



2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT



National Board of Directors Report

Since September 2019 Independent Living Canada (ILC) has experienced a period of renewed growth and transition. We welcomed new Provincial Representatives and a new Executive Committee of the Board. It was also the first full year of a three-year funding commitment provided through Employment and Social Development Canada under the Social Development Partnerships Program of the Government of Canada.

Through this funding agreement, IL Canada and the Independent Living Canada Centres pursued three important goals namely: building partnerships, strengthening programs to enhance social inclusion, and, reinforcement of an independent living culture focused on respecting the rights of persons with disabilities and their socio-demographic and lifestyle differences.

This past year the Accessible Canada Act was passed into law and the civil society continued the review of Canada's adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its role in the implementation. COVID-19 exposed the hardships and minimization of Canadians with disabilities, especially those in long term care facilities. IL Canada was at the forefront of gathering information through a Centre wide survey confirming the hardships and gaps being faced by persons with disabilities.

Given this backdrop, the IL Canada Board of Directors and management mapped out challenges, opportunities and goals as they pertained to the Board. Additionally, the need for strategic partnerships, operational results expected of management and the reality of competition were keenly identified as areas enabling the continued growth and capacity of IL Centres. The IL Canada Board demonstrated leadership in response to domestic and international issues concerning the cross-disability community.

Acknowledging the Passing of Two Remarkable Canadians

With deep sadness the Independent Living Movement lost two remarkable women who dedicated their lives to promoting the rights of persons with disabilities in Canada. On December 17, 2019 Deborah Kennard, Director, IL Canada Board of Directors and Chair of Vie autonome – Montreal passed away. IL Canada will be forever grateful for Deborah's tireless work and advocacy on both a national level and in the province of Quebec.

Also, of monumental note, on January 23, 2020 the disability community learned of the sudden passing of Sandra Carpenter. Sandra was the founder and first Executive Director of the Centre for Independent Living in Toronto. To all who knew Sandra, she unassumingly led the way with her vision of a world where people with disabilities are truly free to live as they choose.

The memory of Deborah and Sandra's tenacity and genuine kindness will remain with us always as we forge ahead for the rights of persons with disabilities.

Accessible Canada Act and Civil Society Review of the CRPD

The Accessible Canada Act, Bill C-81 was formally passed into law in June 2019.

The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion stated: *"The Accessible Canada Act will fundamentally change the way the Government of Canada addresses disability issues in our country. This legislation will help improve the lives of millions of Canadians with disabilities by proactively identifying, removing and preventing barriers to inclusion."*

IL Canada participated in civil society's review of the progress made by the Government of Canada in meeting its commitments for all the articles it agreed to in its ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The challenge for the Independent Living Movement and IL Centres is the need to expand and broaden their support to demonstrate there can be a better alternative to what exists today.

IL Canada continues to look forward to working with the federal government, crown corporations and private sector businesses under federal jurisdiction, such as banking, telecommunications, and transportation to make accessibility the standard of organizational excellence. Nothing about us without us must always remain the starting point for change. With our help, the federal hiring of 5,000 persons with disabilities is a good start.

Importance of CASDO / ASC

One of the important results of the Accessible Canada Act, has been the implementation of the Canadian Accessibility Standards Development Organization, now recognized as Accessibility Standards Canada. IL Canada views this entity to be of extreme importance in the regulation of accessibility standards it creates to advance accessibility. The importance of *"Nothing About Us Without Us!"* will be heard through this organization. The Chair of ASC, Mr. Paul-Claude Bérubé was a Chair of IL Canada for many years and in 2019 honored IL Canada by attending the Annual General Meeting where he took the opportunity to speak with every person in attendance.

Success of the IL Canada Western Summit

In February 2020 IL Canada sponsored a Western Summit in Richmond, British Columbia. The Western Summit was attended by western IL Centre staff and guest speakers who explained the legislative protective measures and authorities set up to protect the human rights of all Canadians, and especially, those citizens who have lived experience with disability.

Of particular interest in this Summit was the Optional Protocol Canada acceded to in late 2018 giving Canadians with disabilities the mechanism to launch complaints to the United Nations on any contravention to the CRPD Agreement Canada has signed.

Represented at the Western Summit was Tabatha Tranquilla, Acting Director of Policy, Research and International, Canadian Human Rights Commission. Ms. Tranquilla spoke about the role CHRC will soon play in monitoring Canada's compliance to the CRPD. Other notable guests at the Summit included: Krissi Spinoza, Accessibility Secretariat for the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (Victoria, B.C.); Heather Walkus, Chair of the BC Coalition of Guide Dog Users and Cross Disability Community Organizer; and, Kasari Govender, British Columbia's first independent Human Rights Commissioner.

New Partnerships and Alliances

On May 26, 2019 IL Canada staged its first ever AccessABLE Technology Expo™. This event attracted a mix of exhibitors who pitched their technologies to a receptive audience of people with disabilities and those with lived experience. Its success gave rise to a new partnership with Carleton University's READ Initiative (Research Education Accessibility Design) that sponsors ENABLE Ottawa which is also held in late May during National AccessAbility Week.

In addition to this new partnership, Carleton University invited IL Canada to join its formation of a Canadian Accessibility Network (CAN) comprised of public, non-profit, private and academic organizations all vying to work cooperatively to research and apply new solutions furthering the breakdown of barriers and advancement of accessibility. Corresponding to this was IL Canada's involvement in the formation of a Pan-Canadian Disability Leadership Coalition. Its focus, *"to ensure that all Canadian policies, services and programs are designed, implemented and evaluated using a disability / accessibility lens."*

IL Canada has a rich history of alliances, as evidenced by its 35-year uninterrupted partnership with the Federal Government of Canada in support of IL Centres operating from coast to coast. IL Canada's mission is to provide education and leadership for its member organization, partners and communities.

Le Phénix and Independent Living Resource Centre Calgary

In June 2019, IL Canada learned Le Phénix Ontario organization was dissolving the operations of its associated IL Centre in Alfred, Ontario. This Centre was successfully administered for many years by Judith Parisien, a prominent women rights advocate and educator in the Franco-Ontario community. IL Canada would like to recognize her tremendous contributions as well as the support Le Phénix organization provided in finalizing the closure of its IL Centre in Alfred, Ontario.

In early 2020, IL Canada learned Independent Living Resource Centre Calgary (ILRCC) was on the cusp of closure with a dwindling and a final resignation of its Board of Directors. Given the situation and during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, continued programming at ILRCC proved difficult as was the recognized establishment of a new ILRCC Board of Directors. In such matters, IL Canada must ensure its fiduciary integrity for the financial support it provides to all Centres benefitting from the Social Development Partnership Program. Hence, a legal review of ILRCC's status was required and was ongoing into May 2020.

Expressions of Appreciation by Carole Barron

As the author of this Report, it is with sincere gratitude that I acknowledge the contribution of each director on the IL Canada Board of Directors. They bring their passion, experience and insight for the governance issues we have collectively dealt with during this year of transition. While there have been challenges, there is an impressive demonstration of resilience to keep moving forward, knowing IL Canada and Centres do make a profound difference for the betterment of all Canadians. To each Board Member, I salute you and offer a very special and, heartfelt thank you to each of you who has given freely of your time to advance the Independent Living Movement.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge and thank Patrick Curran, National Executive Director for his focused attention and leadership to the goals and objectives of IL Canada and the constituency we serve. His thoughtful, focused and tenacious approach to seeking what is right and the truth is absolutely second to none.

Thank you to Lynne Gratton for her contribution to the work of IL Canada and Centres, and, to both for your work especially during these uncertain and unprecedented times.

Annual General Meeting

As stated at the start of this report, 2019 – 2020 was a period of transition in firmly establishing the rules of governance for our organization. In preparation for what will undoubtedly be a virtual Annual General Meeting, the upcoming year should herald a year of renewed optimism and the discovery of new programming possibilities brought about by COVID-19.

IL Canada Board of Directors

2019 – 2020 Independent Living Canada Board of Directors

Carole J. Barron, National Chairperson, Provincial Representative, Newfoundland and Labrador

Samantha Walsh, 1st Vice Chair, Member at Large, Ontario

Carrie Ernst, Provincial Representative, Nova Scotia

Mark Green, Treasurer, Member at Large, Saskatchewan

Kathleen Odell, Secretary, Provincial Representative, Ontario

Kimberly Yetman Dawson, Member at Large, Newfoundland and Labrador

Beth Caskey, Provincial Representative, British Columbia

Robin East, Provincial Representative, Saskatchewan

Chelsea Reddekop, Provincial Representative, Alberta

Julie Haché, Provincial Representative, New Brunswick

Deborah Kennard, Provincial Representative, Quebec

Ralph Meehan, Member at Large, Ontario

National Executive Director's Report



Independent Living Canada and Centres are run for and by persons with disabilities. They are staff, volunteers, program participants and community partners from all over Canada. This juxtaposition of different groups, places, cross disabilities as well as socio-demographic and lifestyle differences all rolled into one, is exactly what the founders of the Independent Living Movement had in mind to set our organization apart from the health care system that views people with illnesses or who have disabilities, as patients, clients or simply those among us who are “vulnerable”. IL Canada provides IL Centres with financial support for their core programming in addition to representing independent living values that promote the equality and rights of all Canadians, and especially the more than 6 million Canadians who identify as having a disability.

The National Executive Director is tasked with carrying out the strategic plans set by the IL Canada Board of Directors. This includes administering to business affairs, following policies and procedures, and representing the organization on matters of public interest and in dealings with existing and potential IL Canada partnerships.

Meeting Our Financial and Fiduciary Responsibilities

During the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, IL Canada strengthened its financial position even though the annual federal government funding was reduced to \$1,200,004; this significantly lower than the annual federal funding received a year earlier at \$1,425,000. Financial highlights compared to the previous year are as follows:

- Excess of revenue over expenses was \$29,609 versus the previous year's loss of \$1,960; this due to other revenue earned.
- National Office Expense at \$277,883 was lower by \$64,488, this a result of substantially lower consulting services and travel expenses.
- Payment to IL Centres was lower by \$181,068, this because of lower federal funding in the first of a three-year funding agreement.
- Balance Sheet improved by \$5,683, this largely due to unrestricted funds which increased from \$84,376 to \$114,087 as at March 31, 2020.

In terms of IL Canada's fiduciary responsibilities, the Board of Directors is always cognizant of our organization's privilege of receiving federal government funding that has always been made available during the last 35-years.

Communicating Independent Living Values

The National Executive Director invariably becomes the spokesperson for IL Canada on issues involving the rights and services afforded to persons with disabilities. There are three streams of communication worth noting that are important to conveying the values of Independent Living. The first stream has been the general understanding and nuanced expressions involving disability.

All IL Canada oral and written communications in the public domain must be, and have been, devoid of words or expressions that have negative connotations about disability.

The second stream of communication by the National Executive Director involves IL Canada's dealings with existing and potential partner organizations. This has been a two-pronged approach in that many of the partnering organizations do not share the same values of Independent Living, nor share the same perspective about disability. IL Canada's approach has been to inform and educate partnering organizations about the value of independent living, as well as the need to remain united as an holistic group in support of the Accessible Canada Act and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Finally, IL Canada received positive press coverage about its criticism of absorbent fees being charged for the preparation of disability tax credit applications. This news item was covered nationally by CBC. In addition, the Huffington Post released an article about the need of persons with disabilities to receive much stronger service assistance and financial support during the COVID-19 pandemic. IL Canada was the backbone of that article and made good use of a survey it had conducted during the start of the pandemic.

Managing in a Pandemic

As the COVID-19 pandemic was in full force by the end of March 2020, it was apparent that IL Canada and Centres had to adjust to a new reality of service and communication. Of considerable importance was the plight of IL Centre program participants who no longer had a place to go, to receive or contribute to programs of interest to them. There were also new services identified by IL Centres as being needed within the community such as securing supplies of personal protective equipment, becoming involved in food drop off and transportation issues and ensuring there continued to be a line of communication with persons living with a disability, as not all people are as 'tech' or telecommunication savvy as others.

IL Canada conducted a survey to show there was empirical evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic was of enormous concern to Canadians living with a disability. The results of a survey administered to 325 workers, volunteers and program participants at IL Centre across Canada revealed the following:

- 80% "Concerned" about not being able to get regular food and grocery supplies.
- 72% "Concerned" about not having enough money to buy food or pay rent.
- 79% "Concerned" about not having access to personal protective equipment.
- 81% "Concerned" about not having the right or ability to be immediately tested.
- 84% "Concerned" about not receiving the same level of medical treatment.
- 82% "Concerned" about not being consulted like others about being treated.
- 85% "Concerned" about being more socially isolated than ever before.
- 76% "Concerned" about, if a choice were to be made as to who lives or dies because of COVID-19, "I, as a person with a disability, will be chosen to die".

The results of the survey, when released publicly, helped frame how support could more effectively be provided so as to alleviate some of the concerns felt within the disability community about the coronavirus.

Partnerships with Carleton University and Disability Leadership Coalition

IL Canada's involvement with Carleton University has been extremely gratifying. To align IL Canada's AccessABLE Technology Expo™ with Carleton's Annual ENABLE Ottawa Educational Forum is the blending of two great events that celebrate the advancement of Accessibility in Canada. Unfortunately, there was no live event organized because of COVID-19. However, IL Canada was still able to partner with ENABLE Ottawa in the launch a virtual three-day conference that featured many renowned speakers addressing various accessibility topics. One such speaker, recruited by IL Canada, was Sharon Sholzberg-Gray who was asked to lead a discussion about her experiences as a person with a disability and how she learned to strategize her day using various mobility devices and personal care assistance. Sharon, an accomplished lawyer and health care executive, is also the wife of the late Herb Gray, former Deputy Prime Minister of Canada and the longest servicing parliamentarian in Canadian history.

During the last year, IL Canada has become involved in new organizations like the Canadian Accessibility Network (CAN) and the Disability Leadership Coalition, both vying for collaborative opportunities with all levels of government for the advancement of accessibility in Canada. The work of the National Executive Director in this regard has been to liaison and contribute to the leadership of these new organizations that are being designed by a censuses of differing opinions and objectives within many organizations, all of whom, in spite of their differences, want to advance accessibility in Canada.

Acknowledgements

I have learned a great deal as the National Executive Director of Independent Living Canada. I have been very impressed by the hard work and dedication staff at IL Centres bring to their job and to the people they serve or collaborate with to deliver programs and services. Many IL Centre Executive Directors who I have come to know, exemplify what it means to give of yourself without receiving anything in return. Many have gone well above whatever was expected of them for the cause of Independent Living.

I would also like to thank the IL Canada Board of Directors who also give freely of their time to provide the direction and governance control needed by our great national organization. Of particular note, I would like the acknowledge Carole Barron, your IL Canada Chair, who has risen to the many challenges she has faced during the last year and who has more than met and surpassed those challenges, as evident by the new partnership formations we have assembled this year as well as the continued improvement of our financial situation.

The staff presence within IL Canada is small, but it is effective in many ways. I wish to thank Lynne Gratton, my Administrative Assistant, and Steve Lind, our Financial Officer. I have learned that they are always available to get the job done, when needed.

While we often observe organizations from the outside looking in, IL Canada might be an exception. Looking from the inside, outward, might give you a better perspective of IL Canada and Centres, now and in the future.

I have been happy to have had a peak at a great Canadian organization and movement. Thank you for having provided me the opportunity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick K. Curran', with a stylized, looping flourish at the end.

Patrick K. Curran B.Comm., MBA
National Executive Director

Treasurer's Report



My profession is that of a Certified Financial Planner (CFP). This training demands I have a clear understanding of financial goals, revenues, expenses and investment options. Consequently during the year, as I am asked to review monthly financial statements and approve Independent Living Canada financial transactions, oversight of the organization's spending has been tediously administered, strengthened by the scrutiny also provided by my colleagues on the Finance Committee who I have enjoyed working with and respect. In the capacity of IL Canada's Treasurer, I am pleased to present this year's audited statement of our financial situation as of March 31, 2020 as prepared by the Frouin Group Professional Corporation, Chartered Accountants.

From a review of the Audited Financial Statements enclosed herein, it is clear that our organization's finances have been well managed, as evident by management having to deal with the arrival of less funding for its operations, while by the end of the year, delivering revenue in excess of expenses in the amount of \$29,609. The reasons for this successful outcome are threefold.

First, IL Canada had to reduce its annual budget at the start of last year to accommodate the decline in federal assistance. Secondly, other sources of revenue such as from IL Canada's AccessABLE Technology Expo™ were realized. Finally, all spending activity during the year was examined closely as were spending alternatives.

You will note in your review of the financial statements that communications, translation, consulting, promotion, rent and travel expenses were considerably lower from the previous year. A true measure of the strength of our financial situation is the growth of our unrestricted net assets which climbed to \$114,087 as of March 31, 2020.

As a member of the IL Canada Board of Directors, I am passionate about promoting the Independent Living Movement in Canada as a means to break down barriers and advance accessibility, so as to place every Canadian on an equal playing field. But there always needs to be a balance between the programs we deliver and their cost. It is also important IL Canada and Centres live within their means, but nevertheless push for more program participation within the communities we serve. That along with responsible fiscal management, will always be the true measure of success.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Green', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark Green, CFP
Treasurer