



FOCUSED ON THE

Future

Independent Living is a Way of Thinking and Living!

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



MISSION

Independent Living Canada is a national non-profit association of Independent Living Centres run by and for people with disabilities who promote the Independent Living Philosophy.

VISION

Independent Living Canada envisions an inclusive and accessible society where people with disabilities are valued equally and participate fully.



Independent Living Canada has a deep respect for the traditional lands of our Indigenous brothers and sisters; many of whom identify as persons with disabilities. We wish to acknowledge this land on which IL Canada operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.





**Apply an
Independent
Living Lens
Everywhere!**

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Freda Uwa
National Executive Director

Message from the National Executive Director

When I pause and look back on this past year, I am struck by how much can happen in twelve months.

Twelve months of learning; of rising to challenges; of building bridges; and above all, twelve months of impact.

This is not just a report. It's our shared story of impact.

Projects – Core and Festival

The National Office remains actively engaged through our Core project, providing essential support to our Centres and leading initiatives across various areas.

I'm pleased to share that the Festival Project is not only on budget and largely on schedule, but also exceeding its goals in several phases. I'd like to commend the incredible team and all our projects' partners for your dedication, hard work, and unwavering commitment. It is your collective efforts that continue to drive these projects forward and make a real difference in the lives of those we serve.

Strengthening Our Policies and People

This year, we focused on strengthening the foundations of our internal operations.

We invested in training for both staff and the Board, and undertook a comprehensive audit of our policies across Human Resources, Finance, and Governance.

Our HR policies have already been updated, while the reviews of our financial and governance frameworks are actively underway.

We also faced changes on our team. While we had staff leave, we welcomed new ones, and created new roles like our Marketing & Social Media Strategist. Each transition taught us resilience and flexibility. By March, we had a refreshed team ready to drive our mission forward.

Forging Partnerships for Greater Impact

We continue to forge partnerships for impact in research, community development and advocacy.

A Year of Conversations and Courage

- I met with policy advisors and federal representatives, advocating for our community's priorities.
- We participated in Canada's reporting before the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Members of our network contributed to CATSA's (Canadian Air Transport Security Authority) Pre-Board Screening (PBS) Checkpoint Accessibility Review contributing to improving accessibility across our airports.



- Notably, on December 16, 2024, I participated in the Knowledge hosted by the Accessible Canada Directorate at Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). This important session was part of a broader engagement process carried out between September 2024 and January 2025, helping to shape the final Accessible Canada Roadmap. It was an honour to contribute IL Canada's perspective to such a critical national dialogue.
- I wrote letters to all five political parties, reminding them that Canadians with disabilities should never be ignored.

These conversations weren't just meetings on paper. They were acts of courage to ensure the lived realities of our community are heard, understood, and acted upon.

Building Community, Online and Off

Connection has been our lifeline. We revived our Social Media presence, sharing photos and stories from across the country.

Our Youth Advisory Council grew into a powerful voice. They recruited new members, launched plans for their own website, and even secured a seat on our national board. The young people stepping forward today will be the leaders of tomorrow. And I'm ever so proud of the work they do.

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Moments of Celebration

There were bright moments.

- IL Across Canada Day showcased beautiful sights and audacious sound of communities celebrating independent living.



- Our Annual General Meeting in Ottawa remains a true family reunion of changemakers. In 2024, we were honoured to welcome distinguished guests, including the Honourable Kamal Khera, then Minister for Diversity, Inclusion, and Persons with Disabilities; Dino Zuppa, CEO of Accessibility Standards Canada; Jutta Treviranus, a world-renowned AI expert; officials from ESDC; partner organizations; and many others who share our vision and commitment
- We gathered insights at national and international conferences, bringing new ideas home to strengthen our work.

Looking Ahead

Yes, we faced challenges this year — staff turnover, heavy workloads, and financial uncertainties. But every obstacle tested our commitment and sharpened our focus. We are emerging stronger, wiser, and more determined than ever.

Looking forward, we aim to:

- continue to strengthen our internal systems.
- Launch new youth initiatives to centre their voices as change leaders.
- Deepen partnerships for innovative projects.
- Secure more sustainable funding to grow our impact.

Most of all, we will continue to listen — because every voice matters.

I'm incredibly proud of what we've achieved together. This report doesn't capture every story, every success or struggle, nor does it fully express the fine details of the resilience and hard work across our network, but I hope it shows the heart and spirit of IL Canada.

We are a movement. We are a community. And together, we are changing lives.

Thank you for believing in this work, and for walking alongside us.

With gratitude,

Freda Uwa

*National Executive Director
Independent Living Canada*





AGM Chairperson's Report Independent Living Canada – 2024–2025

Thank you for being here today. It is truly an honour to serve as the National Chairperson of Independent Living Canada for the 2024–2025 term. I'm proud to be part of a movement that continues to promote the rights, independence, and full inclusion of people with disabilities across the country.

As an organization, we have remained committed to our core values—**choice**, **empowerment**, and **equal opportunity**. Our 24 Independent Living Resource Centres across Canada are doing critical, on-the-ground work to help people navigate barriers and live life on their own terms. From providing peer support and skills training to advocating for accessible communities, these centres are changing lives every day.

Over the past year, we have focused on:

- Strengthening our national network
- Deepening partnerships with community organizations
- Ensuring that the voices of people with disabilities continue to lead our work
- Board governance training
- Policy updates

We know that **real change happens when lived experience is front and centre**.

On the international front, we have proudly reconnected with our global allies—the **National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)** in the United States and the **European Network on Independent Living (ENIL)**. Independent Living is a global movement, and we should be proud of our shared momentum.

For the first time, Independent Living Canada had a presence in **Geneva**. I was honoured to participate in Canada's **CRPD (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities)** review on **March 10–11, 2025**. Alongside other Canadian civil society representatives and government officials, we engaged in a constructive dialogue with the **United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**.

We discussed Canada's implementation of the CRPD and reaffirmed our commitment to holding governments accountable. This work will continue.



This important progress would not be possible without the dedication of many individuals. I would like to acknowledge:

- The incredible **staff and volunteers** at IL Canada and our member centres
- Our **dedicated Board of Directors**
- Our **National Executive Director, Freda Uwa**, for her leadership and tireless commitment

A heartfelt **thank you** to the following individuals whose contributions have been invaluable:

Robin East, Pierre Hamlin, Susan Barrett, Suzanne Larocque, Beth Caskey, Tyler Cooley, Marie Larocque, Teresa Bullegas, Janet Redman, Sebastian Duguay-Nardini, Vicky Levack, Kathy Hawkins, and Jennifer Jucknat.

Your support and leadership help guide our movement and keep us focused on what matters most: **the people we serve**.

Our priorities remain clear. We will continue to:

- Push for **stronger accessibility standards**
- Advocate for **more inclusive policies**
- Support communities where every person—**regardless of disability**—has the opportunity to thrive

Thank you all for your continued support, your trust, and your unwavering commitment to the principles of **Independent Living**. Together, we are building a more **inclusive, equitable, and empowered** Canada.

With gratitude and determination,

Diane Kreuger

On May 21st and 22nd of 2025, the IL Canada Board gathered in Toronto for an in-person board meeting. Pictured front row is Diane Kreuger, Tyler Cooley, Freda Uwa, Marie Larocque, Beth Caskey; and standing in the back is Janet Redman, Teresa Bullegas, Susan Barrett, Pierre Hamelin, Sebastien Duguay-Nardini. Virtual attendees: Vicky Levack, Kathy Hawkins, Suzanne Larocque.



National Impact Perspective

People across Canada know that we are leaders when it comes to standing up for the rights of all people with disabilities. The Independent Living approach is not about what kind of disability someone has. Instead, it's about believing that every person with a disability has the right to make their own choices about how they live. Anyone, with any kind of disability, can choose to follow the Independent Living Philosophy—at any time and in their own way. That's what makes it so powerful. At its core, Independent Living is about freedom—freedom to live where and how you want, with strength, confidence, and most importantly, dignity.



Independent Living thrives on many core values and principles. Certainly, accessibility, inclusion, choice, flexibility, control and dignity are always present in how we approach day-to-day life. However, Community Consultation is possibly the most important concept we employ at every opportunity in our work. We are a self-directed network of people with disabilities working and serving people with disabilities. We seek the direct input of all persons with disabilities - who are the real experts on disabilities - to provide guidance and consultation on where the IL Movement should lead next; what gaps in services exist; and where we can make the greatest positive impact!

Our Core Pillars of Service are the foundation of which we deliver our programs and services.



Member Spotlight

Celebrating Our IL Centres

IL Canada (Independent Living Canada) is made up of 24 strong and active Independent Living Resource Centres (ILRCs) across the country. These Centres are the heart of the Independent Living Movement in Canada and speak up for all Canadians with disabilities.

At their core, ILRCs are places where people with disabilities can learn how to take control of their own lives. They are friendly community spaces where people can:

- share information,
- build skills,
- make art, and
- have fun together.

The staff at each Centre work hard to create a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment where everyone is included—because Independent Living is what it's all about.



The Power of Partnerships

Celebrating Our Allies and Collaborators

Everything we undertake has a reliance on meaningful and lasting partnerships at many levels. Our Allies and Collaborators come in many forms: funders, like-minded organizations and even individuals with a similar passion for building an inclusive and accessible society for all Canadians with disabilities! Here we highlight many of our current partners. We wholeheartedly thank and appreciate every person and entity that fosters friendships with us as we continue forward on realizing our vision and mission.



Employment and
Social Development Canada

Emploi et
Développement social Canada



Accessibility Standards
Canada

Normes d'accessibilité
Canada



Impact!

Our Work on the National Stage

In partnership with several like-minded organizations across Canada, we are part of the leadership of the broader disability landscape of national organizations working toward equity, inclusion, accessibility, and dignity for all Canadians with disabilities. We are in direct national partnerships that are involved in:

1. Reversal of the discriminatory MAiD Track 2
2. Reform and redesign of the Canada Disability Benefit
3. Creating accessibility at all events and festivals in Canada
4. Collaborated on the Canadian Disability Inclusion Action Plan

1

IL Canada joined Canadian civil society and government representatives in Geneva for a constructive dialogue with the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on Canada's implementation of the CRPD.

2

We have provided consultation and input on the reform and redesign needed to ensure that Canada Disability Benefit does as intended and is accessible to all Canadians with Disabilities living in poverty who are under the age of 65.

3

We are actively completing a participatory action study project to help inform and ensure that all federal Canadian Events and Festivals are inclusive and accessible for all Canadians with Disabilities.

4

We collaborated in the creation of the Canadian Disability Action Plan in collaboration with Muscular Dystrophy Canada and several national partners that are actively informing the federal government on positive, active engagement.



Board of Directors 2024-2025



Our governance board is comprised of a majority of people who themselves identify as a person with a disability.



Diane Kreuger
Chairperson



Sebastien Duguay-Nardini
Director



Robin East
1st Vice-Chair



Teresa Bullegas
Director



Pierre Hamelin
2nd Vice Chair



Vicky Levack
Director



Susan Barrett
Secretary



Marie Larocque
Director



Sue Larocque
Treasurer



Kathy Hawkins
Director



Jennifer Jucknat
Past Chairperson



Beth Caskey
Director



Tyler Cooley
Director



Janet Redman
Director

Nothing About Us Without Us

“Nothing about us without us” signifies that decisions affecting a community should not be made without the direct input and participation of that community’s members. Genuine inclusion leads to more effective, relevant, and empowering outcomes for individuals and communities. Ensuring this is the goal of our Board of Directors in every action they undertake at IL Canada.



Leadership and Staff Support



Freda Uwa

National Executive Director
Operational Leadership

Freda is a leader with extensive experience in accessibility, mental health, and project management: informed by her lived experience and professional expertise. Her leadership within the Independent Living Canada network brings a forceful voice on behalf of all Canadians with disabilities. Her tireless efforts to ensure accessibility, inclusion and dignity for all is best witnessed in her genuine approach and perseverance pursuing the issues that matter most to persons with disabilities.

Beyond her professional work, Freda is passionate about mentorship, social impact, and fostering inclusive communities. She is also an accomplished Canadian Red Seal-endorsed professional in the cook trade and loves to feed people great food!

Here at IL Canada, we have several support staff on the team whose combined efforts curate the vision and direction of our National Executive Director.



Kohl Gray - *Executive Assistant*

Kohl keeps close attention to the day-to-day scheduling and follow-ups in our busy national office. Kohl is beyond expert at keeping strict organization and is so detail oriented that it can be astonishing.



Tom Pugliese - *Marketing and Social Media Strategist*

Tom brings volume to the IL Canada Voice at all levels. Tom is masterful at creating direct, consistent messaging that is always focused by a strong IL Lens, accessibility and inclusion.



Lisa Snider – *Festival and Event Accessibility Research Project*

Lisa is responsible for the collection of the varied findings that will help create the most accessible festival experiences ever in Canada. Lisa is an expert and experienced researcher who is meticulous in sorting and reporting data.



Steve Lind - *Financial Officer*

Steve ensures that the financial accounts of IL Canada are always accurate and current. Steve's expert bookkeeping is invaluable to the day-to-day success of IL Canada.



Financial Overview

Message from the Treasurer

Another year has come and gone! It certainly has been an interesting one!

We have continued to strive, work hard and diligently towards our goal of a more inclusive and independent living movement for all persons living with a disability. We continue to adapt to a changing world by using more technology.

To the members of Independent Living Canada, I present the Audited Financial Statement for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025. The Financial Statement was prepared by Frouin Group Professional Corporation Chartered Accountants.

Total revenue for the year was \$1,482,908 and our total expenditures were \$1,433,108 which shows a surplus of \$49,800.

At the start of the year, our fund balance was in a surplus of \$214,809 and at the end of the year March 31, 2025 our fund balance is in a surplus of \$264,609.

The work of IL Canada would not be possible without the contributions of our funders to which I would like to express a sincere thank you for your continued support and belief in our organization. We look forward to our continued successful partnership with you.

Respectfully submitted
Suzanne Larocque,
Treasurer
IL Canada Board of Directors



IL Canada Financial Summary

Condensed Statement of Financial Position As at March 31, 2025

Assets	2025	2024
Current Assets		
Cash	\$325,157	\$342,498
Accounts Receivable	169	266
HST Receivable	11,879	7604
Prepaid Expenses	5,156	11410
Total Assets	\$342,361	\$361,778
Liabilities and Net Assets	2025	2024
Current Liabilities		
Accounts Payable and Accrued Liabilities	\$27,794	\$29,872
Deferred Project Contributions	\$49,958	\$117,097
	\$77,752	\$146,969
Net Assets		
Unrestricted Funds	\$264,609	\$214,809
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$342,361	\$361,778

We strive for ethical and transparent stewardship of all contributions to IL Canada!

Condensed Statement of Revenue and Expenses For the Year Ending March 31, 2025

Revenue	2025	2024
Project Contributions	\$1,441,856	\$1,286,223
Membership Fees	\$12,000	\$12,000
Interest	\$20,432	\$10,795
Other	\$8,620	\$29,511
	\$1,482,908	\$1,338,529
Expenses		
Total Expenses	\$1,433,108	\$1,285,291
Excess of Revenue Over Expenses	\$49,800	\$53,238



Towards Tomorrow

On the Horizon for IL Canada!

Tomorrow does not specifically mean the day after today, but rather the future both near and far. Planning for our future is imperative, particularly with respect to our sustainability and viability in a very competitive funding landscape. More than ever it has become a necessity to demonstrate value and reason.

We believe we accomplish this very well in both a social and economic regard. Our ongoing strength, however, relies on capturing and effectively reporting on our achievements; to both demonstrate positive growth and identify areas for improvement with a meaningful approach.

We will continue to create more and more significant avenues to be self-reflective on our direction forward: and ensure that we remain flexible in our response to the community of consumers we serve. Building capacity through reporting our metrics and our stories are vital to relay our value to the broader community.

We will continue to seek your support, as it is more important than ever that we effectively communicate our positive impact on the Canadian disability landscape through our efforts and those of our valued member centres.



Tomorrow's IL Canada – Today!

Youth Advisory Council



There are exciting events on the horizon for IL Canada and we be more pleased than to announce the successful formation of our Youth Advisory Council. We are vitally aware of the importance and value that is derived from actively engaging Canadian youths with disabilities by youths with disabilities! The Youth Advisory Council seeks the ongoing input from youths across the country; providing a real-time insight into what matters most to young Canadians with disabilities. This enables us to be proactive and responsive to emerging trends and values of our disability leaders of tomorrow – today!

For youth with disabilities by youth with disabilities!

The IL Youth Advisory Council has big plans to connect and collaborate with all youth across Canada. There is no limit on how this will positively impact the emerging Canadian disability landscape – changing youth's with disabilities lives for the positive!



Vision

We envision a Canada where youth with disabilities are empowered, their voices are heard, and they have equitable access to opportunities that promote independence, growth, and inclusion.



Mission

To provide a voice for Canada's youth with disabilities, fostering inclusive opportunities for Independent Living and empowering communities.



Values

- Inclusivity
- Diversity
- Growth
- Respect
- Innovation
- Accountability
- Diligence
- Collaboration



