



## Citizens With Disabilities – Ontario

[www.cwdo.org](http://www.cwdo.org)

“Together We Are Stronger”

15 Gage Avenue, Toronto, ON M1J 1T1  
807-473-0909 (voice) or [cwdo@tbaytel.net](mailto:cwdo@tbaytel.net)

---

# Accomplishments Report, 2023

## Land Acknowledgement

CWDO acknowledges that we are located on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Mississauga peoples, whose presence and resilience continue to enrich this land. We recognize the history of colonization, forced removal, and ongoing injustices faced by Indigenous peoples, including those with disabilities, and we commit to working towards reconciliation and building a more inclusive and equitable society for all.

## Executive Summary

CWDO is pleased to share this report of our accomplishments for 2023.

CWDO has a [5-Year Strategic Plan](#) in place covering 2021-2025 subject to an annual review by CWDO board members and confirmation of the membership. During our 2023 annual general meeting, we reviewed our priorities to help focus our work as a board.

CWDO's priorities for 2023 were:

1. Action Groups
2. Membership
3. Data Management and Storage: Moving to the Cloud
4. Financial Viability
5. Strategic Alliances



The CWDO board has continued to support persons with disabilities in Ontario. Through our priorities, we were able to make contributions on topics such as Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD), housing, and supporting student lawyers, among others.

Our profile has increased and our organization is regularly invited to consultations. We provide input to all the consultations we can. While we look for some steady source of income, we have become adept at working with zero to a low budget. Our various strategic alliances help us to extend our reach and our impact. None of this could be possible without the hard work of our dedicated volunteer board of directors.

## Our Accomplishments

### 1. Action Groups

Action Groups focus on issues (such as accessible transportation) or a common interest (such as photography). Action Groups work to identify barriers and possible actions to take on those issues. Priorities are decided by each Action Group, and CWDO approves any actions the group may wish to undertake such as creating a report, collecting information through surveys, meeting with key decision-makers, etc. Their actions must be consistent with CWDO's vision and mission and must not reinforce stereotyping or ableist attitudes. Action Groups require CWDO Board approval prior to taking any action involving our members or the public.

#### **Attendant Service Action Group**

A former CWDO board member, Sam Savona, shared a “proposal for the establishment of an association dedicated to empowering and protecting people with disabilities who are receiving attendant care and outreach services. The purpose of this body is to ensure that service provider organizations adhere to their own philosophy and policies, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of care and support provided to individuals with disabilities.”

Sam Savona's proposal was written shortly before his untimely death and sent to Tracy Odell by Sam's Executor. It was then shared with Dianne Wintermute who thought this would be a good fit for a pro bono student to work on. During earlier online discussions on proposed changes to the Health Care Act in 2021, hosted by ARCH and CWDO, a number of consumers in attendance raised concerns about getting conflicts resolved when disagreements arose around the duties that an attendant performs; the hours of services available; and having enough time

allotted for services to be performed. There was significant interest in forming an Action Group to address the power imbalance between people with disabilities and service providers. Sam's proposal was the catalyst that got this new Action Group started.

Board members Tracy Odell and Dianne Wintermute are a part of the Attendant Service Action Group, **Alliance for Quality Attendant Services** which is working to become an alliance of people with physical disabilities who receive attendant services through SSLU and Outreach agencies. To inquire about this group or to join, email Tracy Odell, chair of the Alliance for Quality Attendant Services at [tracy@cwdo.ca](mailto:tracy@cwdo.ca).

## 2. Public Profile

CWDO aims to increase our public presence as we continue to be recognized as a public information and advocacy organization that can provide leadership and support to persons with disability and the community.

### Housing

Tracy Odell attended meetings to discuss ways to connect with groups addressing different aspects of housing and some funding opportunities.

Accessible Housing Network (AHN) delivered our presentation which covers "housing" for people with disabilities starting with mass physical Institutionalization in the 1800s - 1950s; experimentation with various models of housing in 1980s-2000; and ending with institutionalization in nursing homes or by making service criteria so rigid that we are becoming institutionalized in a different way. Margot Brunner was doing part 1 and MC'ing our session, Tracy doing part 2, with a 3<sup>rd</sup> doing the rest.

Tracy Odell was also interviewed by Joeita Gupta, Reporter for The Pulse on AMI-audio on June 15, 2023.

On a federal level, board directors and Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network (WNHHN) attended meetings with the Human Rights Task Force in June 2023. The National Housing Council collected and reviewed evidence and made recommendations to the Minister of Housing. While there have been multiple reports/calls to action commissioned over the years, this committee is tackling the issue from a human rights perspective, which has not been done before. It also paves the way for other accountability mechanisms that we can use down the line, for the "The Right to Housing for Tenants with Disabilities in Canada" which is researching affordable and accessible housing. This three-year project will

develop policy papers, training sessions, journal articles, conference papers, etc. Board directors also attended the Canadian Human Rights Commission “Human Rights Virtual Learning Circles on Housing” consultation on December 1st. The housing stories we heard from people were heartbreaking and brutal. Between the four groups, we generated suggestions that are within the power of the federal government to address.

## **Advocacy**

Tracy Odell attended a screening of “[\*Unloved – Huronia’s Forgotten Children\*](#)” followed by a discussion. Tracy felt the screening and discussion were very powerful.

## **E-Scooters & Robotic Vehicles**

Adam Cohoon takes leadership in advocating for pedestrian safety on behalf of CWDO. In this scope, Adam Cohoon looked into the use of e-scooters and accessibility around construction sites. The use of electric scooters poses significant risks to the safety and security of vulnerable people, including people with disabilities.

Adam continues to take the advocacy province-wide and has been helping other communities through the process. He is also raising awareness of the risks of robotic vehicles and using public transportation.

## **Special Investigations Unit**

Kirsten Doyle attended Special Investigations Unit (SIU) meetings for the Director’s Resource Committee (DRC) with primary discussions on how minority groups are reflected in the SIU statistics for investigations and employment.

Tracy Odell attended an inquest in July and was able to hear about the intersection of disability and the law.

## **3. Membership**

### **Membership Secretary**

Tracy Odell and Kirsten Doyle assisted Heather Willis to revamp our [Membership Application Form](#) and [Board Member Nomination Form](#). Heather reviewed the new Google forms that will streamline the application process for potential members and Board nominees.

## **Newsletters**

Tracy Odell prepared a document of costs for hiring writers on contract to prepare newsletters for CWDO.

## **CWDO Website**

CWDO is going to be purchasing a new domain name to have our website hosted by Google Suites for non-profits.

## **4. Data Management and Storage: Moving to the Cloud**

As a virtual board with directors from all across the province, it can be challenging to have files stored on various devices. Using cloud storage would help the board to share information and collaborate on work virtually in a manner that protects our data and allows us to share our work.

Mah-E-Leqa Jadgal, Tracy Odell, Kirsten Doyle, Linda Hunt, and Heather Willis have been working together this past year reviewing various cloud options that can serve the needs of our board and host our website.

CWDO's files are currently hosted on multiple board members personal computers and backed up on to a hard drive.

Switching to Google Suites will help bring all of CWDO's services to one platform where we can develop and build our membership database as well.

## **5. Financial Viability**

CWDO continues to scrape by without the benefit of any regular influx of funding. As a result, we are so good at operating on a shoestring, that other organizations have expressed an interest in learning how we have managed without having a physical office or paid staff.

- We use virtual meetings exclusively and keep our costs low by being part of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities' (CCD) Zoom plan.
- Our costs for board liability insurance have been held steady.
- The contributions of volunteers keep our costs low, and at times we can retain a portion of revenue obtained through any grants we receive.

- We are researching other options such as funding through foundations.
- We will now be able to involve our members better, using their talents to help CWDO achieve our priorities.

## 6. Strategic Alliances

### Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC)

Once again, CWDO spearheaded our initiative to work with pro bono law students on a variety of research projects. Several Board members met with the students regularly to monitor their progress and discuss the projects they were researching. This provided a phenomenal opportunity not only to CWDO and to the various disability communities, but also to the students who are embarking on their careers.

For the 2023/2024 school year, Dianne Wintermute assisted CWDO by being the lawyer supervisor for the law students in Toronto. Additionally, the Pro Bono Students Association found another lawyer to help supervise two more students from Thunder Bay. So, Madison Pearlman from *pooranlaw* joined our team to supervise the student's legal memos. Bruce Drewett and Tracy Odell provided information and support regarding policy and practice on the various topics.

In 2023, the pro bono law students completed memoranda of law on the following three topics:

- Emergency Preparedness for Persons with Disabilities
- Substitute Decision Making
- Climate Change and its impact on persons with disabilities and their inclusion in policy design or practice

The students worked very hard on their individual memorandum. By the end of the year, a new cohort of four law students began to work on memorandum of law. [The completed legal memos](#) and other issues we are following, can be found on our website.

### Grant to Create a National Indigenous and Disability Inclusive Climate Justice Network

Alexis Buettgen and Dianne Wintermute have worked together on a grant application for the Indigenous and disability inclusive climate action project. “This project will explicitly build relationships and connections within and between social movements to promote solidarity and cross-movement organizing for more effective climate justice and disability advocacy work.” Alexis Buettgen also followed

up with a potential law student intern from McGill University and discussed their experiences and interests and availability as well as what they would need from CWDO to complete a part-time summer internship.

## **“Enabling Accessible Healthcare Delivery”: Toronto Metropolitan University and Enabling Change Program**

Heather Willis has been working with Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University) on a project called “Enabling Accessible Healthcare Delivery.” Funded by the Enabling Change Program, this project will use perspectives from people with disabilities to deliver accessible healthcare.

## **Council of Canadians with Disabilities**

Tracy Odell represents CCD on the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD), where she serves as 2nd Vice-Chair on the Executive. Bruce Drewett and Pat Seed served as Alternates.

In addition to Council and Executive meetings, Tracy Odell attended informal gatherings a few times in the year. All meetings were held virtually.

## **Medical Assistance in Dying**

Board members have been working on initiatives to ensure that the human rights of people with disabilities are protected when it comes to Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD). CWDO has been monitoring presentations to the federal government’s Special Parliamentary and Senate Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) regarding proposed expansion.

In July, Mah-E-Leqa Jadgal, Kirsten Doyle, and Tracy Odell attended the Christian Medical and Dentists Association (CMDA) meeting with the Hon. Raymond Cho’s Parliamentary Assistant. The meeting was very positive as compared to the earlier one in June with a policy staffer. Tracy Odell also developed some slides for use in CMDA’s presentation.

## **Conferences, Meetings & Webinars**

Dianne Wintermute attended a workshop on Strategic Planning hosted by Charity Village. Dianne Wintermute felt the webinar was a useful refresher and there are materials that will be shared. The workshop will be helpful when our strategic planning committee meets in 2024 to review CWDO’s current strategic plan.

Board member Alexis Buettgen interviewed Tracy Odell for her research: “Disability and the Green Economy.”

## Conclusion

Thank you to our active board members and other volunteers who have dedicated their time and passion engaging in CWDO activities this year.

Thanks to our networks, we have been able to reach out and others have been able to reach in, so we can share advice and be as helpful as possible.

With the active involvement of more of our members, CWDO will have an increasingly positive impact on the accessibility of Ontario.

**Together we are stronger.**



## About CWDO

Citizens With Disabilities – Ontario (CWDO) was incorporated as a provincial not-for-profit organization on May 10, 2005.

CWDO is non-partisan, with a cross-disability focus.

CWDO) is committed to the rights of all persons to participate fully in the civil, cultural, economic, political and social life of their communities.

CWDO is the Ontario representative for the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD). We participate in many CCD initiatives and support CCD’s pan-Canadian efforts.

## CWDO Board Members

Our thanks are due to the tireless efforts of our dedicated Board of Directors. During 2023, the board consisted of the following people:

- **Mah-E-Leqa Jadgal**, President
- **Kirsten Doyle**, Vice President
- **Tracy Odell**, Past President
- **Kate Tutu**, Secretary
- **Linda Hunt**, Treasurer
- **Adam Cohoon**, Member-at-Large





- **Alexis Buettgen**
- **Bruce Drewett**
- **Julie Emeid**
- **Pat Seed**
- **Heather Willis**
- **Dianne Wintermute**

## Contact CWDO

Web: [www.cwdo.org](http://www.cwdo.org)

Email: [cwdo@tbaytel.net](mailto:cwdo@tbaytel.net)

Voice: **807-473-0909**

## Social Media

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/cwdont/](http://www.facebook.com/cwdont/)

Twitter: **[twitter.com/cwdo](https://twitter.com/cwdo)**

Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/citizenswithdisabilities\\_on](https://www.instagram.com/citizenswithdisabilities_on)