm is a combination of new variant strains, delays to the vaccine roll-out, increased travel restrictions, and mounting fatigue as we approach the one-year anniversary of the first lockdown in Ontario. Although it is increasingly difficult to maintain COVID practices, she reminded her audience that we must remain more vigilant than ever with our IPAC procedures (physical distancing, wearing a mask and good hand hygiene) to weather this storm and see the sunshine on the other side.

Within GIL, our first two positive cases have reminded all of us of this need to be vigilant. By working with the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health on contact tracing and reviewing our IPAC procedures, we made additional changes to our internal procedures including the designation of specific areas in each staff office for meal and hydration breaks, and the use of disposable gowns for all assistance with client showers/ bathing.

Ongoing thanks to everyone for your perseverance, understanding and willingness to adapt as we con-

tinue to navigate this pandemic together. Please know that management is doing everything we can to keep our employees and clients safe by following Public Health guidelines and reviewing our own policies and procedures regularly.

Milestones reached since our Fall newsletter demonstrate how fluid and unpredictable the COVID-19 pandemic is, like the perfect storm. These milestones include:

- Health Canada approves the Pfizer vaccine
- The first vaccines are administered in Ontario
- Health Canada approves the Moderna vaccine
- Ontario enters its second lockdown
- New Coronavirus variants are found
- Anniversary of the first case in Canada

Although March 11, 2021 will mark the one-year anniversary of the World Health Organization declaring COVID-19 as a pandemic, the development of multiple vaccines reminds us that this too will end.

Keep well. Keep safe.

Janet

GIL BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The GIL Board of Directors met on November 24, 2020 and January 26, 2021; highlights include:

- Presentations by Cindy Kinnon, Board Chair, on Strategic Planning and by Judi Fisher, Executive Director at Cheshire London, on the history of Independent Living;
- Approval of Health and Housing financial statements through December 2020;
- Housing portfolio (238 Willow) items:
 - COCHI funding application for capital building projects, submission of 2021-22 budget and 5-year capital plan, and new tenants move into the two recently completed units on the lower level;
- Review of proposals for Strategic Planning in the 2021-2022 fiscal year;
- Report from the Governance committee on Board recruitment; and,
- Executive Director's report on the launch of GIL's new website, status of staffing levels and client service delivery, IPAC Champion training, OCSP funding for client assistance, and the temporary wage enhancement to front-line workers providing personal support services.

When this is over,
may we never again
take for granted
A handshake with a stranger
Full shelves at the store
Conversations with neighbors
A crowded theatre
Friday night out
The taste of communion
A routine checkup
The school rush each morning
Coffee with a friend
The stadium roaring
Each deep breath
A boring Tuesday
Life itself.

When this ends,
may we find
that we have become
more like the people
we wanted to be
we were called to be
we hoped to be
and may we stay
that way—better
for each other
because of the worst.

LAURA KELLY FANUCCI

ONTARIO COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAM EXTENDED TO 2022



On February 1, the Ontario government announced an extension to the Ontario Community Support Program (OCSP) until 2022 to ensure seniors and people with disabilities have improved access to food, medicine, and other essentials during COVID-19. The program was established in April 2020 and involves an innovative partnership with the Ontario Community Support Association (OCSA) and its large volunteer base in communities across the province. To-date, nearly 800,000 deliveries have been made.

“The Ontario Community Support Program is a made-in-Ontario success story that shows the true Ontario spirit, and our government offers our thanks to the army of dedicated workers and volunteers,” said Premier Doug Ford. *“Through the generous and tireless efforts of these people, Ontarians with disabilities and older Ontarians have the food and necessities they need to stay home and stay safe.”*

“This program is critical because it keeps our seniors and people with disabilities safe, by allowing them to receive essential items like food and medicine right at their door, without the need to go out during

the pandemic,” said Raymond Cho, Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. *“Extending this program will ensure that we continue to support our most vulnerable when they need it most.”*

Guelph Independent Living is a member of the Ontario Community Support Association and has been fortunate to receive funding allocations totalling over \$25,000 through OCSP to help support our clients to stay at home safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Program funding has been used to provide GIL clients with SEED food boxes, grocery gift cards, laundry card fill-ups, and goodie bags filled with cleaning and hygiene supplies.

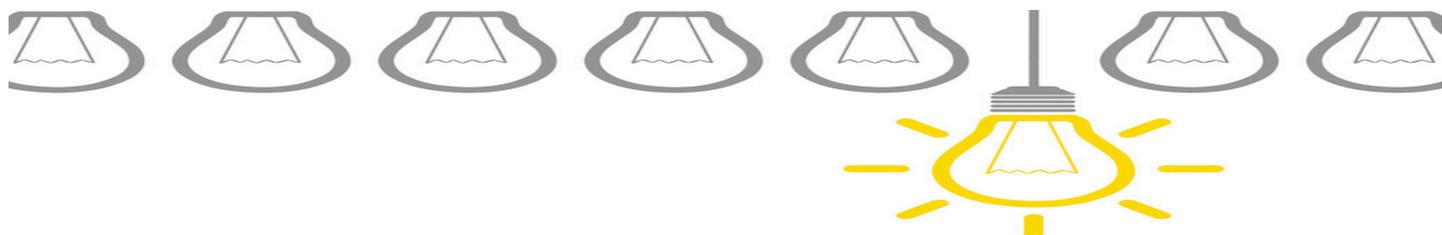
In acknowledgement of this funding support, Guelph Independent Living wishes to extend our heartfelt thanks to OCSA for their advocacy to the Ontario government on behalf of community service organizations and the clients we support.

[OCSA COVID-19 Community Support Finder \(ontario-communitysupport.ca\)](https://ontario-communitysupport.ca)

LEISURE PROGRAM UPDATE

GIL has made the difficult decision to suspend all of our traditional Leisure programs for 2021. This decision is based on current Public Health and the Ontario government restrictions for in-person gatherings.

We plan to continue themed deliveries to clients within available resources and COVID-19 safety protocols. If you have any ideas for creative ways to keep GIL clients involved and connected, we would like to hear from you!



LEISURE PROGRAM DELIVERS HOLIDAY TREATS

Due to the pandemic, GIL was not able to hold its annual Agency Christmas party; instead we delivered Christmas meals to all its clients. Many thanks to the Elliott Community Centre and Market Fresh for putting together the food, and to Admin employees, Rowena, Katie and Kathleen, for their timely deliveries. Individual clients enjoyed a turkey meal complete with stuffing, mashed potatoes and seasonal roasted vegetables, and those living with families, enjoyed a meat pie and Christmas cookies.

GIL employees also delivered Christmas stockings filled with goodies, we hope everyone had fun opening their stockings.

The holiday treats were made possible through funding by United Way and the Ontario Community Support Program.



SURVEY RESULTS - GIL's SUPPORTED LIVING PROGRAM

Guelph Independent Living (GIL) distributed this annual survey in November 2020 to tenants at both 229 Dublin and 130 Grange to evaluate GIL's Supported Living program provided in both buildings. Results demonstrated a high satisfaction rate with the support services provided by Senior Support Workers, Kirsten and Cheryl. Everyone reported their Senior Support Worker to be kind, courteous and approachable.

Additionally, the survey results inform GIL and County of Wellington Housing that tenants prefer to stay

informed through monthly newsletters and bulletin boards. Once the pandemic is over, clients would like to resume some of their favourite activities including movie afternoons, arts and crafts, group exercises, and listening to a community guest speaker. GIL has shared a summary of feedback received with both workers so they understand the value of the supports they provide to tenants who require assistance.

Many thanks to Kirsten and Cheryl for their ongoing dedication and hard work!

OCSA – SAFE CARE HAPPENS AT HOME

The Ontario Community Support Association (OCSA) is recommending that the government make three necessary investments to ensure that Ontarians can stay safe at home and in their communities.

OCSA's 2021 Pre-Budget Recommendations

The province can take the first step towards meeting this goal and invest \$595 million in the 2021 budget by:

1



Taking a home first approach as the primary priority of the health system by investing \$350 million in home and community care organizations and services.

2



Achieving wage and job condition parity for staff across health sectors by infusing \$235 million into the salaries of key front-line staff.

3



Ensuring the sector plays a main role in the province's digital care strategy by doubling this year's sector investment to \$10 million in digital and virtual care.

One of the key lessons learned during Wave 1 of the pandemic was that people are safer at home and home is where Ontarians want to be. A recent public opinion poll conducted by Campaign Research for Home Care Ontario found that 95% of seniors believe staying in their own home with supports is the safest environment for them and 91% want to stay in their own home or apartment as long as possible.

Driven by the ongoing pandemic, the recent changes in vulnerable Ontarians' needs have underscored our obligation to adopt a different approach to health system policy, planning and resource allocation. COVID-19 has once again highlighted what many have been saying for decades; we need to take a home first approach to health service delivery across Ontario. The home and community care sector offer a sustainable and safe environment to receive the care Ontarians need. To ensure people are receiving care in the most appropriate setting, government must recognize that a minimum targeted investment

of \$595 million into this sector is long overdue. Investing here will help enable our province to weather the remainder of this pandemic and protect vulnerable Ontarians as well as save money by diverting care out of hospitals and long-term care for years to come. Home and community care is the least expensive and most desired setting for Ontarians to receive the quality care they deserve and that will keep them safe.

Ontario Community Support Association (OCSA) represents over 225 not-for-profit organizations including GIL that help seniors and people with disabilities live independently in their own homes and communities. These compassionate and cost-effective services improve quality of life and prevent unnecessary hospitalizations, emergency room visits and premature institutionalization. They are the key to a sustainable health care system for Ontario.

MEDICATION ASSISTANCE

Guelph Independent Living provides clients with medication assistance if it is identified as a task for which they require support. Assistance may be verbal (reminders based on scheduled bookings), physical (help to open properly labelled/ original medication containers, placing medications in the client's hand and/or mouth), or controlled (use of a Medication Log to record assistance provided on an identified schedule from a blister pack).

Part of our policy is to track all reported incidents of medication errors to see where improvements to procedures and education can be made, with the goal being zero incidents. Errors are categorized into those made by clients, employees and/or Regulated Health Care Professionals (RHCPs) like doctors, Pharmacies, and hospital.

GIL is pleased to report there was a significant **reduction in the number of reported errors** in 2020 (following the trend from the past year). Of these incidents, the following details were noted:

1. Half of the reported errors were related to employee actions (down from two-thirds in 2019)
2. There were only two errors attributed to RHCP
3. No incidents occurred where a client required further/ immediate medical attention
4. Incidents were across all programs

Employee errors were related to medication:

- not assisted with at scheduled time/day
- left behind in blister pack
- given but not signed for

Client errors included:

- not being home for scheduled bookings
- failing to take meds once set out
- not picking up/ arranging delivery of medications from Pharmacy

RHCP errors included:

- unsuccessful Pharmacy deliveries
- blister pack damaged upon delivery

Ongoing employee training is one mechanism to ensure accurate assistance with medications. All new hires complete the online training module in addition to hands-on direction; plus, Coordinators discuss incidents with the workers involved and assign a training refresh as necessary.

If you have any additional questions or concerns about how GIL assists with your medications, please contact your Program Coordinator.



FALLS PREVENTION AND CLIENT SAFETY

Falls pose a significant risk to everyone's health and safety, and Falls Prevention is identified by the Ministry of Health as an important measurement tool for Service Providers as part of **delivering quality support services**. By tracking the incidents of falls and potential safety hazards, GIL can identify root cause, provide supports, referrals and/ or educational resources to clients to help increase awareness and maintain independence.

GIL is disheartened to report a **50% increase in reported client falls in 2020 compared to 2019**. Falls reported occurred across all programs, involving 10 different individuals. Approximately 25% of this year's falls resulted in clients needing medical attention; with four involving a broken bone and/or hospitalization. The root causes were identified as unsuccessful independent/unsupervised transfers, loss of balance, imbibing in alcohol, and tripping hazards.

GIL recognizes our **clients' right to live with risk;**

however, we also want everyone to remain healthy and safe at home. Please be reminded of these safety protocols:

- Call workers for assistance with transfers as needed or wait until someone is present;
- Use mobility equipment as required or work with your Occupational Therapist when equipment needs change;
- Remove tripping hazards and clutter from your home;
- Always move in a forward direction to ensure good sightlines;
- Use a personal alarm device (i.e. Lifeline) so help can be summoned quickly; and,
- Scan the environment in your home or the community.

We will continue to work with clients when additional supports or strategies may be needed to keep everyone safe!

2020 SAFETY GROUP PARTICIPATION

GIL's Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) worked diligently throughout 2020 to keep all employees healthy and safe in the workplace.

The JHSC partnered again with Dunk & Associates' Safety Group to complete four focus areas for the Workplace Insurance and Safety Board's (WSIB) Health and Safety Excellence Program.

We updated two policies: Hazard Reporting and Incident/Injury Investigations. This process involved updating all internal health and safety report forms that employees use as required. Forms include Incident, Hazard/Near Miss, Injury, and Workplace Violence & Harassment as well as the Incident/Injury Investigation report that Program Coordinators

use to investigate the root cause(s) of workplace injuries to help prevent reoccurrence.

The other two focus areas completed were COVID-19 protocols implemented at GIL in compliance with directives issued by provincial authorities including the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

In December, the committee submitted 'evidence' to the WSIB portal of activities completed throughout the year to prove how we achieved the four focus areas. GIL is currently waiting for approval and feedback as we prepare for the 2021 program.

PRESENTED BY SYSTEMS24-7

HOW TO WALK SAFELY

1. Watch where you step

- Look ahead at your intended path of travel. Are there uneven surfaces? Slippery surfaces? Steps? Anything that blocks your path?

2. Wear proper footwear

- Make sure you are wearing proper footwear for the weather (no flip flops in the winter), the environment you are in (does your footwear have proper ankle support), and what is required by your workplace (i.e. closed toed, slip resistant, steel toes etc.)
- Make sure your footwear is in good condition. No holes, treads and soles are still in tact and in good condition etc.



3. Take sturdy steps

- Walk according to the environment/path/weather etc. Small, wide steps provide the sturdiest base to help keep you upright while walking. Do the 'Penguin' walk when it is icy or your walking surface is uneven.



4. Use assistive devices

- This can include handrails, a buddy, walking sticks, walking close to walls for balance etc.

5. Try and keep your hands free

- If your hands are full, you can't try and catch your balance as effectively if they were free, in the event of a slip or trip.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

In January, GIL employees completed a Diversity and Inclusion training module via the agency's on-line training platform.

What is Diversity?

Workplace diversity is understanding, accepting, and valuing differences between people including those:

- of different races, ethnicities, genders, ages, religions, disabilities, and sexual orientations
- with differences in education, personalities, skill sets, experiences, and knowledge bases

What is Inclusion?

Inclusion in the workplace is a collaborative, supportive, and respectful environment that increases the participation and contribution of all employees.

GIL believes equity, diversity and inclusion is about creating a workplace culture that embraces the uniqueness of individuals and we are proud to have a diverse population amongst our employees (and

clients). Equity means that people of all identities are treated fairly; and their individual rights, responsibilities and opportunities are not dependent upon identity.



SURVEY RESULTS - HOME HELP PROGRAM

Guelph Independent Living distributed this annual survey to all its Home Help clients in September 2020. The survey is designed to evaluate GIL's brokered Homemaking program which has been operating in the city of Guelph since 2005. Home Help is a coordinated, supervised homemaking program matching eligible clients, seniors and adults with physical disabilities, with screened homemakers who assist with routine household tasks. These activities may include light housekeeping, laundry, shopping, and meal preparation. The client pays a fixed cost per 2-hour visit directly to the homemaker. Currently, the program has 48 homemakers who support approximately 415 clients.

GIL is pleased to receive positive feedback from most clients or from caregivers of someone receiving Home Help assistance. Results demonstrated a high satisfaction rate for services, with clients describing their homemakers to be friendly, courteous, and respectful.

These completed surveys provide GIL with a quantitative measurement of how many clients value the help they receive through the program; thus, allowing them to live independently and remain in their own homes longer.

Thank you to the team of homemakers who keep these client homes clean and organized.

INCLUSIVE FACE MASKS

Imagine wearing a mask that would allow you to see people's facial expressions – their smiles and emotions. Achieving just that, The Como Foundation designed **My Access Mask**, making communication accessible for everyone.

The Como Foundation, a not-for-profit organization, partnered with McRae Imaging with a goal to produce 1.4 million **My Access Masks**. The masks feature an innovative lip-reading lens creating a unique solution for the Deaf and hard of hearing community during the COVID-19 pandemic. The masks will also carry the Ontario Made logo as part of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters program, to highlight quality made-in-Ontario products. Both organizations are based in Mississauga, Ontario.

Additionally, McRae Imaging received \$332,000 from the government of Ontario to support the production of these inclusive personal protective equipment. Not only will this increase the provinces stockpile of Ontario-made products and PPE, but this will

also help combat the current pandemic while supporting local businesses.

*“The **My Access Mask** is a great example of the Ontario Spirit and the creativity and ingenuity here in Mississauga,”* said Rudy Cuzzetto, MPP for Mississauga-Lakeshore. *“I’m so thrilled that our government is supporting this landmark partnership between McRae Imaging and the Como Foundation. Not only will this crucial funding support the domestic production of accessible PPE at a time when it’s needed most; it will help to make life easier for Ontarians who are deaf or hard of hearing, and for their families.”*



GIL'S NEW WEBSITE USES ACCESSIBE

GIL launched our new website in January to improve the user experience and to be in compliance with AODA WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards.

The new website features a new web accessibility widget called **accessiBe**. AccessiBe is a world-leading technology that allows each web visitor to personalize the site for their own accessibility needs. The widget aligns with AODA standards as well as restoring background tasks 24/7 in accordance to WCAG. Some features of accessiBe include keyboard navi-

gation for the motor impaired, on-page and live directory for individuals with cognitive disorders, and user interface (UI) adjustments and/ or screen-reader optimization for the visually impaired.

To learn more about the accessiBe tool, visit our new website at <https://guelphindependentliving.org>

30 YEARS AT GIL

Wanda, Senior Support Worker at 85 Neeve, asked to share her thoughts about working at GIL as she approaches her 30-year anniversary with our agency.

“Wow” Three decades down and many more to go!

How in the world did the time go by so fast?

I am taking this time to look back at the many good times and to look forward to wonderful tomorrows.

Thirty years ago on February 11th I walked into a newly-built building at 238 Willow Road. I was ready to do personal care for 24 people with physical disabilities. I remember feeling both nervous and excited to start a new chapter of my life.

I was very young when I started. I had just finished Nursing school in Cape Breton and married my husband Merv. We have now been married for 39 years and we have two amazing children named Kandice and Kinnon, who each have two children of their own. I am very proud of my beautiful family, and our 4 grandchildren keep Merv and I moving.

I remember having so many mixed emotions after leaving Cape Breton and my family to try to provide a better life for our children. I was looking for a job where I could take care of my family and use my Nursing experience. Throughout the years GIL has provided

this for me. I have worked with so many amazing co-workers who have since become amazing friends.

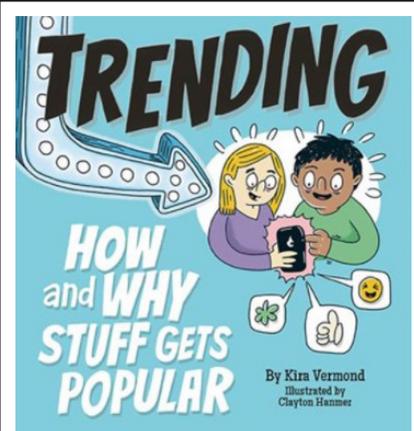
I really loved my work at 238 Willow road. After working there for 20 years, I felt it was time for a change. I moved to 85 Neeve street and began doing senior support. I am consistently learning from the amazing stories and knowledge of each person I meet.

When I think about the many changes to our agency over the past 30 years, I remember the amazing people who have come and gone. There is one thing that remains consistent and that is the pride I feel every day to help people live their lives with respect and dignity.

While working during this difficult pandemic I remind myself to be thankful every day and I try to brighten someone else’s life in some way. Being in a job for so long is like that nice cup of coffee every morning. I might have it every day, but I still enjoy it so much!

I pray that the following years will bring us all health and happiness. I hope when we look back on 2020/2021 we do so with pride and say we did it!

Sincerely,
Wanda



Congratulations to Louise and Mary who entered their names for a draw in November, each won a copy of “Trending”.

GROUNDHOG DAY 2021

The origins of Groundhog Day date back to medieval Europe. The second day of February corresponds with Candlemas, a Christian festival, which candles are lit. This festival dates to pagan times, when farmers would purify their land by carrying torches in procession before sowing time. Excess flour was used to make crepes, a symbol of prosperity for the coming year. Since the 5th century, February 2 has been used to mark the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple 40 days after his birth, a date that was chosen in accordance with the Gregorian calendar. The celebration also falls halfway between winter solstice and spring equinox.

Groundhog Day is celebrated in Canada and the United States every year on February 2. Legend has it that watching a groundhog emerge from its burrow can determine the weather forecast for the coming weeks. Accordingly, if it is a sunny day and the groundhog sees its shadow, it goes back to sleep for six more weeks of winter. If the weather is cloudy and the groundhog does not see its shadow, it stays outside, meaning that the worst of winter is over, and spring will soon arrive.

This year, Canada's best-known weather-predicting groundhogs called for an early spring as they delivered their annual forecasts over video due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Wiarton Ontario, the community's famous albino groundhog, Wiarton Willie, was nowhere to be seen as officials called an early spring after throwing a fur hat into the air – a move they said hearkens back to the tradition's first edition more than 60 years ago. *"The committee decided to pay tribute to the first prediction (which did not include a groundhog, only a fur hat) because it was the 65th anniversary this year and we were not able to host a live event due to COVID,"* the town's deputy clerk said in an email.

Some people have been referencing this past year as 'Groundhog Day'. COVID-19 has felt at times like we are all living the same day over and over again. However, Groundhog Day also shows us that the monotony ends, and the cycle will be broken.



GUELPH HUMANE SOCIETY'S NEW LOCATION

Guelph Humane Society (GHS) is gearing up for their move to their new location at 190 Hanlon Creek Boulevard in the south end of Guelph, with plans to move in early spring 2021.

The new space will not only be a shelter for vulnerable animals but a location the community can also enjoy. The new facility is three times the size of its current location and will provide a brighter, more comfortable space for animals. Facility upgrades include large dog kennels with indoor and outdoor access, an enclosed outdoor space for cats, dedicated space for medical exams, training, grooming, intake for surrendered pets and injured wildlife, and more space for visitors to interact with animals prior to adoption. In addition, there is a spacious community room for children's camps, birthday parties, fund raising initiatives, and educational programs.

"We wanted to build something that was more than

just an animal shelter," adds Adrienne McBride, Executive Director at GHS. "GHS has been in our current location for more than 50 years. Our team is doing such incredible work, and we need a space that reflects that. We also wanted to make sure we created a space that brought our community in. Think of it as a community animal centre."

For the full article and see progress on the build, click the link below:

<https://guelphhumane.ca/get-involved/unleashing-hope-building-campaign/>



ARCH ADVOCATES FOR THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE

ARCH Disability Law Centre is a firm dedicated to defending and advancing the equality rights, entitlements, fundamental freedoms, and inclusion of persons with disabilities in Ontario. Originally incorporated in 1979 as the Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped, it opened its doors as a specialty legal aid clinic in 1980 and was instrumental in leading the Human Rights Coalition, successfully advocating for the inclusion of “handicap” as a protected ground in the Human Rights Code in 1981 thereby making human rights real for persons with disabilities across Ontario.

During the COVID pandemic, ARCH has continued to advocate for persons with disabilities to ensure their voice is heard related to health care decisions. The most recent advocacy effort came in January when ARCH was alarmed to discover that the Critical Care Command Centre is seeking an Executive Order to suspend certain provisions of the Health Care Consent Act (HCCA) if hospitals have more patients than resources. Currently, the HCCA requires doctors to obtain agreement from patients, or their substitute

decision makers, with disputes resolved by the Consent and Capacity Board, an independent tribunal. The Ontario government has remained silent on this; a further demonstration of the lack of transparency that disability organizations, including ARCH, have been decrying since April 2020.

The checks and balances set out in the HCCA are truly the last resort for any patient (or their family) who disagrees with removing critical care. ARCH has called upon the government to immediately make public the Ontario Critical Command Centre’s request and implores that the HCCA not be suspended. The lives of Ontarians, and the fundamental right to make decisions about what happens to one’s own body are at stake.

ARCH continues to monitor and advocate on this issue.

[ARCH Disability Law Centre | ARCH Disability Law Centre Statement on the Potential Suspension of the Health Care Consent Act](#)



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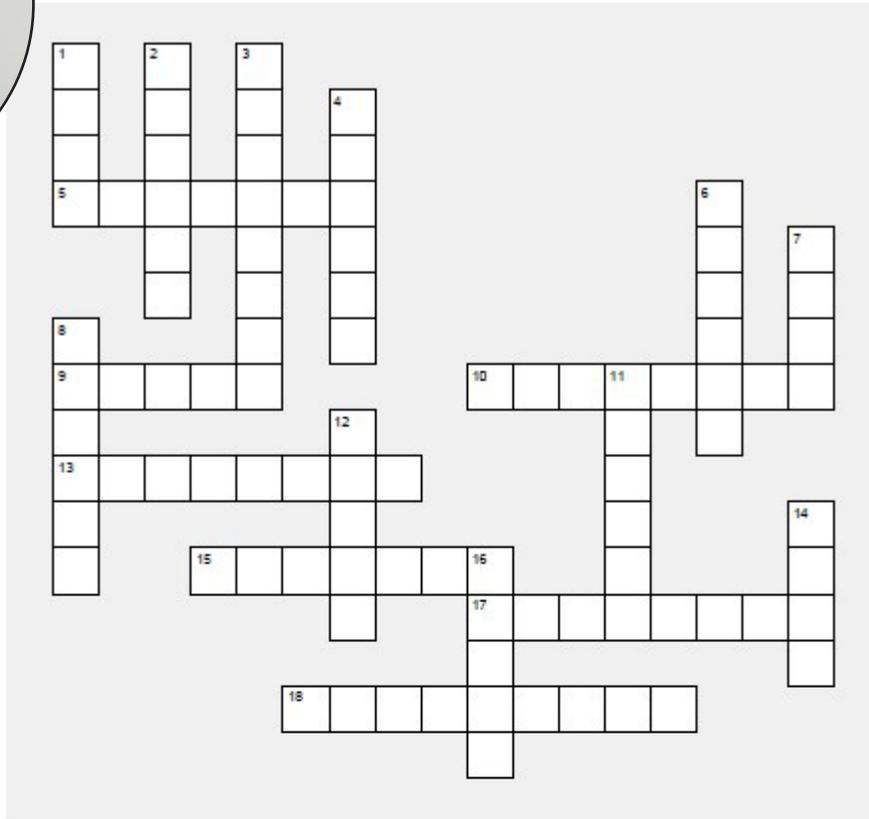
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CANADIAN HEARING SERVICES



SPRING CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 5) They're usually found in beds
- 9) Time for showers
- 10) Gloom's opposite
- 13) Yellow spring flower
- 15) Day for diamonds and dreams
- 17) Shower apparel?
- 18) Monarch, e.g.

DOWN

- 1) Sport with tees
- 2) Fledgling plant
- 3) America's pastime
- 4) ___ egg
- 6) Eating outing
- 7) When spring ends
- 8) Vegetable plot
- 11) One of four in a year
- 12) Breezy
- 14) Flying toy with a tail
- 16) Verdant

Free Crossword Puzzle, Compliments of © Memory-Improvement-Tips

Answers for crossword will be shared in an upcoming Client Memo.