

# Safe Engaged Environments Disability (SEED)

## A Safer City For All



Compiled by the Centre for Independent Living in Toronto  
(CILT)

Funded by the City of Toronto's Community Safety Investment  
Program, and the Toronto Community Housing Corporation's  
(TCHC) Social Investment Fund

July 28, 2011

Copyright © Centre for Independent Living In Toronto.  
May be reproduced only with permission from CILT. Publication 2011

ISBN: 978-1-927351-00-0

## **Acknowledgements:**

### **SEED Partners**

- Sponsoring Partner/Trustee: Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT) Inc.
- Birchmount Bluffs Neighborhood Centre
- City of Toronto
- Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario (ERDCO)
- Hearing Every Youth through Youth (HEY Y)
- People with Disabilities in Toronto
- Sherbourne Health Centre
- Springtide Resources
- TCHC Anti-Ableism Committee
- TCHC tenants with disabilities
- Voices From The Street

### **SEED Funding Partners:**

- City of Toronto, Community Safety Investment Program
- Toronto Community Housing Corporation, Social Investment Fund

**SEED Main Steering Committee Members:** Sandra Carpenter, Linda Coltman, Melissa Graham, Chris Lytle, David Meyers, Mia Mioc, Melanie Moore, John Mossa (Chair), Anthony Ng, Fran Odette, Tracy Warne

**Past SEED Main Steering Committee Members:** Mike Creek, Cheryl Duggan, Connie Harrison, Tyler Hnatuk, Ayshia Musleh

**SEED Toronto Community Housing Corporation Steering Committee Members:** Rennie Bishop, Linda Coltman, Mabel Ernest, Joan Jordan, Tasha Lee, Natalie Lichtenstein, Chris Lytle, Melanie Moore, John Mossa (Chair), Rita Oliver, Beverly Smith

**CILT Staff:** John Mossa, Melanie Moore, Sandra Carpenter

**SEED Logo designed by:** Cheryl Duggan

### **SEED Project Staff:**

- Linda Coltman, SEED Project Coordinator
- Chris Lytle, SEED Project Report Main Researcher/Author

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<b>Foreword: Things We Learned.</b>	6
<b>Executive Summary</b>	8
<b>PART 1: The SEED Project</b>	
Introduction	11
Methodology	13
SEED Focus Group Demographics	16
How Did We Decide on the Safety Themes?	20
<b>PART 2: Specific Safety Themes from the TCHC Tenants with Disabilities</b>	
<b>a) Accessible Formats for Information</b>	22
• Written Information	
• Policies	
• General Access	
<b>b) Building Security and Safety</b>	23
• Main Doors	
• Fire Safety	
• Cameras	
<b>c) Accountability and Transparency</b>	25
• Repairs	
• Staff	
• Health Promotion Officer	
• Accessibility Coordinator	
<b>PART 3: Specific Safety Themes of People with Disabilities Living in the City of Toronto</b>	
<b>a) Traffic Safety</b>	27
• Crossings	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speed</li> <li>• Vehicles</li> </ul>	
<b>b) Access to Programs</b>	<b>28</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income Support Programs</li> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Community Programs</li> </ul>	
<b>c) Disability Awareness Education</b>	<b>29</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Politicians</li> <li>• Police</li> <li>• TTC</li> </ul>	

## **PART 4: Common Safety Themes from People with Disabilities Living in the City of Toronto and/or TCHC**

<b>Common Physical Issues</b>	<b>31</b>
a) Safety and Transportation	31
b) Safety and Infrastructure	35
c) Safety, Security and Surroundings	37
<b>Common Social Issues</b>	<b>42</b>
a) Safety and Identifying as a Woman with a Disability	42
b) Common Views about Police	44
c) Fear of Retribution	47
d) Race, Religion, and Disability	48
e) Emotion and Poverty	50

## **PART 5: SEED Community Event and Skills Development Workshops**

SEED Community Event and Skills Development Workshops	53
---	----

## **PART 6: SEED Action Plan Recommendations and Conclusion**

SEED Action Plan Recommendations	59
Conclusion	64

<b>Part 7: Appendices</b>	<b>65</b>
Appendix A: SEED Focus Group Questions	65

Appendix B: Complete List of SEED Focus Groups	66
Appendix C: SEED Demographics	68
Appendix D: Complete List of SEED Skills Development Workshops	71
Appendix E: SEED Skills Development Interactive Group Advocacy Tools	73
Appendix F: Group Advocacy Tools	91
Appendix G: Media Tools	100
Appendix H: Resources	114
Appendix I: The Safety Ambassador Project Proposal	121

## **Foreword: Things We Learned.**

The Safe Engaged Environments Disability (SEED) Project is a collaboration of cross-disability community partners, Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) tenants with disabilities and/or citizens with disabilities in Toronto.

The SEED Project should have been called “It always takes longer than you think it will”. However, if you want a process which truly involves everyone, you have to be prepared to make a lot of detours on the road to your ultimate goal. We learned that the participatory action model can be thought of as many things and democracy is one. And as someone once said, “democracy can be a messy process”. In other words, this Project did not move in a straight line but was inclusive.

The most exciting aspect to us was seeing people from a cross-disability perspective become more engaged about community safety issues. This was achieved through focus groups, skills development workshops and peer support among participants. We broke ground on this important Project in finding a true cross-disability voice. Throughout this Project, people with disabilities began to take ownership of their right to safety.

The SEED Project Committees support this report and its recommendations and request the City of Toronto and TCHC to make changes to increase the safety of people with disabilities.

SEED is thankful to all participants in this Project for sharing their personal stories on safety in Toronto.

We sincerely hope community involvement in city-wide issues such as safety will continue as well as the momentum of SEED.

Please contact John Mossa, Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT) at 416-599-2458 ext. 238, TTY: (416) 599-5077 or by email [ilskills@cilt.ca](mailto:ilskills@cilt.ca) for more information on the SEED Project.

Sandra Carpenter  
Executive Director  
Center for Independent Living in Toronto

## **Executive Summary**

The Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT) and the City of Toronto recognized the need to increase the level of awareness of community safety for people with disabilities in the Toronto area.

The Safe Engaged Environments Disability (SEED) Project was developed with partnerships with cross-disability community organizations, and tenants with disabilities in Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) and/or people with disabilities in the City of Toronto.

The SEED Project was funded by City of Toronto's Community Safety Investment Program and TCHC's Social Investment Fund.

The SEED Project was a 3 year community based action research project. The Project has been developed and was carried out for persons with disabilities by persons with disabilities.

The SEED Project report is a collaboration of stories, skills development and recommendations that emerged out of 33 focus groups with 304 concerned citizens with disabilities in Toronto and/or tenants with disabilities in (TCHC).

There were a few key realizations that came out of the focus group process.

- People with disabilities ultimately feel as though they have no voice or no say. The disabled community has come to expect half commitments, failure of programs and policies that are supposed

to support people with disabilities and a lack of personal autonomy with regards to service providers in Toronto.

- The disability community is frustrated about being ghettoized even though rights are enshrined under several legally binding texts in Canada. People with disabilities still feel a gap between the right to have a home and having the right to access that home when you are a person with a disability.
- There are both physical and social factors that act as barriers to the safe participation of persons with disabilities in Toronto.

There were key findings to our Project involving physical and social structures within Toronto.

- Safety information is not provided in accessible formats
- TCHC and City repairs are not done in a timely fashion
- TCHC and City buildings are not sufficiently cleared of debris and snow
- TCHC has little to no accountability or follow up with regards to maintenance and repairs
- Residents are lacking appropriate community programs
- Traffic safety needs to be retooled to make city navigation easier for people with disabilities
- Construction in the city needs to reassess policies for notification and accessibility around construction sites.
- General programs run by the city and other entities within Toronto need to be made more accessible for people with disabilities.

- TCHC and City staff need disability awareness training so that they interact with people with disabilities positively and without assumptions.
- People with disabilities must have an active role in disability awareness training and/or decision making at all levels of TCHC and the City that affect them either directly or indirectly.

***“A community can only be as safe as the people that live there because safety is not just safe stairs.” SEED Focus Group, May, 2010.***

## **PART 1: The SEED Project**

### **Introduction**

Toronto is Canada’s largest city with a population that represents a diversity of cultural, economic and social backgrounds. Toronto is a city earmarked by constant changes in demographics (the people in this city), roads, public transportation, construction and/or demolition. When our city takes on initiatives, it is important that it fully reflects people with all disabilities- physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual - as a part of the diversity of Toronto.

People with disabilities have not been fully involved in city decisions that directly affect them. This includes discussion or planning for public and personal safety within Toronto.

Staff from the City of Toronto's Social Development, Finance and Administration Division, hosted two meetings in 2009 with people with disabilities and their supporters, both informal and formal. The purpose of those meetings was to hear directly from people with disabilities about the matters that concerned them the most and to identify an area of focus that people could work on together, using a cross-disability approach.

Meeting participants spoke strongly about safety as a key concern. They talked about the need for people with disabilities to define and identify improvements where problems exist. Several meeting

participants worked together to develop a proposal for the Safe Engaged Environments Disability (SEED) Project and the Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT) agreed to take on the lead role.

This research Project intended, above all, to give a voice to people with disabilities who traditionally have not been consulted on matters that affect them directly, whether it is access to safe housing or the design of street cars. The Project also acknowledged the strength and value in bringing people with different types of disabilities together to work in unity.

The Centre for Independent Living in Toronto led this research Project and assembled this report in the hope that people with disabilities will push for changes related to safety. In this context, safety is not defined narrowly – it includes a wide range of matters that affect the well-being of people with disabilities. We hope that people will gain strength from reading this report and realize that they are not alone. Together, we can bring about change.

We are pleased with the timing of the report because a number of recent changes reflect an increase in social awareness of disability. Society is now accepting its responsibility in creating and removing barriers. First, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the subsequent *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* are potentially creating better access and services for people with disabilities. Second, Canada's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has emphasized that people with disabilities are bearers of human rights equal to everyone else. We now question the view of disability as a thing that is 'broken' and needs to be 'fixed'. Disability

now represents a community and diverse culture, not a set of medical conditions and symptoms.

The report is divided into seven sections. Part 1 introduces the SEED Project. Parts 2 and 3 discuss the safety themes specific to TCHC tenants and/or people with disabilities living in Toronto. Part 4 discusses the common concerns of people with disabilities living in the City of Toronto and/or TCHC. This discussion provides a more in-depth look into the safety concerns of Toronto's disabled community. Part 5 gives a brief explanation of each SEED skills development workshop. The basic purpose of every workshop was to develop group advocacy and media skills based on the SEED themes identified in all the focus groups. Part 6 outlines recommendations for an action plan using ideas that came out of the focus groups and skills development workshops. Part 7 includes important appendices such as advocacy and media tools.

In this report, we hear voices of people with a range of disabilities from across the City of Toronto. They speak with passion about safety concerns and offer solutions. People with disabilities are demanding to be heard on equal grounds as any other citizen. Together these voices reflect a growing and increasingly more powerful community in the City of Toronto.

## **Methodology**

The SEED Project's primary research method was Participatory Action Research (PAR). Utilizing PAR meant that every aspect of the SEED Project involved people with disabilities in key roles and areas of

responsibility. This included designing the focus group questions, organizing the information that was gathered, to writing this final report.

The saying 'nothing about us without us' - a rallying cry in the disability movement - is simple but powerful. Therefore, the SEED Project Steering Committees reflected this cross-disability approach. The majority of SEED and SEED TCHC Steering Committee members had physical, mental health, intellectual, visible and/or invisible disabilities. Both Committees included grass roots participants with disabilities and their allies who supported the common goals of the SEED Project. This is what made the Project unique. It is negligent and inappropriate for any organization or project to assume that their approach to disability is the correct one, especially when there is no representation of persons with disabilities.

The SEED Project was funded by both the City of Toronto's Community Safety Investment (CSI) Program and the Toronto Community Housing Corporation's (TCHC) Social Investment Fund (SIF). As a result, two Steering Committees were formed with slightly different terms of reference. The SEED TCHC Steering Committee was made up of a majority of TCHC tenants with disabilities, whereas the SEED City Steering Committee was made of a majority of community partners with disabilities. What was similar in the terms of reference was the Steering Committees' main goal of supporting and engaging people with disabilities in advocating on safety concerns. As well, the SEED Steering Committees created terms of reference to ensure that Project input came from a diversity of perspectives such as gender, disability, cultures, age, and sexual orientation.

The SEED Steering Committees got together and created 5 focus group questions about safety for people with disabilities living in Toronto and/or TCHC. These 5 focus group questions are outlined in **Appendix A**.

The CILT office was responsible for setting up all of the focus groups with participants recruited through various community agencies and the Toronto Community Housing Corporation. We kept a cross-disability perspective in the focus groups because we wanted to make sure that a range of disabilities and participants' views were reflected.

Before each focus group, participants were asked to sign a consent form with the understanding that their participation was voluntary. As well, focus group participants were informed any information collected would be kept anonymous and confidential by the SEED Project.

The information that came out of the focus groups was what could be expected in a city as large as Toronto. People expressed concerns ranging from sidewalk maintenance in the wintertime, to a need for harm reduction programs for people with addiction issues. Although responses were varied, links between poverty and safety strongly emerged. This eventually became a framework with which to organize the research for the action plan.

Project participants were kept up to date with regular letters sent through mail and/or email. In addition, the Project provided opportunities for active engagement such as becoming members of SEED Steering Committees, being part of the research groups and attending our skills development workshops.

## **SEED Focus Group Demographics**

Overall, there were 33 SEED focus groups with 304 participants. See **Appendix B** for a complete list of SEED focus groups. After every focus group, participants were asked to fill out a voluntary and anonymous demographics form. See **Appendix C** for SEED focus groups demographics. Here is a general breakdown of the demographics:

- The city focus group participants totaled 170 focus group participants. Of those 58 filled out a demographics form for a 34% response rate.
- The TCHC participants totaled 134 focus group participants. Of that, 110 filled out a demographics form for an 82% response rate.
- Overall, 168 SEED focus group participants filled out the SEED Project voluntary and anonymous demographics form for a 55% response rate.

## **Disability**

Out of 168 people who responded with a demographics form 74 percent (or 124) were people with disabilities. Here is a general breakdown of the disability demographics:

- 31 percent identified as people who had a mobility disability,
- 24 percent identified as people who had an invisible disability,

- 16 percent identified as people who had a mental health disability,
- 16 percent identified as people who identified as “other” disability,
- 8 percent identified as people who were blind,
- 6 percent identified as people who have addictions,
- 6 percent identified as people who had an acquired brain injury,
- 2 percent identified as people were deaf or deafened and,
- 1 percent identified as people who had an intellectual disability

The total number here is more than 100 percent due to the fact that people with disabilities identified themselves under more than one category. These are people with multiple disabilities. An example of this is when a person with a mobility disability also identified as a person with a mental health disability.

From our demographics you can see that we tried to branch out into the larger disability community within the Toronto area. This is a cross disability perspective that illustrates the attempts to make linkages that traditionally separate disability groups.

## **Income**

The current Canadian Low Income Cut Off (LICO) at which a single person will be self-sufficient is \$22,637<sup>1</sup>. This means that if a person earns less than this amount, he or she will be spending 20 percent more on necessities such as rent and food. Some alarming statistics that came out of our demographics were that 30 percent of all people who filled out a demographics form reported an annual income between

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75f0002m/2011002/tbl/tbl02-eng.htm>

\$0 to \$8,000 and 40 percent reported earning an annual income between \$8,001 to \$16,000.

As well, according to a recent poll done by Wealth Management Research<sup>2</sup>, Toronto is the 8th most expensive city in the world. The majority of SEED focus group participants with disabilities who have safety concerns in Toronto are living well below the poverty line in an ultimately unsustainable situation in one of the world's most expensive cities.

## **Gender**

Running focus groups with both TCHC and/or City participants yielded higher demographic responses from women.

- 59 percent identified as women,
- 37 percent identified as men,
- 3 percent offered no reply and
- 1 percent identified as transgendered.

Overlapping disability and income demographics, the majority of SEED focus group women with disabilities are living below the poverty line.

## **Race and Ethnicity**

Race and ethnic diversity was an important part of the focus group process. Even though the SEED Project worked hard engaging diversity and disability, the highest number of people who filled out a

---

<sup>2</sup> Prices and Earnings: Wealth Management Research. UBS AG. August 2010

demographics form identified themselves as Caucasian. Here is a breakdown:

- 38 percent identified as Caucasian,
- 19 percent did not reply,
- 17 percent identified as Aboriginal people,
- 16 percent identified as Black,
- 9 percent identified as “other”,
- 6 percent identified as Latin American,
- 2 percent identified as South East Asian and West Asian.

Being able to discuss diversity and disability on an equal level is still something that needs to be worked on by any organization that does research in a city such as Toronto. The participation of other ethnicities is crucial to gaining an understanding of safety in any urban centre.

## **Age**

The SEED Project heard safety issues from people with disabilities from across different age groups.

- 67 percent identified as being between the ages of 25 to 64,
- 27 percent identified as being 65 plus,
- 4 percent offered no reply, and
- 2 percent identified as being between the ages of 20 to 24

## **Sexual Orientation**

As well, the Project heard safety issues from people with disabilities from different sexual orientations.

- 68 percent identified as being heterosexual,
- 20 percent of people didn't answer,
- 11 percent identified as being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and two-spirited
- 1 percent identified as being both heterosexual and/or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and two-spirited

### **How did we decide on the safety themes?**

After the focus groups were completed, the SEED Steering Committees decided to create Sub-Committees to work on how to organize the information gathered and identify any emerging safety themes. Theme development took place over several meetings and included everybody on the research Sub-Committees. Members were given copies of the focus group notes in advance of meetings and then met after they had a chance to review them. In these meetings certain common safety themes emerged. From the focus groups, the research Sub-Committees saw that people's thoughts on safety included stories about specific and general issues in the City and/or TCHC.

When people were telling us their stories, all the examples had a certain element of emotion to them. The interviewees came from all backgrounds and all areas of the city and their stories about safety took a lot of courage to tell. You can imagine how frustrating it is to have a curb that is inaccessible in front of where you live. You can also imagine that if police don't listen to you because of your disability, it takes a toll on you emotionally. One person told us that a Member of Parliament started directing his answer to his able-bodied attendant after being questioned by a person with a disability about construction

policies. Again, it is very frustrating and deflating when there is an underlying belief or assumption that the person with the disability is not able to talk with authority on the matter. As a result of this we created a section specifically on “emotional issues” because there was a strong sense of stress in all of the information we gathered.

***“We can create demons that aren’t there and there is a lot of fear within the community... Our community certainly needs a lot of healing.” SEED Focus Group, August 2009***

## **PART 2: Specific Safety Themes from the TCHC Tenants with Disabilities**

Listed below are the main safety concerns expressed by TCHC tenants with disabilities in their focus groups. There was a lot of concern overall that applied to TCHC, but this represents an overview of items that should be looked into closely.

### **A) Accessible Formats for Information**

Accessible formats for all information was a major concern. Tenants with disabilities wanted but did not have access to TCHC information that was in plain language and/or in accessible formats.

#### **Written Notices and Information:**

Information such as 24-hour notice of entry into apartments, general building maintenance notices or any relevant TCHC information that is posted in the main lobbies and common areas of TCHC buildings did not make access accommodations for people who are blind, visually-impaired and/or people with learning disabilities. We heard from a number of TCHC tenants with visual impairments state that if TCHC could make notices in different languages why could they not makes those notices in Braille, e-mail, or alternative format. They expressed their fear of

TCHC maintenance workers coming into their apartments to do repairs but not receiving proper access accommodation notice.

**Policies:**

TCHC policies regarding accessibility and access accommodations, tenant rights, responsibilities, and complaints processes are not made available especially in accessible formats such as electronic copy/email/PDF, Braille, plain text for screen readers, and/or plain language.

**General Programs and Services:**

General access to TCHC Information was not good. The general feeling was that tenants with disabilities did not know where to find information on programs and services within TCHC such as the TCHC's Anti-Ableism Committee. There was usually no information for tenants to look at especially in alternative accessible formats.

**B) Building Security and Safety**

Building security was a common issue specific to TCHC. There was a general feeling that there was no control over who entered TCHC apartment buildings at any time and this created more stress for tenants.

**Main Doors:**

The main doors of apartment buildings were a concern specific to TCHC. We often heard that people would rush in after a wheelchair

user had opened the door. The feeling was that this was not monitored closely enough. Tenants are told not to allow people into the building who are not residents although this becomes extremely difficult for people with disabilities to monitor because they use the accessible button and/or automatic door openers.

### **Fire Safety:**

Fire safety was a major concern for people with disabilities living in TCHC. The concern centered on fire policies. People felt that being asked to stay in apartments and wait for assistance while the building is being evacuated was not right. We have now seen two recent fires occur in TCHC housing units and the concern about safety has risen as a result. Being afraid and not trusting policies about how to evacuate in case of a fire adds stress to the lives of people with disabilities.

### **Cameras:**

Cameras were a subject of frustration for people with disabilities as there were constant stories of cameras that were meant for security being broken and ineffective at preventing crime. People felt if the cameras worked and TCHC staff in charge of security cameras used them effectively, it would prevent crime. In fact, tenant with disabilities felt that more cameras used effectively by TCHC staff, in such areas as elevators, in stair-wells, in hall-ways and around the TCHC building property would reduce crime.

## **C) Accountability and Transparency**

*“My door is made out of plywood. I asked when my door is going to be done, I got no answer. I put a chair against my door because I am afraid for my safety” SEED Focus Group, May 2010*

Accountability and transparency really concerned TCHC tenants with disabilities. They commented on the lack of information about various job descriptions of TCHC staff. More importantly, TCHC tenants with disabilities felt they were not respected and that proper and timely repairs rarely occurred. It is crucial for people with disabilities to know that follow up and repairs will be done.

### **Repairs:**

This was a subject that came up in all of our focus groups and tenants felt that they were being given the ‘cold shoulder’ by TCHC staff. They felt as if nobody took responsibility for things such as broken elevators, doors, water leaks, etc.

### **Staff:**

Tenants had major concerns and problems when it came to TCHC staff. There was a strong sense that the staff seemed to withhold information and act in the interest of TCHC instead of taking the tenants’ concerns seriously. There seemed to be apprehension at allowing staff members to know what tenants’ groups were up to, for fear of being evicted and/or patronized.

**Health Promotion Officer (HPO):**

This position was not widely understood and rarely did anybody know who the Health Promotion Officer was in their area. Most tenants did not know what the job description of a HPO was and/or that the position existed.

**Accessibility Coordinator:**

As well, this position was not widely understood and rarely did anybody know this position existed. Most tenants did not know the process on how to make their apartments and/or buildings more accessible.

***“We have zero social capital, no friends, no connections, [and] zero access to the press unless we are allowed to access them.” SEED Focus Group, August 2009***

### **PART 3: Specific Safety Themes of People with Disabilities Living in the City of Toronto**

Below are listed the main safety concerns from people with disabilities living in the City of Toronto that were heard throughout our experience with focus groups. Although there were many concerns overall that applied to this group, the following discussion represents an overview of issues that should be looked into closely.

#### **A) Traffic safety**

Traffic safety was a major concern that we heard throughout our focus group experience with people with disabilities. They were concerned about being involved in accidents in fast-flowing traffic, traffic light switches and hybrid vehicles with no sound.

#### **Crossings:**

These were a major concern for persons with disabilities. They felt that the time allowed for them to cross the street was not realistic based on their disabilities.

#### **Speed:**

Passing cars were an issue that we had heard a lot of in our focus groups with city residents. Speed was seen as a safety issue due to the nature of the disabilities of some participants. They felt that

there should be a traffic calming program around housing that is designated for persons with disabilities.

### **Vehicles:**

An important factor for people with visual impairments is that they are able to navigate by sound as they can hear oncoming traffic and can detect when to cross at a stop by the orientation to the sound of vehicles. Vehicles that make no sound, such as hybrid cars, work against this principle and therefore cause a major safety issue.

## **B) Access to Programs**

Accessing programs that will help regain a livelihood for persons with disabilities was seen as extremely hard to do. The majority of people we ran focus groups with were recipients of the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).

### **Income Support Programs:**

Income support programs and their benefits need to be more transparent. There were people with disabilities who had little to no idea about income support programs and the additional drug, dental and other benefits for ODSP and Ontario Works (OW) recipients. Some were not sure how to apply or how to check their application and eligibility status. Not knowing this information put people with disabilities in situations where their income security became a serious issue.

## **Employment:**

Employment needs to become more accessible to people on ODSP. The lack of accessibility acts as a barrier to the overall involvement of people with disabilities who are recipients of ODSP. The fears that people with disabilities have because of the rules about what is or isn't considered income and confusion over the rules, makes people afraid to receive a gift card or a \$20.00 honorarium for fear of having their benefits revoked completely.

People with disabilities do not feel empowered to become employed under this system. The general feeling was that people with disabilities should be able to earn more income while on ODSP without severe penalties.

## **Community Programs:**

Community programs need to be in place that are not focal points for pity. We heard from people with disabilities that there is a need for more community programs where people can come together and learn how to be positive and proactive equal citizens, neighbours, and/or community members.

## **C) Disability Awareness Education**

One of the biggest concerns by focus group participants was not enough disability awareness education for politicians as well as police, TTC, City staff, etc. This is a very serious issue because as long as there is lack of understanding of people with disabilities there will always be room for mistakes that could jeopardize the safety of people with disabilities. People with disabilities expressed their frustration at

being seen as having a medical condition first instead of being a member of a community.

### **Politicians:**

City Councilors, Members of Provincial Parliament, and Members of Parliament need to be available to persons with disabilities. There was confusion about who represented what branch of government and how to access appropriate elected officials in case of complaints. Information about political representatives should be made clear to people with disabilities so that they can have access to the political process on an equal level to everybody else.

### **Police:**

People with disabilities felt as though there was little to no knowledge of disability issues within the police service. The focus group participants told us that there was a disconnection between the concerns of people with disabilities and the actions of police officers in their communities. This is what leads people with disabilities to feel nervous and anxious about calling the police.

### **TTC:**

TTC Operators need the same sort of education because we heard stories of people being left on street corners by regular service TTC drivers who did not want to take the time to lower the ramps and tie down wheelchairs. It was felt that people with disabilities were disrespected as a whole by TTC operators who did not know about disability and accessibility issues.

***“It is really hard to build community in a community where people are so marginalized.” SEED Focus Group, May 2009***

## **PART 4: Common Safety Themes from People with Disabilities Living in the City of Toronto and/or TCHC**

### **Common Physical Issues**

The following is a discussion of the similarities that people with disabilities experience from the perspective of living in the city and/or TCHC in general. These shared experiences fuel the feelings of frustration and anxiety among all focus group participants with disabilities regarding safety in Toronto.

#### **A) Safety and Transportation**

There were many concerns about physical issues. When we are talking about physical issues we mean things like ramps, buildings, public transportation (TTC) and/or personal safety.

Transportation was of great concern wherever we interviewed people with disabilities. Here are five examples from people with different types of disabilities:

*“I worry over narrow platforms such as Davisville but my biggest concern is over the ability to have a safe place [to sit] once on the subway for someone with a wheelchair and then consideration for a walker, canes and general stability.” SEED Focus Group, August 2009*

*“TTC [is] where you get pushed and shoved and there is no room to stand. I rarely use TTC... but when I do I have found that the physical environment isolates you and leads to unsafe situations”* SEED Focus Group, July 2009

*“When I go out on regular transit some of the drivers will not put down the ramp and sometimes there are issues with snow not being removed so I can’t get through and risk falling”* SEED Focus Group, August 2009

*“I spoke to a TTC person and he was asking me questions and I told him the same thing. Here is the main problem! The [subway to platform] gaps are too large. His answer ‘Oh, well nothing we can do.’”* SEED Focus Group, October 2009

*“Some TTC stations have elevators but not enough [of them] and ramps.”* SEED Focus Group, October 2009

*“I got stuck in the [subway] door. They have these spots for wheelchairs [in the subway] but doors open and close [too fast that] there is no time to get out.”* SEED Focus Group, October 2009

*“Subways, I think need to have mandated a little more time at subway stations when the doors open... [as well] I find it difficult to get on because of being in a wheelchair and the gap between the subway and the subway platform is dangerous. No room to jump the gap.”* SEED Focus Group, June 2009

Wheel-Trans is what connects people with disabilities to the City. In some cases it is the only mode of transportation that people with disabilities rely upon. People with disabilities explained to us their frustrations with the Wheel-Trans system in general. They felt as if they were not being treated like everybody else simply because of the amount of travel and organization needed to fulfill chores, visit family or complete any other task requiring travel.

Concerns about Wheel-Trans were mostly based upon the call system that is used to book rides. The booking system requires one day advanced scheduling of rides and there is often a 30-minute window when pick ups and drop offs will occur. For example, if a call is made for a Wheel-Trans bus at 12:00a.m. the pick up may be between a 12:00a.m. and 12:30a.m. If there is a specific time given, let's say 12:30a.m., a person with a disability has to wait 30 minutes before they can report it as late; in this scenario that would mean 1:00a.m. The person with a disability can be waiting for a ride in unsafe areas during this time.

In addition, there is no way that a person with a disability who relies upon Wheel-Trans can make spontaneous decisions about going out because of the one-day advanced booking system.

The following illustrates some of these frustrations:

*“[There are] Woman with disabilities taking Wheel-Trans at night and being left waiting for rides and outside of closed buildings often in poorly lit areas.”* SEED Focus Group, August 2009

*“ [We have]transit concerns due to Wheel-Trans leaving people in unsafe places and in unsafe conditions and arriving far too early or too late leaving people alone. We are a forgotten population sort of like we are a lesser population”. SEED Focus Group, July 2009*

*“You have to plan your life and errands around how long it is going to take you to get from point A and point B as public transit isn’t always reliable especially so with Wheel-Trans since you have to plan your life in advance and ultimately according to their schedule so it is difficult to impossible to be spontaneous.” SEED Focus Group, August 2009*

*“We need to have better transportation. People need to stand up. People need to speak up for what they need.” SEED Focus Group, August 2010*

The ability to take part in everyday living becomes really difficult for someone who has to plan and book rides well in advance. People with disabilities are frustrated because they have as much desire to be part of their communities as able-bodied people. The idea of Wheel-Trans being an alternate but equal transportation for people with disabilities is inaccurate. They still feel that they are being treated separately and unequally because Wheel-Trans does not work towards promoting full participation and inclusion for people with disabilities.

## **B) Safety and Infrastructure**

The infrastructure of the City was a very large component of the focus group discussions. When we asked group participants to tell us what things made them feel unsafe, a discussion about roads, sidewalks, stairs, unplowed accessible routes during winter-time and building maintenance were the first things that came up. All had several complaints about safety that related to these issues.

*“They fixed up the sidewalks that didn’t need it and now there is a drop in the sidewalk. The sidewalk is not quite filled in all the way and I couldn’t really feel the sod. I could not really tell this with the tip of my cane. I didn’t see or feel the drop off with my cane because you can’t tell where you are. I could not tell where I was. Construction can be a safety issue for everyone but particularly for cane users, guide dogs usually go around the obstacle but with a cane you don’t have this option. People with disabilities should be able to get Wheel-Trans as long as construction is in your area. That might take away some of the frustration until it’s gone.”* SEED Focus Group, September 2009

*“Bus stops are blocked. When you travel in construction you are taking your life in your hands. At night construction workers have gone home [and] man holes might not be covered and construction workers are gone. I fractured my fingers because I fell in a hole that was not covered”* SEED Focus Group, September 2009

*“Disabled people trip and hurt themselves. We do not have a proper walkway for disabled people. We want to travel but can’t*

*easily because of erosion. People are always tripping on cracks and it doesn't look safe or feel safe. I am the one that has to watch people fall. [Safety is] the freedom to walk or the freedom to go where you want to go without obstructions". SEED Focus Group, April 2010*

Infrastructure relates to safety because of the injuries that may result if a trip, fall or other accident happens, but it also relates to an overall sense of safety in a community for people with disabilities. In neighborhoods where construction takes place, features that may have been accessible before are temporarily unusable. The recent construction that occurred along Ronesvalles Avenue is a perfect example of this. After the removal of the sidewalks, wooden planks were used to bridge gaps between the street level and local shops. This causes safety concerns for individuals with disabilities that make it impossible to travel on uneven ground. After viewing the above examples, you can see how construction is a real safety issue for persons with disabilities.

Many focus group participants were 'fed up' with wait times for things to be fixed and accountability. When anything was brought up about repair times, focus group participants told us that there was little to no indication as to whose job it was to fix anything. The following represents responses from people with different disabilities.

*"There is too much red tape before anything gets done. In my opinion it should not take two years for repairs to be made because of red tape. A repair request is submitted, then it goes to Bob, Terry, Mary, then it goes missing because when I ask Mary,*

*[she says] I have not gotten anything. It reaches nowhere fast. I can drive it to where it needs to go and [nothing] happens!"*

SEED Focus Group, May 2010

*"Nobody is feeling safe because building staff do not work on fixing the issues."* SEED Focus Group, April 2010

*"[In terms of repairs,] I have lived in this building 2 years and they do nothing. Some people cannot speak and they have gotten stuck in the elevators. The elevators are 100 years old."* SEED

Focus Group, May 2010

Access to information was a very important aspect of the focus groups we ran. When talking about infrastructure, repairs or general information about construction, we heard from a number of different people with disabilities that information was not accessible to them. There were quite a few people with lower literacy skills who would have trouble reading a technical letter. For people who are blind or visually impaired, construction signs, 12 point font letters and/or print materials are not accessible. There were also a number of people who could not physically access information inside closed envelopes and would need the assistance of an attendant in order to do so. For those individuals who have limited communication ability, information could be missed by an attendant without proper communication training.

### **C) Safety, Security and Surroundings**

Physical space was another subject that came up in our focus groups. When we say physical space we are talking about how an area such as

a park, a lobby of a building or a particular neighborhood can have an impact on safety. In some cases people felt as though they were in situations and areas that were beyond their control either because of the environment of their neighborhood or because of the physical layout of their building. We often heard about mistrust, anxiety and feeling unsafe in the communities that people with disabilities live in. The following responses are from people with different types of disabilities.

*“[People with disabilities are] isolated and stigmatized in their community. [They are afraid of] the drug dealing and drug dealers coming onto their property and soliciting. There is a police presence but it is adversarial and they have very few social supports and are very mistrusting of agencies and they don’t have any green space. Children are out on the concrete they don’t have a gathering place and green space and some kind of agency contact that they can trust.”* SEED Focus Group, August 2009

*“[She] can’t afford to live in her area so she doesn’t feel financially secure. So she doesn’t feel safe. [She] has lived in government housing all her life and doesn’t want to live there. So she lives in the private rental market but financially she is insecure.”* SEED Focus Group, August 2009

*“The building is open to anyone [and] people can come and go as they like. [There] is no security at night. People have been robbed... People let anyone in. They tap on the door and they just let them in.”* SEED Focus Group, April 2010

*“I have concerns over handling money in public... I feel like there is a real target due to my visible disability and pulling out my wallet... Things do happen and you are a target when you are just sitting somewhere alone in a wheelchair.”* SEED Focus Group, August 2009

*“My building has 240 units in it. My building is a high traffic area [and I] don’t know who is around. I feel people are listening in from the hall way to my conversation. [It] might be my schizophrenia but my walls are not that sound proof. I should be able to talk in my own home”* SEED Focus Group, May 2010

In both TCHC and city-wide focus groups, there was frustration about not being heard with regards to the vulnerability and anxiety that people with disabilities experience in housing situations. This anxiety and sense of vulnerability was in every focus group.

One major sentiment was that people with disabilities felt anxious around people they did not know if they seemed threatening. For example, if someone entered the building that tenants did not know, they felt as though the person could be there dealing drugs or performing other illegal activities. The person might be a relative of another tenant but the fact that they are unknown can cause stress in people who do not know what the circumstances are. This fear was linked to the general security of the building and the feeling was that security needs to be improved to stop unknown persons from entering the premises.

While at a TCHC meeting about a recent attack on the premises, security suggested that when they are called they often do not come to the residence of the complainant. Although security might be looking after the physical building, tenants who are vulnerable and/or have disabilities feel fearful and apprehensive because they do not see the security staff. Living in an environment where unwanted, unknown or suspicious looking people are allowed to enter the building at random adds pressure and anxiety, especially when there is no sign of security.

*“I would like to see somebody around at night. Our [building] is like a graveyard. There is nobody around if you feel safe enough to leave your apartment. I don’t like to name names, because they’ll come back at you.”* SEED Focus Group, May 2010

*“We don’t know we have security and we don’t know who to contact or what their names are. We know the TSC and the super but I don’t even think they know the names of all these other people – the HPO or the manager who knows? I’d contact them if I knew who they were or how to contact them.”* SEED Focus Group, May 2010

*“TCHC has a security consulting person for our unit and I didn’t understand their role or their position ... from the perspective of the safety of the community or the business owners or for the policemen.”* SEED Focus Group, April 2010

*“I call security no one comes I just wait, wait and wait.”* SEED Focus Group, April 2010

In this case there is a large gap between calling security to deal with a situation that may compromise safety and then actually being put at ease by knowing that something is being done by someone. In all the focus groups that we ran, we did not hear one positive report that security was actually good or effective within TCHC housing. The assumption is that if a security service tells someone that they are looking after a situation in a resident's building, the resident will be put at ease. However, this is not the case when the tenant does not actually see the security.

It is difficult for anyone to raise their voice when they feel disenfranchised from being part of the community and when everyone has experienced the difficulty of creating long-lasting positive relationships with public housing staff.

*"I won't let my family come visit me in my community because it is not safe."* SEED Focus Group, May 2009

*"I used to go out at night periodically but now I open my door and smell [drugs] and if I smell anything or hear anything, I lock the door and don't go out."* SEED Focus Group, May 2010

*"Most of the time you feel unsafe about the people you live with. You are so scared of the population that lives in the TCHC."*  
SEED Focus Group, May 2009

People with disabilities in housing are marginalized in many ways. The above quotes speak about an individual who feels the risk of bringing their family into their neighbourhood for a visit outweighs the positive

benefit of having family close by. When people with disabilities feel that they cannot trust their own neighbourhood, the chances of any one of them getting together to create real change is low. When they are systematically oppressed over many years and have never had the ability to make real life decisions for themselves, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to break out of this cycle.

## **Common Social Issues**

### **a) Safety and Identifying as a Woman with a Disability**

Being a woman with a disability doubles the stigma of disability. Women are living in a society where decisions about housing and policies are not only made by able-bodied people, but the majority are made by men. This simple aspect of oppression replayed itself within the focus groups we ran.

*“There are multiple issues and multiple barriers being a female feeling vulnerable and add to that being a woman with disability”*

SEED Focus Group, August 2009

*“It isn't fair for women to need to feel more fear for their safety issues it is a gender thing – women are more vulnerable than men.”*

SEED Focus Group, May 2010

People felt that living in an area like Gerard and Dundas and being a woman with a disability is different from living at Rosedale and Yonge and identifying the same way.

*“Where I live at Gerard and Dundas and I go to the store it is dangerous you can get robbed by guys with guns – down here we are easy to prey upon, both of us we are women, we are small and we are easy to prey on –we need more security!”* SEED Focus Group, September 2009

Being a transgendered person with a disability living in the vicinity of Parliament and Dundas will bring multiple oppressions as well.

*“My neighbours are ignorant because I am transgendered. Police make us feel uncomfortable just as the dealers do. The police threatened to beat me up if I didn’t tell them what was going on and they threatened to beat me up if I didn’t tell them who the drug dealers are.”* SEED Focus Group, August 2009

Some women spoke to us about having a triple stigma. For example while talking with participants of a women only support network they told us that in their neighbourhood, there is very little opportunity to find a job because of their disabilities and in some cases, because of their criminal records.

*“Please give me a job instead of how to write a resume 3 different ways.... [There are] not a lot of places that want to trust me because of the record. [There is] discrimination because of age and discrimination because of my criminal record.”* SEED Focus Group September 2009

Being a woman with a disability with a criminal record would make it practically impossible to find employment and live independently.

In one of the focus groups, a woman who had recently become disabled by vision loss became agitated and asked us *“How can you assure me that I will get home safely?”* The reason why she had become agitated was because we were discussing issues that dug deep into how people with disabilities identify safety issues in communities across Toronto. She was experiencing the same lack of resources and the same societal discrimination that anyone with a disability experiences. The difference was that she was experiencing this from the perspective of a person with a fairly new disability.

The issue of gender and disability is important because there is little to no analysis in publications of how gender and disability affects safety within Toronto. These are just brief insights into the lives of the women with disabilities who we had the privilege of doing focus groups with.

## **b) Common views about police**

The impression of the police from the participants was not positive. The general feeling was that the police could not be trusted and that the police did not add to a feeling of safety in the community.

*“You can’t feel safe when the police are always visible and needing to be there.”* SEED Focus Group, August 2009

*“They [people with disabilities] are isolated and stigmatized in their community and are stigmatized and isolated and dealing with dealers coming onto their property and soliciting. There is a*

*police presence but it is adversarial.” SEED Focus Group, August 2009*

*“Police won’t take you seriously; I was walking down the street and passing by a parking lot and a car drove over my cane. [The driver] wasn’t going to give me any compensation. The police argued ‘well, you’re blind how do you know that it was that car?’ But he [the officer] would not take me seriously. The driver could have gone over my foot and you can’t hear that stupid quiet car’s sound bouncing off the other cars.” SEED Focus Group, September 2009*

*“Police don’t take you seriously because you have a disability – they ask you if you are taking your medication instead of taking the problem seriously.” SEED Focus Group, July 2010*

*“I hear so many gunshots in my area so I wonder why the neighbors don’t call the police. Nobody wants to get in trouble. The community is afraid that this information will get leaked and we don’t feel confident that we are protected – we feel unprotected” SEED Focus Group, September 2009*

*“I have a balance problem so before I ended up in my wheelchair I often got stopped by the police thinking I was drunk, so given my experience I would not go to the police.” SEED Focus Group, September 2009*

Although apprehensions about police were presented in both TCHC and City focus groups, the police were also seen as a necessity for

preventing further crime. The participants often felt as though more police were needed to protect them but they did not like the feeling that they were being judged by their disabilities. As you can see by reading the previous quotes these participants did not feel protected and in other cases they felt as if their disabilities were misconstrued.

These feelings of apprehension with police and judgment by them varied depending on the neighbourhood. For example, when we were conducting focus groups in the Steeles and Dufferin area, the sentiment was that the misunderstanding of disability from police was somehow linked to the type of person and the area. The geography of the city can have a huge difference in how a person with a disability is seen.

*“I was walking along with my usual limp and I got pulled over. The police asked me how I was doing and where I was going. I told them that I was at a friend’s house and that I was going home. This has never happened to me before but because I was in a neighborhood that is seen as sketchy, the cops thought that I was high or something.”* SEED Focus Group, July 2009.

*“One of the things I hate about living around here is you have to change who you are and how you look. You have to look aggressive so that people won’t approach you and hurt you”* SEED Focus Group, September 2009

The major concern expressed was that the police service did not have the understanding of disability issues to train officers about discrimination and disability. This affects safety for all citizens with disabilities in Toronto. If people with disabilities are apprehensive about

approaching police, they won't feel comfortable going to them when their safety is in question.

There were many cases where people with disabilities did not trust any authority figure in general, because they were afraid of getting hurt or afraid of retribution.

### **c) Fear of Retribution**

The fear of retribution was present in every focus group. People would tell us that they were afraid to make a complaint to TCHC personnel, security or police because their confidentiality would or had been breached. They were afraid of getting hurt by the person they complained about.

As well, there was a fear that if a tenant made any complaints they would get on the bad side of TCHC personnel, security or police and they would either be put on a 'black list' or evicted for complaining too much.

*"TCHC is ineffective and don't protect you from retribution."* SEED Focus Group, April 2010

*"[An ideal environment is] when you can express any kind of sentiment to your worker and not have to worry about any kind of retaliation or abuse – be it physical or emotional."* SEED Focus Group, June 2009

*“I don’t point out apartments because [I am] really scared for my safety.”* SEED Focus Group, May 2009

As one of the participants put it, it is “*a much bigger problem for people to understand why it is a problem.*” People on the outside of these situations think that it is “make believe” that people are being abused. The result is a misunderstanding in the public at large, such that people with disabilities should be thankful for the treatment they get and if they just tried harder they could be just like their able-bodied peers.

#### **d) Race, Religion, and Disability**

*“Your cultural background can have a lot to do with how you feel about safety.”* SEED Focus Group, August 2009

Discrimination on the basis of race and/or religion is always in places where there is little to no education to counteract it. Racism happens when there is no communication between groups. Seeing someone with a head scarf does not give anyone the right to make comments on who “they” are as people. When ideas of how people act because of the way they are or the way they look takeover from common sense, it is a sign that people are really just afraid of difference.

It is important to point out that there was fear and apprehension about TCHC tenants with disabilities based on their race and/or religion.

*“If I had a choice, I wouldn’t live in a ghetto. Racism, stigmas, in other words, if you get disability, the stigma, it’s a big stigma; it’s like you’re not there. Whatever it is, the stigma is so great. If*

*you're not white the discrimination is worse."* SEED Focus Group, April 2010

While talking about what a safe community looks like, one City focus group participant had this to say:

*"[A safe community is] a place where a person can play and also pray and develop and live their life in peace without being harassed by police and [It is] where as a person of colour, he knows he won't be stigmatized or stereotyped, where they can come together as a community."* SEED Focus Group, August 2009

Race, religion and disability are very important factors in how people with disabilities were viewed living in public housing. Focus group participants experienced some form of discrimination every time they left their apartments and in their neighborhoods. It is very similar to the experiences of being a woman with a disability in different areas or neighborhoods, at different times of the day.

Whether it is a fear of being assaulted or a simple fear of other people, these represent real concerns that are not addressed. As we suggested before, the idea of people not reporting about concerns does not make sense. People with disabilities must have the same right as any able-bodied person, to air their grievances in an atmosphere that does not promote discrimination, fear of retribution or further abuse. There is a major disconnect between the concerns of people with disabilities and the mechanisms that are in place to deal with these issues in a respectful manner.

## e) Emotion and Poverty

*“You can’t feel safe when you are not being taken seriously. Fear can do horrendous things to your psyche.”* SEED Focus Group, September 2009

Emotion and poverty played a large part in the responses we received. We felt it was important to mention this because rarely, if ever, has there been a report created about persons with disabilities that includes the emotional aspects of trying to live under the poverty line and under constant stress. It is only natural to feel emotional about uncertainty. It is natural to feel like there are no options for someone who is impoverished but also wants to see their community change for the better.

For example, there were a lot of people who felt that they were too poor (powerless) for anyone to notice their safety complaints. They felt that having money was a means to being heard. They also felt as though trying to make positive change in their communities was just too emotionally draining. While discussing poverty, one of our interviewees said:

*“There is no romance without finance.”* SEED Focus Group, August 2009

It was his feeling that there is little possibility for any forward movement without money to back you up. In terms of emotion, people’s sense of personal safety can be broken by living under what they feel are strict and unwanted rules and policies. While talking about fear in general,

one interviewee told us about her friend who had an experience with fear:

*“She doesn’t feel safe in launching a complaint in some of these organizations where she has had issues and fears of retaliation.”*  
SEED Focus Group, July 2009.

While talking about emotion and poverty on Sherbourne one interviewee told us how she felt about her neighborhood due to drug dealers in the building.

*“I feel more safer on the streets than in my apartment.”* SEED  
Focus Group, August 2009

Responding to a discussion about how safe people feel in their apartments one person with a disability responded as such:

*“[There was a] gentleman on the 13th floor, [who was] a double amputee, murdered, I don’t know what happened and they never found out who did it – They found him in his apartment with signs of trauma and now I get worried”* SEED Focus Group, September 2009

These are just a few examples of the way that people with disabilities feel disconnected, apprehensive and fearful of their neighborhoods. The reason for using these examples, is to show that people with disabilities do experience negative emotional impacts from living in housing that is located close to where drug trafficking happens and/or in an area that is unknown to them where they constantly feel unsafe. To better

understand why a person with a disability would not call police or security about a drug dealer living beside them, is to know that they are afraid and vulnerable due to disability, poverty and social isolation. Being afraid and being poor have definite impacts on what type of decisions you make and how much empowerment you feel.

## **PART 5: SEED Community Event and Skills Development Workshops**

From all the specific and common safety themes from the focus groups, the SEED Project created 14 community event and skills development workshops. The workshops were held at various City of Toronto locations as well as TCHC Buildings with an overall total of 352 people who attended them. See **Appendix D** for a detailed list of workshops and facilitators.

This section will give a brief explanation of each SEED community event and skills development workshop. The basic purpose of every workshop was to develop group advocacy and media skills of people with disabilities that attended our SEED focus groups which included TCHC tenants with disabilities and/or people with disabilities from the City of Toronto.

In general, the workshops had two parts. The first part gave people the strategies, tools, and resources and the second part of the workshop people practiced those strategies, tools, and resources in small groups. The small groups would pick a SEED Theme and then develop their skills on particular group advocacy or media skill tool/strategy. See **Appendix E** for the developed advocacy and/or media tools by small groups. (Note: some of the tools were edited for corrections)

For all of our community events and skills development workshops, we used Participatory Action Research methodology. Therefore, our main SEED Steering Committee members and/or SEED TCHC Steering Committee members acted as event moderators, speakers, break-out group facilitators, registration and information recorders.

1. **St. James Town SEED Walk:** On Sunday, May 2, 2010, SEED hosted a Jane's Walk as part of a city-wide initiative. Throughout the city, 123 Jane's Walks were led by passionate locals – with the SEED walk being the first organized and led by people with disabilities geared specifically towards the interests of people with disabilities. People explored the places they live and work, met their neighbours and shared their thoughts. The SEED walk toured the downtown Toronto area of St. James Town and had 30 participants.
2. **“It Doesn't Take Rocket Science: Finding Solutions to TTC Barriers”:** On June 17, 2010, SEED was a partner with the Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario (ERDCO), for an advocacy skills workshop. Participants with disabilities developed their skills on identifying issues and barriers to accessible transportation in Toronto. Participants then broke into small groups to practice their presentation skills to ask questions at a future TTC forum on accessibility issues. Hosted at the TCHC's Senator Croll Apartments building with 30 SEED participants.
3. **“Make Your Voice and Vote Count”:** On September 15, 2010, SEED hosted an election- related skills development workshop to discuss issues of interest to people with disabilities connected to municipal politics. Questions discussed by participants were the following: promoting the hiring of people with disabilities in paid and voluntary positions, transportation issues for people with disabilities, making Toronto a city of equal opportunity and full accessibility, and disability awareness. Participants developed their skills to pose these questions to their municipal candidates at city debates prior to

the October 25, 2010 Municipal election. Hosted at the TCHC's Senator Croll Apartments building with 34 SEED participants.

4. **“Finding Your Voice on Safety Issues in Your Community”**: On March 10, 2011, SEED hosted a skills development workshop on group advocacy. The guest speaker was John Mossa, SEED Steering Committee member. The workshop explained how working as a group can change a problem into a solution. Effective group advocacy was discussed as four steps: 1) Preparing 2) Planning 3) Acting and 4) Evaluating. Several group advocacy tools were presented. Participants broke into smaller groups and picked a SEED Theme and practiced one tool. Hosted at Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre with 17 SEED participants.
  
5. **“Finding Your Voice on Safety Issues in Your Community”**: On March 16, 2011, SEED hosted a skills development workshop on group advocacy. It was the same as the workshop above but participants practiced different advocacy tools. Hosted at the TCHC's Senator Croll Apartments building with 25 SEED participants.
  
6. **“Finding Your Voice: Telling Your Story to Media”**: On March 24, 2011, SEED hosted a skills development workshop on **you going to the media**. The guest speakers were Joe Fiorito, Toronto Star City Columnist and Mike Creek, Voices From The Street, SEED Partner. Mr. Creek explained the basics and gave tips on telling your issue to media. Mr. Fiorito explained that every story should simply be truthful and have a beginning, middle, and end and show how it relates to the common person. Participants broke into smaller

groups and picked a SEED Theme and practiced telling one story. Hosted at the Anne Johnston Health Station with 29 SEED participants.

7. **“Finding Your Voice: Working with the Media”**: On March 31, 2011 SEED hosted a skills development workshop on group advocacy and media. The guest speaker was Melissa Graham, SEED Steering Committee member. Ms. Graham gave specific tips and answered questions on how to practice telling your story as a group to the media. Hosted at CILT with 25 SEED participants.
  
8. **“Finding Your Voice: Practising Group Advocacy”**: On April 7, 2011, SEED hosted a skills development workshop on how one individual used group advocacy to resolve an access issue. The guest speaker was Donna Jodhan. Ms. Jodhan gave her personal story for advocating accessible websites from the federal government. She explained how she started out alone and got legal assistance. She also talked about how she asked others for help, her experiences with charter of rights court challenge, how she spoke with the media, and sharing her victory with people and groups that helped her. Hosted at the CNIB with 23 SEED participants.
  
9. **“Finding Your Voice: Advocacy and Income Security”**: On April 14, 2011 SEED hosted a skills development workshop on how social action groups advocated keeping the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) Special Diet Program. The guest speakers were Dana Milne, Kevin Reid, Kyle Vose and Neil Howard of the ODSP Action Coalition. The speakers presented the various steps and advocacy tools they took to keep the Special Diet Program. Hosted

at the TCHC's Senator Croll Apartments building with 31 SEED participants.

10. **“Finding Your Voice: Working with the Media”**: On April 28, 2011, SEED hosted a skills development workshop on **media coming to you**. The guest speaker was Cher Jones, Senior Coordinator Promotions and Communications, City of Toronto. Ms. Jones presented tips on how to tell your story when the media comes to ask you questions about issues. Hosted at the Northern District Branch Public Library with 25 SEED participants.
  
11. **“Finding Your Voice: Social Media & Group Advocacy”**: On May 5, 2011, SEED hosted a skills development workshop on group advocacy and social media. The guest speaker was Melissa Graham, SEED Steering Committee member. Ms. Graham presented how to use Facebook, Twitter and blogging for group advocacy. Hosted at CILT with 21 SEED participants.
  
12. **“Finding Your Voice: Preventing Violence Through Group Advocacy”**: On May 12, 2011, SEED hosted a skills development workshop on preventing violence through group advocacy. The guest speakers were Fran Odette, Springtide Resources, David Meyers, Birchmount Bluffs Neighborhood Centre, Joan Jordan, and Beverly Smith, SEED TCHC Steering Committee members. The workshop consisted of defining violence and group advocacy, a personal story, skit exercise and group discussions around community engagement using positive communication. Hosted at the TCHC's Senator Croll Apartments building with 23 SEED participants.

13. **“Finding Your Voice: Tenant Rights and Group Advocacy”:**

On May 19, 2011 SEED hosted a skills development workshop on Tenant Rights and Group Advocacy. The guest speakers were Yutaka Dirks, Advocacy and Outreach Coordinator, Advocacy Center for Tenants, Ontario (ACTO) and Harry Cho, Lawyer (ACTO). The workshop gave an overview of tenant’s rights and how to bring people together to advocate for change. Hosted at the TCHC’s Broadview Manor Apartments building with 21 SEED participants.

14. **“Finding Your Voice: Emergency Preparedness Through**

**Group Advocacy”:** On May 26, 2011 SEED hosted a skills development workshop on Emergency Preparedness Through Group Advocacy. The guest speaker was Maxine Marz, Diversity Outreach Liaison Officer, Emergency Management Ontario. The workshop focus was on how to advocate as a group for emergency preparedness and community safety. Hosted at the TCHC’s Senator Croll Apartments building with 18 SEED participants.

For more information on the tools and resources that were handed out at the skills development workshops, please see **Appendix F** Group Advocacy Tools, **Appendix G** Media tools, and **Appendix H** Resources.

## **PART 6: SEED Action Plan Recommendations and Conclusion**

### **SEED Action Plan Recommendations**

As a result of conducting these focus groups, community events, and skills development workshops, the following recommendations are meant to address the gaps or concerns that were identified in this process by people with disabilities living in Toronto.

#### **A) TCHC**

##### **Accessible Formats for Information**

1. All information should be provided in accessible/alternative formats including flyers, information pamphlets, policies, fact sheets, and/or other resource materials. Efforts should be made to ensure that those who cannot see or read are fully informed of this information.
2. Special attention, related to the above, must be made to ensure that all fire safety and evacuation plans are understood and that all gaps between these policies be addressed.
3. All public documents should be accessible and updated on a regular basis to ensure that everyone knows the staff roles and names of who is responsible for what.

##### **Security and Safety**

4. When security is called to deal with an issue within a TCHC building and/or community, they should make every effort to contact the person who filed the original complaint to ensure that the tenant knows that their concern is addressed and that security personnel are in fact, on site.
5. There needs to be onsite 24/7 security staff in TCHC buildings and/or communities especially from the hours of 5pm to 8am.

6. Disability awareness training should be provided on an on-going basis to TCHC security staff to improve their understanding and communication with people with disabilities.

## **Repairs**

7. Repairs should be done in a timely manner.
8. TCHC should hold regular information sessions for tenants to know their rights with regards to repairs, procedures to apply for repairs and complaints process about repairs not being done.

## **Maintenance and Snow Removal**

9. Buildings should be clean of garbage and dirt in front entrances, hallways, elevators, and outside of building is clear of obstacles and garbage.
10. Snow and ice should be removed from all entrances of buildings according to City of Toronto policies.

## **Accountability and Transparency**

11. All TCHC staff should receive training which addresses a disability positive perspective, including tenant rights.
12. All TCHC staff should receive training which includes problem solving with tenants as equal players in the public housing system.
13. TCHC should hold regular information sessions with tenants to ensure that all current procedures, policies, and practices are understood.

## **Community Building Programs**

14. TCHC should invest in programs that build a sense of community in each of their apartment buildings. Tenants would decide what community building program would work best for them and be in charge of running it. The program would be inclusive for all and especially for tenants with disabilities.

## **B) The City of Toronto**

### **Traffic Safety**

15. The City should provide an accessible 24/7 hotline to deal with concerns that people with disabilities have with regard to safety in traffic and at crosswalks.
16. The City should adjust the timing of traffic controls to recognize that people with disabilities and seniors are also part of the community and may move a little slower.
17. The City should make it illegal to make a right turn on a green light.
18. The City should make broader use of advance green lights so that pedestrians and automobiles have their own signals.
19. The City should put audible signals on all streets for people who are blind or with visual impairments.
20. The City should increase ticketing of individuals who ride their bicycles on the sidewalk.
21. The City should conduct a comprehensive review and consultation with people with disabilities to ensure that traffic safety issues are addressed.
22. The City should explore the possibility of ensuring all vehicles have audible noises when running to increase the safety for people who are blind or with visual impairments.

### **Construction Safety**

23. The City should provide an accessible 24/7 construction hotline regarding sidewalks and roads. This hotline would increase safety for all citizens of Toronto especially for people who are blind or with visual or mobility impairments.

## **Access to Programs**

24. The City should raise awareness of programs that are available to residents.
25. The City should provide all information in accessible/alternative formats including flyers, information pamphlets, policies, fact sheets, and/or other resource materials. Efforts should be made to ensure that those who cannot see or read are fully informed of this information.
26. The City should ensure all City program staff are trained to be disability positive.
27. The City should conduct a disability-related barriers review of all City programs.
28. The City should conduct a comprehensive review and consultation with people with disabilities to ensure that issues of barriers can be addressed.
29. The City should work with the Province of Ontario to eliminate barriers to employment for ODSP and Ontario Works recipients.

## **Education of Professionals**

30. The City should provide disability awareness training to all first responders including Police, Fire, Ambulance, and all City staff so they can understand and communicate with people with disabilities including a recognition of the dignity and worth of people with disabilities,
31. The City should provide this training with the emphasis that all people with disabilities be approached from an assumption of competence rather than incompetence.

32. The City should provide this training to other professional bodies as social workers, occupational therapists, etc.

## **Civic Engagement and Outreach Safety Awareness Programs**

33. The City should provide civic engagement programs for people with disabilities. Similar to the SEED group advocacy and media skills development workshops, programs should engage and educate people with disabilities to make real change, for example, how City services, the political process, and complaints process work.

34. The City should provide a Safety Ambassador Project by people with disabilities. The Safety Ambassador Project would engage people with disabilities to create awareness around safety issues with the public, with businesses and with municipal services in the City of Toronto and TCHC. (See **Appendix I** for an outline for the Safety Ambassador Project Proposal.)

## **Conclusion**

CILT, its community partners, TCHC tenants with disabilities, TCHC and the City of Toronto have a responsibility to keep the issues of people with disabilities at the forefront of decision making, affecting policy, and ultimately safety. Most importantly, we have a responsibility to ourselves to make sure that the safety of our community members does not fall by the wayside. We represent the largest minority in the world with the narrowest route to make ourselves heard.

From the 304 voices we heard from the 33 focus groups, the lack of safety is a huge barrier to the full inclusion of people with disabilities. It is a brick wall in the path to full enjoyment of one's life.

It is the responsibility of everyone who reads this report to bring these issues to the forefront of social awareness. It is also the responsibility of those who took part in this process to use what they have learned to gain their own voice and become a vehicle for change.

We would like to thank those courageous people with disabilities who opened up to us and let their hearts pour out. This Project would not have had any success without the connections that were made in our community, by our community.

Safety is not just an issue for those who can voice their own issues; safety is an issue for everybody. We hope that this report informs and motivates you to take action for a safer City for all!

## **APPENDIX A: SEED Focus Group Questions**

- 1) What does a safe community look like to you?**
- 2) What do you think some of the reasons are that you or your friends might feel unsafe?**
- 3) Who would you go to, to talk about this?**
- 4) How can your community be made safer? What are some of the changes you'd like to see?**
- 5) General Discussion**

### **SEED TCHC Focus Group Questions:**

- 1) What does a safe TCHC community look/feel like to you?**
- 2) What do you think some of the reasons are that you and/or your friends might feel unsafe?**
- 3a) Who would you go to within TCHC to talk to about these issues?**
- 3b) Who would you go to from the community to talk to about these issues?**
- 4a) How can your immediate TCHC community be made safer?**
- 4b) How can your community at large be made safer?**
- 5) General discussion:  
What are some of the changes you'd like to see?**

## **APPENDIX B: Complete List of SEED Focus Groups**

### **CITY SEED Focus Groups:**

1) Tuesday, June 16, 2009: - Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre:	8 Participants
2) Thursday, June 18, 2009 - Centre for Independent Living in Toronto:	6 Participants
3) Thursday, July 23, 2009 - Anne Johnston Health Station:	15 Participants
4) Thursday, July 30, 2009 - Across Boundaries Focus Group:	15 Participants
5) Wednesday, August 12, 2009 - Canadian Paraplegic Association:	6 Participants
6) Thursday, August 13, 2009 - Centre for Independent Living in Toronto:	6 Participants
7) Wednesday, August 19, 2009 - Voices From The Street (@ CILT):	7 Participants
8) Thursday, August 20, 2009 - 416 Community Support For Women:	8 Participants
9) Wednesday, August 26, 2009 - Workplace Essential Skills Partnership:	15 Participants
10) Friday, August 28, 2009 - ODSP Action Coalition:	6 Participants
11) Tuesday, September 15, 2009 - The Native Canadian Centre:	21 Participants
12) Wednesday, September 16, 2009 - CNIB:	5 Participants
13) Thursday, September 17, 2009 - Balance:	8 Participants
14) Friday, September 18, 2009 - Sherbourne Health Centre:	5 Participants
15) Wednesday, September 23, 2009 - Geneva Centre For Autism:	9 Participants
16) Friday, October 2, 2009 - CNIB:	8 Participants
17) Thursday, October 15, 2009 - Tobias House (Jarvis Location):	5 Participants
18) Wednesday, November 18, 2009 - North Yorkers For Disabled Persons:	10 Participants
19) Friday, August 27, 2010 - Neighbourhood Link Support Services:	7 Participants
<b><u>Total:</u></b>	<b><u>170 Participants</u></b>

**TCHC SEED Focus Groups:**

1) Tuesday, April 8, 2010	
- Senator David A. Croll Apartments: <u>(AAC)</u> :	14 Participants
2) Tuesday, April 13, 2010	
- Doug Saunders Apartments:	7 Participants
3) Wednesday, April 14, 2010	
- McMurrich Place:	13 Participants
4) Tuesday, April 20, 2010	
- Senator David A. Croll Apartments:	8 Participants
5) Wednesday, April 21, 2010	
- Islington Manor:	6 Participants
6) Tuesday, April 27, 2010	
- May Robinson Apartments:	7 Participants
7) Wednesday, April 28, 2010	
- May Robinson Apartments:	10 Participants
8) Tuesday, May 11, 2010	
- TCHC Corporate Head Office:	6 Participants
9) Thursday, May 13, 2010	
- Senator David A. Croll Apartments:	14 Participants
10) Wednesday, May 19, 2010	
- Broadview Manor:	13 Participants
11) Tuesday, May 25, 2010	
- TCHC Corporate Head Office:	7 Participants
12) Wednesday, May 26, 2010	
- Byng Towers:	9 Participants
13) Tuesday, June 8, 2010	
- Senator David A. Croll Apartments:	9 Participants
14) Wednesday, September 1, 2010	
- CILT: (Spanish Focus Group):	11 Participants
	<b><u>Total:</u></b>
	<b><u>134 Participants</u></b>
	<b><u>Grand Total:</u></b>
	<b><u>304 Participants</u></b>

## APPENDIX C: SEED Focus Group Demographics

### Gender:

Gender Categories	City #	TCHC Tenant #	Combined #
Females	30	69	99
Males	25	37	62
Transgendered	1	1	2
Offered No Reply	2	3	5

### Age:

Age Categories	City #	TCHC Tenant #	Combined #
15-19	0	0	0
20-24	3	0	3
25 to 64	38	74	112
65+	14	32	46
Offered No Reply	3	4	7

### Do you consider yourself part of the LGBTT Community?

LGBTT community includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and two-spirited people

Responses	City #	TCHC Tenant #	Combined #
Yes	5	14	19
No	41	74	115
Both	1	0	1
Didn't Answer	11	22	33

### Is your annual income\*:

Income Categories	City #	TCHC Tenant #	Combined #
\$0 to \$8,000	14	37	51
\$8,001 to \$16,000	14	53	67
\$16,001 to \$25,000	7	6	13
\$25,001 to \$35,000	3	0	3
\$35,001 to \$55,000	4	0	4
Over \$55,000	5	0	5
Didn't Answer	11	14	25

\*1 specified ODSP & 1 indicated a change between \$8,000-\$16,000 & \$16,000-\$25,000

**Do you have a disability\*?:**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>City #</b>	<b>TCHC Tenant #</b>	<b>Combined #</b>
<b>Indicated Yes</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>Indicated No</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Offered No Reply</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>13</b>

\*of those that responded No, 14 ticked off categories of disability (7 City/6 TCHC)

**Categories We Used\*:**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>City #</b>	<b>TCHC Tenant #</b>	<b>Combined #</b>
<b>Acquired Brain Injury</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Addictions</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Blind</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Deaf</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Deafened</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Homeless (previously)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Intellectual</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Mental Health</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Mobility</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Visible</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Invisible</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>28</b>

\*The total number here is more than 168 due to the fact that people identified themselves under more than one category of disability. These are people with multiple disabilities. An example of this is when a person who has a mobility disability also identified as a person with a mental health disability.

Under the Other category, people specified (by 1 respondent each): Arthritis; Asperger syndrome; Asthma/Bronchitis; Back & Shoulder Injuries; Back Injuries; Bad Hip/Needs to be Replaced; Bipolar Disorder; Breathing/Heart Problem; Cerebral Palsy; Cognitive Behavioral Disorder; Dialysis Patient; Emphysema/Chronic Bronchitis/COPD/Heart Disease; Epilepsy; Eyeglasses; Heart Patient; HIV; I Need a Cane to Walk; Manic Depressive; Medical; Need Walker; Obsessive Compulsive Disorder; On ODSP; One Eye Blind; Paralyzed; Partially Blind; Partially Deaf; 75% Deaf; Personal; Physical CP; Some Autism; Visible Ocular Migraine; Visual Impairment; & Diabetic (x5)(3 City/2 TCHC); High blood pressure (x2)(TCHC); Learning Disability (x4)(3 City/1 TCHC); Stroke (x 2)(City)

**Are you an Aboriginal person?:**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>City #</b>	<b>TCHC Tenant #</b>	<b>Combined #</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Didn't Answer</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>26</b>

**Race\*:** *(Racial groups are defined by race or colour only – not by country of birth, citizenship or religious affiliation)*

<b>Responses</b>	<b>City #</b>	<b>TCHC Tenant #</b>	<b>Combined #</b>
<b>Black</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>East Asian</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Latin American</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>South-East Asian</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>South Asian</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>West Asian</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>White/Caucasian</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Offered No Reply</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Multiple Visible Minority</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

\*Other specified: (by 1 respondent each): Aboriginal; African; Ashinabe; Caribbean; Celtic/Irish/French; Chinese; Christian; Sicilian; European; German; Greek; Hungarian; Jewish/Semitic; Metis; Native Indian; North American First Nations; North American Native; Polish; & Invisible (x2)City; North American Indian (x2)City; West Indian (x2)TCHC

## **APPENDIX D: Complete List of SEED Community Event and Skills Development Workshops**

- 1) St James Town SEED Jane's Walk  
Sunday, May 2, 2010 @ St. James Town  
Facilitator: Chris Lytle, SEED Steering Committee Member 30 Participants
- 2) It Doesn't Take Rocket Science: Finding Solutions to TTC Barriers  
Thursday, June 17, 2010 - @ TCHC Senator Croll Apartments  
Facilitators: ERDCO and SEED 30 Participants
- 3) Make Your Voice and Vote Count  
Wednesday, September 15, 2010 - @ TCHC Senator Croll Apartments  
Facilitators: Mike Creek, Chris Lytle, David Meyers, Beverly Smith,  
and Melanie Moore, SEED Steering Committee Members 34 Participants
- 4) Finding Your Voice on Safety Issues in Your Community  
Thursday, March 10, 2011 - @ Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre  
Facilitator: John Mossa, SEED Steering Committee Member 17 Participants
- 5) Finding Your Voice on Safety Issues in Your Community  
Wednesday, March 16, 2011 - @ TCHC Senator Croll Apartments  
Facilitator: John Mossa, SEED Steering Committee Member 25 Participants
- 6) Finding Your Voice: Telling Your Story to Media  
Thursday, March 24, 2011 - @ Anne Johnston Health Station  
Facilitators: Joe Fiorito, Toronto Star Columnist and  
Melanie Moore and Mike Creek, SEED Steering  
Committee Member s 29 Participants
- 7) Finding Your Voice: Working with the Media  
Thursday, March 31, 2011- @ CILT  
Facilitator: Melissa Graham, SEED Steering Committee Member 25 Participants
- 8) Finding Your Voice: Practising Group Advocacy  
Thursday, April 7, 2011 - @ CNIB, 1929 Bayview Ave.  
Facilitator: Donna Jodhan, Accessibility Business Consultant and  
Melanie Moore, SEED Steering Committee Member 23 Participants
- 9) Finding Your Voice: Advocacy and Income Security  
Thursday, April 14, 2011 - @ TCHC Senator Croll Apartments  
Facilitators: Dana Milne, Kevin Reid, Kyle Vose and  
Neil Howard of the ODSP Action Coalition and  
Melanie Moore, SEED Steering Committee Member 31 Participants

- 10) Finding Your Voice: Working with the Media  
 Thursday, April 28, 2011 - @ Northern District Branch Public Library  
 Facilitator: Cher Jones, Senior Coordinator,  
 Promotions and Communications, City of Toronto 25 Participants
- 11) Finding Your Voice: Social Media & Group Advocacy  
 Thursday, May 5, 2011 - @ Centre for Independent Living in Toronto  
 Facilitator: Melissa Graham, SEED Steering Committee Member 21 Participants
- 12) Finding Your Voice: Preventing Violence Through Group Advocacy  
 Thursday, May 12, 2011 - @ TCHC Senator Croll Apartments  
 Facilitators: David Meyers, Fran Odette, Beverly Smith, Joan Jordan  
 and Melanie Moore, SEED Steering Committee Members 23 Participants
- 13) Finding Your Voice: Tenant Rights and Group Advocacy  
 Thursday, May 19, 2011 - @ TCHC Broadview Manor  
 Facilitators: Yutaka Dirks, Advocacy and Outreach Coordinator  
 Harry Cho, Lawyer, Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (ACTO) 21 Participants
- 14) Finding Your Voice: Emergency Preparedness Through Group Advocacy  
 Thursday, May 26, 2011 - @ TCHC Senator Croll Apartments  
 Facilitator: Maxine Marz, Diversity Outreach Liaison Officer  
 Emergency Management Ontario, MCSCS 18 Participants
- Grand Total: 352 Participants

## **APPENDIX E: SEED Skills Development Interactive Group Advocacy Tools**

Learning Advocacy Skills Workshop:  
Finding Your Voice on Safety Issues in Your Community

Thursday March 10, 2011 - Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre

### **Example: Writing a Letter**

March 10, 2011

Dear City Councillor:

We're writing to express a concern about violence and its impact on people with disabilities in our community. There are two issues of particular interest to us:

- 1) Abuse and its many forms: physical, sexual, financial, care giver abuse & bullying and harassment.
- 2) Fear of retribution and negative/hostile environments for people with disabilities

The Safe Engaged Environments Disability (SEED) Project is a community based partnership that has engaged people with disabilities to acknowledge and address safety issues that have been identified as a direct result of focus groups conducted by SEED.

To reduce the violence in the community we are in need of programs for:

- 1) Prevention, 2) Education, and 3) Support for persons who experience and/or are exposed to abuse and violence in the community

We know this issue is an important issue for you as a Councillor representing our Ward.

What specific action will you take towards offering these programs to people with disabilities in your Ward?

Thank you for your time.  
Sincerely,

The SEED Skills Development Session BBNC Letter Writing Breakout Group

cc: Mayor Rob Ford, City of Toronto, Community Liaison Officer, LoriAnn Girvan,  
Toronto Community Housing Community Health Unit Director

## **SEED Skills Development Interactive Group Advocacy Tools**

Learning Advocacy Skills Workshop:  
Finding Your Voice on Safety Issues in Your Community

Thursday March 10, 2011 - Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre

### **Example: Meet With Your Local MP**

Our group worked to plan the setting up of meetings with local Members of Parliament (MPs) throughout the Toronto area based upon the SEED project theme of Economic Issues.

Our collective approach was decided to be meeting with MPs to address the issues and impacts of economic issues and economic insecurity for people with disabilities and seek to gain support around our group's recommendation for a Guaranteed Annual Income (GAI) for all Canadians.

Our meeting was to ask for a Guaranteed Annual Income (GAI) which would provide a basic, minimum level standard to all Canadians depending on household configuration, age and other sources of income.

The goal of our meeting would be to establish a non-stigmatizing entitlement to an adequate base level of income, regardless of employment or other contributions, for all members of society.

We would meet with our local MPs as a group of concerned citizens with disabilities to propose and seek support around the GAI universal demogrant (UD) concept. This is a payment to all persons regardless of income.

Arguments we would offer for such would tie in to the SEED focus group/community based research report and would define our request of a GAI as a right of citizenship and whose purpose is to eliminate poverty.

As well, GAI would lead to more equal sharing of the economic benefits of society and as a primary means of ensuring people with disabilities are uniformly brought to a livable income standard across Canada. GAI would allow them to freely participate in and contribute to society without the economic disadvantages that lead to the safety issues we would highlight from the SEED report.

#### **Preparation & Process considerations:**

Before going into the meetings we would develop standard information kits to be shared with our whole group so all would relate the same topic messaging to MPs.

Such information would contain the following:

- Copy of the SEED Final Report with highlights on data on people with disabilities and poverty
- Copy of information of a proper definition and benefits and means of implementation for the requested Guaranteed Amount Income (GAI).
- Copy of a basic GAI amount, we suggested \$22,637 equal to the Canadian Low Income Cut Off amount annually for a single person with a disability; however this amount is only the basic starting point for our discussion and could be modified.
- The group also suggested we combine ideas and bring letters of support from other local SEED project participants and supporters backing a GAI concept and/or copies of petitions signed by local SEED project participants and supporters. These could be drafted in accordance with templates as offered in Advocacy Tools kit as received at today's session.
- Copy of other specific data on people with disabilities and poverty, unemployment and other relevant issues such as Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) by Statistics Canada.

**Statement points agreed upon:**

- GAI to be offered not as a gift but as a right which would make a big difference in helping people with disabilities and all marginalized people. **A Right for Every Canadian** concept.
- Argument to be framed re: cost of living in general with a case to be made re: impacts for people with disabilities and other marginalized groups.
- Quality of Life focus
- That we are a group of people with disabilities raising the issue on behalf of everyone impacted by poverty/marginalization.

We would identify local MPs and ask our members to set up small group meetings with them.

**At the meeting: We would frame our GAI recommendation and present supporting documents and evidence as outlined and ask the MP the following:**

1. What does he/she know about the GAI initiative?
2. What does he/she think about it?
3. Would he/she support it?
4. What would he/she like to see changed in respect to our request so that he/she would support it if not inclined to do so initially? What needs to be done to get his/her support on a GAI issue?

We would take notes of the discussion and if we received support would ask to receive copy of something stating such in writing from the MP.

We would thank the MP for speaking with us.

We would also follow up afterwards sending a thank you letter and restating key points from our discussion in writing and keep a copy.

## **SEED Skills Development Interactive Group Advocacy Tools**

Learning Advocacy Skills Workshop:  
Finding Your Voice on Safety Issues in Your Community

Wednesday, March 16, 2011 – TCHC Senator Croll Apartments

### **Example: Writing a Letter**

Addressed to Chair of TTC (find out proper contact information)

March 16, 2011

Dear Chair of TTC,

We are citizens with disabilities who are writing to express our concerns about safety issues with TTC.

There are 3 issues of particular interest and concern:

1. Failure of respectful customer service for disabled passengers combined with general lack of respectful customer service,
2. Lack of accessible TTC vehicles and stations, and
3. Lack of reduced fares for disabled passengers.

We propose the following solutions:

- Institute a customer service conduct policy whereby TTC staff would be trained to be more understanding of the issues of people with disabilities,
- Allocate funds to make the TTC totally accessible, and
- Reduced Fare/Metro Pass costs, specifically for people with disabilities.

We know these are important issues for you as Chair of TTC.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

We look forward to receiving a response from you that will address our concerns.

Sincerely,  
Concerned Citizens with Disabilities

Prior to drafting the letter to the TTC Chair, the group discussed the following items:

- Lack of accessible transportation options
- Our desire for a subway system that is totally accessible
- That funding allocated for Pan American Games could be designated to provide accessibility services that will remain available to Torontonians.

- Need TTC to enforce verbal stop announcements, code of conduct rules re customer service and staff/client interactions, safety and security enhancements to be made with additional cameras, etc.
- Put in place a code of conduct whereby TTC staff would be trained to be more sympathetic and understanding of the issues of people with disabilities.
- Expanded street routes to cover larger geographic sections of the City without need to maneuver the subway system – large interconnected accessible transit system above ground for major routes.
- Perhaps local businesses could help subsidize prior point.
- Disability pass to be issued specifically for the individual only – non-transferable with photo.
- TTC ride cost increasing but income of people with disabilities (ODSP and other) is not. Perhaps a means of providing reduced fare passes to enable people with disabilities to be able to afford to travel on the TTC more frequently.
- Perhaps a special free or reduced pass for people with disabilities as they don't use the TTC as often as people using it for travel to work, school, etc.

# SEED Skills Development Interactive Group Advocacy Tools

Learning Advocacy Skills Workshop:  
Finding Your Voice on Safety Issues in Your Community

Wednesday, March 16, 2011 – TCHC Senator Croll Apartments

## Example: Writing a Petition

### PETITION

TO The Legislative Assembly of Ontario: -

### WHEREAS

To create a Ministry responsible for all issues related to people with disabilities.

For the purpose of treating people with disabilities as “whole” individuals we ask that all relevant policies and platforms be brought under the jurisdiction of a single Ministry.

WE the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: -

- Creating an independent Ministry responsible for responding to all the needs/issues of people with disabilities in Ontario.
- Be completed within the next Legislative session.
- Have clearly stated goals and roles for addressing and accounting for the issues of people with disabilities.
- Ensure a continuity of care for people with disabilities in the Province of Ontario.
- Acknowledge and respond to the intersectionality of issues, i.e., language, culture and changing population demographics facing people with disabilities and those aging in place within the Province of Ontario.

Name (printed)	Address (printed)	Signature



# SEED Skills Development Interactive Group Advocacy Tools

Learning Media Skills Workshop:  
Finding Your Voice: Telling Your Story to Media

Thursday, March 24, 2011 – Anne Johnston Health Station

## Example: Telling Your Story to Media

### Group Discussion:

**Selected option/topic:** A real life issue of a group participant, an attendant care service provider Board decision to stop offering contracted attendant care to tenants with disabilities.

### Headline: Tenants with Disabilities to be Tossed from Their Homes

A situation that occurred within Senator Croll Apartments at 341 Bloor Street West, Toronto, an attendant care service provider Board decision forced some tenants to move into chronic care and nursing homes. Others had to scramble to make arrangements for alternate attendant care services, so they could remain living independently within their current apartments.

### **What are the main issues in this story? (Give a beginning, middle, and end)**

#### **Points to be raised- to be worked to form beginning, middle and end of story:**

- Being forced to move will result in a loss of home, loss of independence, loss of community.
- These tenants should be treated with respect.
- Request – tenants want same security of tenure as would be afforded anyone in this City/Province. Tenants want arrangements made for an alternative attendant care service provider to be found.
- Maintaining dignity and independent living should be a protected right.
- No tenant with a disability should be faced with the dilemma of losing their homes through no fault of their own.

#### **Story points:**

- The matter pertains to an on-site support/attendant care issue related to Ontario Ministry of Health funding contracts which were initiated in order to allow residents in need of attendant care accommodation to live independently in their own TCHC units at the aforementioned location.
- For these residents, their service provider informed them that they were "consolidating their operations" and said they could no longer offer full-time service to them as had previously been done to allow those affected to maintain their independence and community links.

- In association with this change of operations, residents were advised that they would have to move.
- Bellwoods housing was the suggested relocation offered to residents, some of whom moved, some stayed and were forced by the lack of provision of care circumstances to move out and others hung on and received care provided by an alternative provider – the March of Dimes who stepped in to assist those who remained.
- Notification was given to those tenants affected by this change, that alternate arrangements must be made by December 31, 2007 (need to check date).
- A date that has since passed to see some residents relocated against their personal wishes/will and others in limbo and constant worry of a forced relocation/move from their home community at a future date – or as best as is offered at present, an ability to remain in their current homes but so only with the provision of a drastic cut back to the services for which they have come to depend on in order to maintain their independence with dignity.
- Other issues expressed by those affected concerning management abuse, intimidation and harassment and lack of recourse based on a convoluted Morrison Residence Board matter which allows concerns to continue and remain unresolved.
- Another concern is the precedence that allowing this action/forced change would set.

# SEED Skills Development Interactive Group Advocacy Tools

Learning Media Skills Workshop:  
Finding Your Voice: Working with the Media

Thursday, March 31, 2011 – CILT

## Example: Telling Your Story to Media

### Group Discussion:

#### **Selected option/topic:**

A person had to stay in hospital and was unable to pay rent, and fears eviction. The people in his building realize this is a common issue and want to do something about it.

#### **What are the main issues in this story? (Give a beginning, middle, and end)**

- Person was hospitalized so probably can't deal directly with landlord.
- Person unable to pay rent (why?)

Decision made by group to focus/direct solutions on common issue of TCHC tenants who are receiving rent-geared-to income (RGI) housing subsidies and end up hospitalized and unable to pay their rent due to loss of their subsidy while hospitalized (due to missing their annual review reporting period and getting rent raised to "market rent" – a common problem issue of knowledge to many group participants. For simplicity also assume the person is a recipient of ODSP as such is also connected as common issue given scenario: Given this topic stream/revision:

- Outstanding rent means hospitalized person facing eviction and might not have a place to come home to once discharged.
- People in our group, TCHC tenants who face this problem recognize as a common issue and want to do something about it.
- Why common? – conflict between rent reporting rule/timed guidelines of legislation rules of Social Housing Reform Act (SHRA) and lack of protection for these circumstances under SHRA and Residential Tenancies Act (RTA).
- ODSP and RGI issues and how people with disabilities fall through system cracks and bureaucracies.

#### **Would you want others to help you share your story? (friends, other people with disabilities, organizations)**

Yes, tenant advocacy, advocacy among people with lived experience to disability and disability group membership/participation all deemed as good partners to help share story and raise public awareness to issues.

### **What message would you want to give people by telling your story?**

That legislation and systems should be there to protect the interests and rights of people with disabilities especially in times of crisis/times when their disability is of concern/issue (such as when hospitalized).

These same systems shouldn't be working to make life more difficult and stressful for people with disabilities but should be there as true supports to provide stability for people with disabilities who need to rely on them (RGI and ODSP etc.)

### **Who would be most effective in doing something about it?**

Group decided on joint focus of meeting with politicians and going public seeking media attention.

### **How would you get their attention and the results you want? (What media would you use, would you do a petition, write a letter, etc.)**

Dual focus would be to try to set up meetings with local politicians – primarily MPPs as social housing legislation is a provincial responsibility however consideration also given to City system as social housing administration is a City concern/municipality is the local service provider and has role in interventions and seeking leniency needed to change system and act on behalf of local clients.

Media – Toronto Star (examples) and other newspapers and media resources friendly to the issues of people with disabilities (Helen Henderson) and those with issues related to living in poverty (Carol Goar, Laurie Montsebratten, Joe Fiorito)

### **Now pick ONE way to get their attention and practice it with the group.**

#### MPP option selected

Decision: Want message to be – accommodations have to be made within legislation.

SHRA has to be changed to simplify reporting requirements to maintain RGI supplements when extenuating circumstances arise (in our example hospitalization leading to inability to meet reporting deadlines to maintain subsidy).

As well, local municipal housing management processes need to be changed to ensure people with disabilities are supported in maintaining their housing (true security of tenure) and don't fall through the cracks – don't end up facing scenarios like eviction processes when hospitalized.

Legislation and processes need to work for and with the people they are enacted/meant to support/assist.

Practice session plan:

- In our example, a group member would phone and arrange an appointment with a tenant's local MPP.
- Group determines who to attend (3-4 people) and who will say what/represent what when attending on given date/time.
- Other members of group collect documents from other concerned/supportive tenants and interested parties – perhaps a petition, stories etc. for group members to bring to meeting as supporting documentation relevant to their ask/argument.
- Scope of discussion – telling of scope of issue (provide common case scenario example) and ask for MPPs assistance in seeking to rectify legislative problems and intervention in respect to municipal service provider direction in respect to RGI reporting periods and exceptions.

To do tasks:

- Find copy of relevant sections of SHRA to offer exact areas we wish to seek change within legislation. Draft plan/document numbers of tenants we know affected by same or similar issue and seek permission to share their names/contact info.
- Members to speak to MPP to practice info sharing and timing of discussion to provide key points/concepts/example with each having 5-7 minutes to talk max – overall about 20 minutes talking time with 20 minutes allocated to hear MPP response.
- Remainder of plan - to follow points as discussed at prior SEED skills development session in respect to follow up with MPP to clarify agreements, offer thanks for meeting etc.

# SEED Skills Development Interactive Group Advocacy Tools

Thursday, April, 7, 2011 - CNIB

Learning Advocacy Skills Workshop: Finding Your Voice: Practising Group Advocacy

## Example: Petition

### PETITION TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

We, the undersigned residents of Canada, draw the attention of the House of Commons to the following:

#### THAT

- 14 percent of Canadians have disabilities
- With the population aging, the number of Canadians with disabilities will increase
- Inaccessibility limits the equal participation of Canadians with various disabilities in society
- Canadians with disabilities are responsible taxpayers and demand equal rights and services
- Internationally, there have been other comprehensive federal laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act that have been successful in improving the accessibility for people with disabilities

THEREFORE, your petitioners request the House of Commons to enact a Canadian Accessibility Act that would improve accessibility for Canadians with disabilities. Creating such an Act would consult with Canadians with disabilities to include their expertise with the planning and implementation of the Act. The Act would address equal accessibility in the public and private sectors in the following areas:

- Communications and access to information
- Transportation
- Physical Built Environment
- Services, Programs and Policies
- Employment
- Customer Service Standards
- Assistive Technical Devices
- Measurable targets and timelines

Signatures

(Sign your own name. Do not print.)

---

---

Addresses

(Give your full home address, or your city and province, or province and postal code.)

---

---

THEREFORE, your petitioners request the House of Commons to enact a Canadian Accessibility Act that would improve accessibility for Canadians with disabilities. Creating such an Act would consult with Canadians with disabilities to include their expertise with the planning and implementation of the Act. The Act would address equal accessibility in the public and private sectors in the following areas:

- Communications and access to information
- Transportation
- Physical Built Environment
- Services, Programs and Policies
- Employment
- Customer Service Standards
- Assistive Technical Devices
- Measurable targets and timelines

Signatures

(Sign your own name. Do not print.)

Addresses

(Give your full home address, or your city and province, or province and postal code.)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# **SEED Skills Development Interactive Group Advocacy Tools**

Thursday, May 12, 2011 - TCHC Senator Croll Apartments

Learning Advocacy Skills Workshop:  
Finding Your Voice: Preventing Violence Through Group Advocacy

## **Summary of Discussion/Flip Chart Notes – Group 1 and Group 2**

### **Group Discussion: Group 1: What can we do to stop violence?**

- Create a “code of conduct” for demonstrating shared responsibility, respect and dignity
- Group member question – When do we intervene? Example parent/child situation where as a passerby you are led to believe abuse might be occurring. Talk to a Community Liaison Officer (Police) or similar expert to address and prevent abusive situations from occurring
- Start shared education and/or support groups
- Don’t turn your back on violence in community (& General advocacy impacts many individuals)
- Community education/collective discussions (don’t be afraid to discuss topic of violence/abuse identification and prevention)
- Show by example – modelling
- Organize for effective change of systems, and challenge/question common institutional policies and practices of abuse (examples TCHC’s Eviction Prevention Policy and police policies/practices)
- Become observant/don’t turn your back on issues or people in distress
- Report problems/potential problem situations even if you feel a need to do so anonymously (example to/through Community Liaison Office/Officer)
- Make calls of inquiry and ask questions if you “don’t know” – search out for details and facts.
- Suggestion for people suspected of experiencing problems – write letters of support and encouragement to them and mail them or drop them off to them (anonymously or other)

### **Group Discussion: Group 2: Standards and Best Practices**

1. Self-assessment – emotional
2. Outcome/solution versus complaining
3. Show benefit win/win
4. Abuse – getting help through group or organization
5. Support – witness
6. Listen actively – non-judgemental
7. I statement – I feel, I would, Help me, Could you help me...
8. Give and take
9. Ombudsman (to refer...)

10. Please be patient
11. To repeat or explain
12. Disability education , sensitivity and diversity
13. “Charter” – human rights abuse
14. Disability “needs”
15. Media – Helen Henderson – letters/petitions and collective action
16. Building capacity – our community self-awareness.

# **SEED Skills Development Interactive Group Advocacy Tools**

Thursday, May 26, 2011 - TCHC Senator Croll Apartments

Learning Advocacy Skills Workshop:  
Finding Your Voice: Emergency Preparedness Through Group Advocacy

## **Summary of Discussion/Flip Chart Notes – Group 1 and Group 2**

### **Emergency Preparedness Scenario:**

**You are a group of tenants in a building. A chemical spill has happened in your neighbourhood; firefighters state everyone must evacuate the building in 45 minutes. Action plan questions/discussion:**

### **Group Discussion: Group 1:**

#### **What are some basic things you need to take with you?**

- Yourself – get out 1<sup>st</sup> priority
- Water
- Medication
- Dental needs
- Clothing
- Dog/pet food
- Papers/ID
- Radio and batteries
- Food
- Money
- Flashlight & batteries
- Blanket
- First aid kit
- Pen/paper
- Playing cards
- Wet wipes/toiletries
- Phone numbers
- Cell phone

#### **Who would you contact, once you left the building?**

- Family (mother, child etc.)
- Insurance broker
- My employer
- My medical team and/or doctor
- List/ODSP
- 911

#### **What services do you need, if any?**

- Pharmacy
- Community Care Access Center
- Emergency housing
- Relative to come get me
- Building buddy/best friend
- Fire department for assistance
- Contacts from my cell phone
- Emergency assistance – someone to help – 911
- Alarm system people to let them know about the alarm situation (ADT)

### **How would you engage in group advocacy?**

- Facebook post
- Speak up
- Neighbours
- HPO
- Media (take photos)
- All the people on my floor
- First responders meeting with people with disabilities to interact
- To acknowledge need to help those who don't speak English in building
- Ontario Fire Marshall's re building code
- Tenant leaders from group/take group advocacy

### **Group Discussion: Group 2:**

#### **What are some basic things you need to take with you?**

- Pet and pet food
- Clothing
- Meds
- Water
- ID
- Food
- Radio
- Flashlight
- Phone
- Batteries
- First Aid
- Vinyl gloves
- Accessibility devices
- List of numbers
- Personal needs
- Bags
- Blanket
- Note pad and pen
- Money

#### **Who would you contact, once you left the building?**

- Friend
- Family
- Attendant
- Service provider
- Neighbours
- Pharmacist

#### **What services do you need, if any?**

- Attendant care
- Accessible washroom
- Shelter
- Food
- Meds
- Place of worship
- Place of comfort
- Generator
- Crisis worker
- Volunteers

### **How would you engage in group advocacy?**

- Create support network
- Peer support
- Sharing personal experiences
- Pre-event advocacy

## APPENDIX F: GROUP ADVOCACY TOOLS

### How to write a letter to an MP

By *Maria van Geest*, Created 08/14/2008 –Published on *Citizens for Public Justice* (<http://www.cpj.ca>)

A personal letter can go a long way in reaching a Member of Parliament. Whether you are writing as a part of a letter-writing campaign or on your own, the following guidelines will help you know how to write an advocacy letter to an MP.

#### **Style**

- A personal letter is much more effective than a form letter, so try to **put it in your own words**.
- If you can, make the letter **personal** by including your own experiences.
- An **email** is just as effective as a letter by post, as Parliamentary staff handle both in the same way. (Remember to include your postal mailing address if you write an email.)
- Emphasize **two or three** major points, and keep to the same topic.
- Try to keep the letter to **one page**. Do not exceed two pages. If you have more information to share, include in the envelope a brief on the topic or any other informational materials.

#### **Contents**

- Your **objective** should be stated from the outset. Follow this with a brief introduction outlining your concerns.
- Describe your **interest** in the issue and your **credentials** to speak on it.
- Ask questions that provoke a **response**. Ask for more information or for clarification on your MP's position.
- Request a **commitment** to a specific action, and give a rationale for your request.
- **Thank the MP** for any positive action he/she has taken in the past on this issue.
- Request that the MP **respond** to your letter.

#### **Other Tips**

- **No postage** is required when you send a letter to an MP.
- **Keep a copy** of the letter you send. This way you can refer back to it when you receive a response.
- Share your letter with other individuals and organizations who are also advocating for your cause. That way, your network of advocates knows what you have communicated to the MP.

- Follow up. Write back to the MP, thanking them for their response, and remind them of your requests and any commitments they have made.

## **SAMPLE LETTER**

By *Maria van Geest*, Created 08/14/2008 – Published on *Citizens for Public Justice*  
(<http://www.cpj.ca>)

Date

Mr. John Smith  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am writing concerning the inclusion of a federal poverty reduction strategy in the Budget 2009. One in ten Canadians lives in poverty. A comprehensive strategy, built into the federal budget, could significantly reduce this number and change the lives of many poor Canadians. Your party has stopped short of announcing an official poverty reduction strategy, and I hope that you will do all in your power to bring about positive change in this area.

I have volunteered at a local food bank for six years, and while it is rewarding to be a part of this work, it saddens me to see more and more people in our community in need of this type of assistance just to live day-to-day. I believe that, through the implementation of a federal comprehensive poverty reduction strategy, many of our clients could be lifted out of poverty.

Your party has committed to many actions to address poverty in Canada, including reforming employment insurance, offering affordable housing and childcare, and seeking justice for aboriginal peoples. Your party has also called for Parliamentary hearings to address a federal poverty reduction strategy. Please now be a voice in your party to adopt an **official comprehensive poverty reduction strategy**, which would include:

- A long-term vision with measurable targets and timelines.
- A plan of action and a budget that coordinates initiatives within and across governments.
- Accountability structures.
- A set of agreed-upon poverty indicators to plan and monitor progress.

Thank you for your commitment in the past to justice and combating poverty. Will you now commit to working towards a federal poverty reduction strategy to be announced by your party? What specific actions will you take towards this goal?

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Jane Doe  
321 Justice St.  
City, Province A1B 2C3

## How to organize a public meeting

By *Maria van Geest*, Created 08/14/2008 –  
Published on *Citizens for Public Justice* (<http://www.cpj.ca>)

A public meeting can help you to **gain support** for your cause by educating other members of your community. It can also catch the attention of the **media** and **decision-makers**. It is a forum for **interaction**, for **discussion** of alternative viewpoints, and can provide an opportunity to **question** a public official.

You can structure the meeting in various ways. It could be a roundtable discussion, a “town hall meeting,” or a debate. The format is up to you and depends on who will be there and what you will discuss.

### ***Steps to organizing a public meeting:***

1. **Determine the purpose** of holding the meeting. Keep a clear and tangible focus.
2. **Approach other groups** who might want to help organize or attend the event.
3. **Choose a public place** with adequate accessibility, seating capacity, and sound system.
4. **Publicize:**
  - Send a public service announcement to the media and post bulletins in the community.
  - Prepare a press release summarizing the background to, and purpose of, the meeting.
  - Contact the media and invite them to cover the event.
5. **Invite local representatives** and elected officials responsible for the issue to attend.
6. Invite representatives from **relevant organizations** as well.
7. **Distribute responsibilities** for welcoming, chairing the meeting, moderating a debate, introducing speakers, arranging for audio-visual equipment, etc.
8. Determine **meeting format** and **time limit**.
9. Have **informational materials** available.

It is most beneficial to time a public awareness event, such as a public meeting, **just before** implementing an advocacy strategy. The event will most likely **increase public support** on the issue, apply pressure to legislators to respond, and will **provide momentum** for your campaign.

<http://www.cpj.ca/en/content/how-organize-public-meeting>

## **How to write a petition**

By *Maria van Geest*, Created 08/14/2008 –  
Published on *Citizens for Public Justice* (<http://www.cpj.ca>)

A petition is a good tool for a straightforward issue that has widespread support.

There are fifteen minutes set aside daily in the House of Commons for petitions to be read. There is no debate following the reading of the petition, but the government is required to respond to your petition within 45 days. Your petition could spark interest on the part of Members of Parliament or it could influence a debate already occurring in the House of Commons.

Below are some tips for writing a petition and getting signatures.

### ***General guidelines for writing a petition***

- The petition statement should be **clear** and **concise**.
- Begin the statement with a phrase like: *We the undersigned hereby affirm*.
- Keep it as short as possible, while laying out your concerns.
- Start with general principles and progressively get more specific, ending with your requests.
- Make sure that the **petition statement appears on each page** of the petition.

If an MP is to read a petition in the House, they must first submit it to the Clerk of Petitions, who examines it to make sure that its form and content meet Parliamentary specifications. If it fails to meet them, it cannot be read for the record. It is therefore important to follow the guidelines for an official petition to Parliament. You can also send a draft petition, before collecting signatures, to a Member of Parliament to ensure that it is correctly worded and to find out if they would be willing to read it in the House.

### ***Guidelines for an official petition to Parliament***

- Address it to the House of Commons (not the Prime Minister or any individual MP).
- Use a standard paper size (8 ½ x 11 inches or 8 ½ by 14 inches).
- Do not attach any other documents to the petition or print the petition on the reverse of another document.
- The petition must address an issue that is under federal jurisdiction and must ask the government to take or not take a specific action.
- It must contain a minimum of 25 Canadians' signatures. Each signature should be accompanied by the signatory's city and province of residence.

- There is no minimum age requirement for signing a petition.
- Note that certification usually takes three to five working days, and that petitions cannot be certified during an election period.

### ***Other Tips***

- **Bring** your petition to events where you expect there will be people who support it.
- Follow-up is important because it demonstrates that there is real commitment behind the signatures. Encourage signatories to write, call, or visit MPs to explain why they signed the petition.
- **Any MP** can present a petition in the House on any topic. Some MPs have a policy of presenting any petition brought to them by constituents.
- The Government must respond to each petition **within 45 calendar days** of its presentation. If this fails to occur, the Member who presented the petition designates a committee of the House to look into the reasons why it was not responded to.

<http://www.cpj.ca/en/content/how-write-petition>

## **SAMPLE PETITION**

By *Maria van Geest*, Created 08/14/2008 –Published on *Citizens for Public Justice* (<http://www.cpj.ca>)

### PETITION TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

We, the undersigned residents of Canada, draw the attention of the House of Commons to the following:

#### THAT

- 1 in every 10 Canadians lives in poverty.
- Persistent poverty impacts the dignity of many Canadians, and represents a serious cost to individuals, to our society, and to our economy.
- Comprehensive federal poverty reduction strategies have been used successfully in other countries to combat poverty.

THEREFORE, your petitioners request the House of Commons to include a federal comprehensive poverty reduction strategy in the Budget 2009. Such a strategy should include:

- Measurable targets and timelines
- Coordination within and across governments
- Accountability structures
- Poverty indicators to plan and monitor progress

Signatures

(Sign your own name. Do not print.)

Addresses

(Give your full home address, or your city and province, or province and postal code.)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## **How to meet with your MP**

By *Maria van Geest*, Created 08/14/2008 –Published on *Citizens for Public Justice* (<http://www.cpj.ca>)

Your Member of Parliament is more accessible than you think. If you are passionate about an issue, respectful of the MP's time, and willing to take the time for a meeting, it is more than likely that they will also be willing to meet with you.

### ***Setting up a meeting***

- To set up a meeting with an MP, **call the constituency office**. Give your name, your postal code, and the reason that you'd like to meet with the MP. Ask when the MP will next be in town, and when they will be available to meet with you.
- You can also **go to the constituency office** directly to request the meeting. Making a good impression will also increase your chances of gaining access to your MP.
- If the MP is unavailable for a meeting, request a meeting **with a member of their staff**. Staff have more time to meet with you and they can bring your particular concerns to the MP.

### ***Preparation***

- **Stay informed** on the issue.
- **Develop a list of questions** that you have for the MP, as well as specific proposals for solutions.
- **Bring materials** that the MP can refer to later. A one-page brief gives them a concise background on the issue, your concerns, and your proposed solutions.
- **Ask staff beforehand** how much information the MP has on your issue. This way, you will know where to start. Offer to send informational materials ahead of time.
- In a typical meeting with an MP, the MP talks two-thirds of the time, you one-third. **Be prepared to listen.**
- **Focus on how you can help the MP** do their job. Where are the gaps in information? Do you have information that will be of value to them?

### ***At the meeting***

- **Present your case** in a clear and concise way, stating the exact nature of your concern and precisely what you want the MP to do about it.
- Focus on **one or two issues**.
- Insist on a **straight answer** to your questions.
- If the representative agrees with you, **get it in writing**.

- Even though you may be very passionate about your issue, and may disagree strongly with the MP's stance, **have a calm and respectful dialogue**. Show that you are willing to work with them.
- Even if the MP disagrees with you, **thank them** for their time and opportunity to meet.
- A meeting with an MP usually lasts no more than an hour. If you have an agreed-upon time limit, stick to it.

### ***After the meeting***

- Follow up. Write a letter thanking the MP for meeting with you. In your letter, summarize any commitments that were made, and ask for an update on what has been done.

<http://www.cpj.ca/en/content/how-meet-your-mp>

## **APPENDIX G: MEDIA TOOLS**

**How to work with the Media** By *Maria van Geest*, Created 08/14/2008 – Published on *Citizens for Public Justice* (<http://www.cpj.ca>)

Working with the media can also be an important component to an advocacy strategy. It can **increase public awareness** and can also catch the attention of **elected officials**. You may find yourself engaging with the media through **writing press releases** and **letters to the editor**, or offering information to a **journalist**. The media may also **contact you** for an interview. It's important to know how to approach the media and how to get your voice heard through **newspapers, television, and the radio**.

### ***How to approach the media***

- You should approach **newspapers first** because TV and radio journalists often get their stories from the newspaper. They are also able to go more in-depth on a topic.
- Mondays and Fridays are generally slow news days, so approaching a newspaper on **Sunday** or **Thursday** is best.
- When you see an article or story that you like, or if you see a negative or incorrect story, **write a letter to the editor**.
- The best way to approach a journalist is to **write a to-the-point email** and **follow up with a phone call**. Show the reporter that you are not trying to sell them on your view, but trying to help them do their job by providing useful information and an interesting story.
- **Send press releases** following meetings with MPs (make sure that you let the MP know that the meeting is “on the record”), after newsworthy events relating to your issue, and before events that you or your group plan.
- For a more in-depth campaign, you may want to send an entire **press kit**, which includes a press release, your one-page brief, a factsheet, and a biography of the organization or spokesperson.

### ***What to do when the media contacts you for an interview***

- **Write down** the name of the publication and the name of the journalist. Ask them questions about the focus of the story, who else will be interviewed, etc.
- **If you need time** to prepare, ask them to call back later.
- **Be prepared** with statistics and anecdotes.
- Keep in mind the **key messages** of your campaign so that you do not get off track. Keep control of the interview by returning to them often.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, say so and **offer to get back** to the journalist promptly.

## **Finding Your Voice: Telling Your Story to Media**

### **Talking to the Media.....Helpful Hints**

By Mike Creek, SEED Steering Committee Member

- Build and maintain relationships with local media. Know something about them—different newspapers have different attitudes, talents, and interests. Who would do best job?
- Remember that the press is “not always with us.” They just want good stories and to cover the news.
- If a story is not picked up, ask yourself: Was it presented well? What else happened that day?
- When the spotlight falls on you, make the best of it, because when *you* want the spotlight, it’s harder to get. Seize opportunities—timing. If something is in the news, that’s the time to call.
- Reporters are always in a hurry. There’s never enough time to do all the stories that should be done—news is relative and depends on what else is going on. Few reporters are experts on anything. Tomorrow is always another story.
- Return phone calls from reporters promptly—tomorrow is probably too late.
- Provide key information in writing: names, titles, phone numbers, sum up important points.
- Figure out *what* you want to tell people and *who* you want to tell. Consider the audience.
- Be absolutely accurate.
- Practice simplifying your message. Don’t use jargon.
- Tell a story (beginning, middle, and end), conflict, timelines, who-what-where-when-why.
- Pictures sell. Graphics are needed/useful—especially for TV. Radio loves good audio.
- If you don’t say it, they can’t print it (covers both good and bad stuff). If you don’t share info, the media doesn’t have it and can’t report it. There is

no such thing as “off the record” when you are speaking with a reporter. Stick to your subject and don’t say too much.

- The press wants to talk to experts directly this includes people with a lived experience, not public relations.
- Be patient and polite.
- “No comment” can create a negative reaction to a story, which can hurt. Remember agencies and organizations can (almost) always say something. Consider the needs and responsibilities of the agency or group for which you work. Determine in advance who talks and what they say.
- Don’t ask to read a story before it goes to press. It won’t happen and the media thinks less of you.
- Plan ahead. Faxed press releases are ignored more than phone calls. Invest time & use the phone.
- Press releases should:
  - o Indicate either “Embargoed” (with a date) or “For Immediate Release.” If the latter, send and then call to discuss it.
  - o Always have the first paragraph sum up issue.
  - o Use quotes to editorialize.
  - o Always be clear and concise. Help reporter determine what is of greatest importance to the greatest number of listeners or readers. There is limited space or minutes to devote.
- If the press makes a mistake, call the next day. Corrections will be printed. Don’t overreact—the reporter wasn’t trying to get the quote wrong.
- Be a resource for the media. Use handouts and bulletins that are concise, with good information and phone numbers are helpful.
- Save news conferences for very big things.

## **Finding Your Voice: Working with the Media Workshop Tools**

By Cher Jones, Senior Coordinator, Promotions and Communications, City of Toronto

### **PART 1: Be Prepared**

#### **Know your audience:**

Working with the media is a way to get your message out to your target audience.

Who is your audience? Be specific. (e.g. donors, volunteers, etc.) Remember that when you are speaking to a reporter you are using this reporter to get your message out to them.

#### **Know what your audience wants from you.**

Once you have developed your list, it's important to recognize what your audience wants from you, your organization, group, business, and/or event. Make sure you know this because generally speaking people only tune in when there is something in it for them.

#### **Determine your “call to action”/ what do you want them to do?**

When your target audience hears or reads about your organization, how do you want them to respond? What do you want them to do or feel? Do you want them to visit a website? Call someone (a politician or a company)? Do you want them to call you? Do you want them to show up somewhere? Buy a ticket?

#### **Know your key messages:**

What is the ONE most important thing you want others to know about you/ your organization/group/company/product? That is your key message, one that you will repeat over and over again. This message should be something you can say in conversation, in interviews or presentations to groups. It should be easy to say and remember keep it short. The length of a Twitter message – 140 characters – is a good guide.

It may be as simple as: “Our school library needs new books to reflect the many cultures of our diverse student body.”

#### **You can have more than one key message but no more than three**

If you have several key messages, narrow them down to the three most important ones. Even though the rest of the information is still very important, you want to make sure your audience remembers what you want them to remember. When you have too many messages, they won't remember a thing! Three is the magic number!

**Know your stories, facts and stats:**

It is always important to have a few powerful examples, such as stories, comparisons and/or statistics to illustrate your key messages. Remember, when you are telling the media a story, it should be no longer than 15 seconds. When using stats, it's great to paint a picture with them.

**Be prepared for the tough questions:**

You should also know what you do not want to say, and think how you would answer the worst possible question. Compile a list of the most difficult questions you could face and figure out how you would respond to them.

**PART TWO: The Interview****What to do when the reporter calls:**

You don't have to speak with them right on the spot. But be sure to ask the following questions:

- **When their deadline?**  
This will ensure you set a call back time that is way before their deadline. Even if a reporter says they need your answer right now, calmly tell them you're eager to cooperate, but that you're in the middle of something and need a half-hour to finish. Spend those 30 minutes crafting/reviewing your messages and anticipating the likeliest tough questions before returning the call.
- **What would you like to interview me about?**  
At this point make sure that you are the right person for the interview. If not, refer them to the person they should be speaking to.
- **Do they have any specific questions in mind?**  
This will allow you to determine if you are the right person to speak to and help you gather the information they need to ensure they get the answers they are looking for.
- **Send them a fact sheet if available**

**Think before you speak:**

When a reporter asks you a question, you don't have to answer right away; pause for a few seconds to think about your response. Then, and only then, answer the question.

**Not sure what the reporter is asking?** Ask them to clarify their question. You can say something like "I'm not sure what you are asking me? Would you mind clarifying your question for me?"

**Answering wide open questions:**

When a reporter asks a very open ended question like "What does your organization do?"

Start with the WHY then follow with your key message of WHAT you do. Why we do something always makes the "what" more interesting. But...get to the point! Keep the "why" short.

**Listen to the question:**

This will ensure you are answering what the reporter asks you.

**Don't be afraid to ask for clarification.**

Feel free to say, I am sorry, I am not sure what you are asking me. Would you mind clarifying your question?

**Stick to your message and repeat it:**

No matter what you are asked, don't let the interviewer derail you. When necessary, respond first then make a transition back to your main message. Repeat your message throughout the interview and stay consistent.

**Learn how to bridge:**

This technique allows you to deflect any attempts to derail your message. "Bridging" creates a transition so that you can move from one subject to the message you want to communicate. First answer the direct question, then transition to your message.

Here are a few bridging statements:

- "Before we get off that topic, let me just add..."
- "Let me put that in perspective."
- "It's important to remember that..."
- "What I do know is..."
- "I don't know, but what I can tell you..."

**Never say 'No comment':**

If you cannot tell them something, explain why, and if you do not know the answer, say so. If not, it suggests guilt or concealment. Even a few words are better than none, if only to explain why you can't discuss the subject. Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know" and offer what you do know. You could also offer to seek out the answer, or refer them to someone who does.

**Do not go 'off-the-record':**

In 99.9% of cases don't say anything you don't want published to/or in the presence of a journalist.

**Don't speculate:**

Steer clear of hypothetical questions or suggesting possible scenarios unless

they truly emphasize a positive message that you are trying to convey. Don't feel obligated to answer a question that should more correctly be asked of someone else.

"Although I can't speculate, I can tell you that...."

**Do not offer a personal opinion:**

When you are identified as a spokesperson for a company, group, or organization, your personal opinion have no place because you are speaking on behalf of the organization. The media will identify you as a representative of your organization.

"Well, I'm speaking for the organization, not myself, and what we believe is...."

**If you have their attention, slow down and repeat:**

If you're giving a phone interview, listen for the sound of typing on the other end – you'll hear it when you say something that intrigues the reporter. That's your cue to slow down, make sure the reporter has time to capture every word then repeat what you've just said. The same is true during an in-person interview when a reporter is scribbling notes in a notepad. When you see a reporter scribbling notes, slow down and repeat your point.

**Project confidence:**

Make eye contact with the interviewer and smile to project confidence and credibility. Don't smile if the subject is truly grave, but otherwise, smile as he or she asks questions, and also, when appropriate, during you response and when you finish.

**Relax and take your time:**

Speak clearly at your own pace. Speak in a concise but conversational style that conveys your expertise. Pause when if you have to gather your thoughts. Let the interviewer finish each question before responding. If you feel like you are being rushed, feel free to tell the reporter "That's an important point, and I'll need more than a couple of seconds to answer it."

**Don't be contentious or hostile:**

Be positive, not defensive. And always be polite. Journalists have the last word when it comes to editing the interview, so it is best not to get into an angry debate. Better to simply reaffirm your main message no matter what is asked or said.

**Watch your body language;**

Before on-camera interviews, do whatever you need to do to relax your body. When interviewees look tense or stiff (even in positive situations), it can a big impact on credibility.

## **Finding Your Voice: Working with the Media**

By Melissa Graham, SEED Steering Committee Member

***"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."***

***—Margaret Mead***

### **Step One: Start Talking**

Whether you're passionate about disability issues, safer neighborhoods, or saving cats, chances are there are others that share that passion. The easiest way to find people who share your view is to start talking about it. Discussing an issue can actually be activism in itself, because it gets people thinking. This discussion can happen in an everyday conversation, a blog, a Facebook group, a radio show, or a full blown action. There's a myth in society that says we have to be passionate about big social issues, and making big public displays of ourselves to be activists, but that's not true. If you're actively bringing attention to an issue, you're an activist.

### **Step Two: Collaboration**

You may find through all the talking and discussing about this issue that you want to start meeting as a group, or perhaps join an existing group. This can be an exciting and nerve wracking step. Joining an existing group is a little easier, and requires less of a commitment on your part. Before creating your own group, it is important to be aware of what's already in the community.

Creating your own group can be an exciting venture, but it also requires commitment and energy. Be prepared to start slow. People are often cautious about joining new groups, especially if they are not normally activists, or are already over involved in issues. Make sure to advertise your meetings as much as possible. This can be done using flyers, Facebook, other social networks, or even simple word of mouth can be effective.

If you're finding it difficult to attract new people, you may want to consider broadening the scope of your issue, or paying more attention to how you approach new members. First impressions are important, if a person's needs are not being met by the group they will not likely return. Remember that everyone has strengths and resources that they bring to the group, and try to encourage everyone to contribute. It may seem more convenient to keep things organized on your own, but that's the fastest way to burn out. Just because you started the group doesn't mean you always have to take the lead.

### **Step Three: Get Out There!**

As your group develops ideas will begin to take shape. You may want to have demonstrations, share information with the community, or work on building the structure of your group. What you do will vary from group to group and there are no set rules. Some groups such as PETA have guides than can help you organize your group and plan actions, but most grassroots groups develop in their own way. There will be appropriate times to put some structure in place, but this varies according to the group's needs.

If you're looking at going out into the community, consider your audience. The general population prefers easy to understand information that explains the issue clearly, but briefly. Politicians want proof and formal writing to even look at the issue, and make sure you send it to the right people. When contacting the media, prepare for great coverage, but don't expect it.

#### **The three most important things to remember when creating and running a group:**

- ✓ Avoid excluding people – everyone has something to offer, don't discourage interest
- ✓ Be flexible – once your issue is a group issue, you've opened it up to people who may have different opinions that are also valid. Groups are dynamic, they change.
- ✓ Have Fun – if you're not having fun, it's probably not worth doing.

The issue that's been eating at you, won't get any attention by you sitting and complaining to yourself. If you want to be an activist – get active!

## Talking to Reporters

### **Preparing**

- ✓ Ask to meet with a letter, and give a follow up call
- ✓ Have an agenda
- ✓ Do your research and practice
- ✓ Delegate roles within your group
- ✓ Have key points
- ✓ Know their position on the issue

### **Making Your Point**

- ✓ Thank them for coming before and after
- ✓ Stay on topic, don't get sidetracked
- ✓ Make the issue important politically and individually
- ✓ Focus on the opposition party, they're more likely to pick up the issue

### **The Next Step**

- ✓ Leave them information and contact information
- ✓ Give them something to follow up with (next meeting date, etc.)

## Telling your Story

### **The Purpose of your Story**

- This is your chance to get a message across. Consider why you are telling this story.
- Often you won't have much time to get your message across. When this happens, consider the main points you want to focus on.
- Remember, stories work best when they come from the heart, not just from the head.

### **Consider your Audience**

- Who is your audience?
- What do you want them to get out of the story?
- Choose a variety of material to appeal to a variety of people
  
- Have extra information handy for questions
  
- Avoid giving too much information
  
- Use every day, respectful language

### **Don't be Afraid of Humor**

- Funny stories from real life
- Analogies, quotes, cartoons

### **Wrapping it Up**

- Give people a chance to react to your story
- Look at people, smile, and listen to their applause
- They're appreciating your story. Accept that they liked it!

**“If the speaker won't boil it down, the audience must sweat it out”**

**– *Public Speaking for Dummies***

## Body Language

### What is Body Language?

- Facial expressions, posture, gestures
- Use and vary gestures

### **Avoid**

- Leaning on the podium, however it can be used for effect
- Standing with your hands on your hips
- Swaying back and forth
- Standing with your arms folded across your chest
- Standing with your hands behind your back
- Keeping your hands in your pockets
- Smile, but not too much

### **Eye Contact**

- Look at the audience, not everywhere else
- Look at a variety of people, not just one or two
- Make eye contact at the end of a thought
- Spend more time looking at the audience than your notes
- If you're nervous, look at their noses

### **Voice**

- Warm up your voice
- Pronounce clearly
- Avoid filler sounds
  - Um, like, you know
- Tone variety
- Use emphasis
- Use pauses

## **How to Set Up a Blog – a Friendly Tutorial**

By Melissa Graham, SEED Steering Committee Member

***Find more information on: <http://en.support.wordpress.com/getting-started/>***

### ***What is a blog?***

A blog is a collection of commentary posted on the internet. There are all different types of blogs including personal, corporate, political, mom blogs, podcasts, video, and more. Blog posts are typically displayed in reverse-chronological order with the latest posts at the top.

### ***Sign Up & Activate***

To get started, sign up for an account. <http://en.wordpress.com/signup/> On the first screen, you will be asked for a username, password, and email address. You must agree to the terms of service, and also select whether you would like a blog URL such as USERNAME.wordpress.com

### ***What is a Dashboard?***

The Dashboard is where to manage your blog. You can change settings, select themes, write or manage content, add or remove users, add images, buy upgrades, and more through the Dashboard.

The Dashboard is the first screen you see when logging into the administration area of your blog. The main idea of the dashboard is to give you a place where you can get an “at a glance” overview of what’s happening with your blog. You can catch up on news, see which posts you’ve been working on in draft, see who’s linking to you or how popular your content’s been, quickly put out a no-frills post, or check out and moderate your latest comments. It’s kind of like a bird’s eye view of operations, from which you can swoop down into the particular details.

### ***What if I don’t like Wordpress?***

Wordpress is one of the most recommended, accessible, free options for a blog, but there are others as well

**Blogspot**    [www.blogspot.com](http://www.blogspot.com)    **Blogger**    [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)

**Live Journal**    [www.livejournal.com](http://www.livejournal.com)

## **Useful Social Media Websites and Links**

By Melissa Graham, SEED Steering Committee Member

*Here is some information that may be useful for getting started with social media.*

### **Blogging**

Getting Started with Blogging      <http://en.support.wordpress.com/getting-started/>

### ***Sites where you can sign up for a free blog:***

Wordpress              <http://en.wordpress.com/signup/>

Blogspot              <http://www.blogspot.com/>

Blogger                <http://www.blogger.com>

Live Journal           <http://www.livejournal.com>

### **Facebook**

Main Facebook Page: <http://www.facebook.com/>

Facebook Help: <http://www.facebook.com/help/>

Facebook for screen readers: <http://m.facebook.com/home.php>

### **Twitter**

Main Twitter Page:              <http://twitter.com/>

Twitter Basics:                <http://support.twitter.com/groups/31-twitter-basics>

Twitter download for screen readers - no visual interface <http://qtwitter-client.net/>

### **Examples of Disability Related Social Media**

<http://www.getmobilized.ca/>

<http://exposingableism.wordpress.com/>

### **SEED Facebook Page:**

[http://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group\\_127635667313687](http://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group_127635667313687)

## **APPENDIX H: Resources**

### **Safety Resources**

**9-1-1** –Emergency, for life threatening situations

**Crime Stoppers**- 416-222-8477 –To report information about a crime anonymously

**Police** – 416-808-2222 –For non-emergency police matters as well as a crime that has already happened, suspicious activity, lost or found property

**TCHC Community Safety Unit**- 416-921-2323 –To report illegal activity, parking enforcement, loitering and/or noise complaints on TCHC property

### **Abuse and Sexual Assault Resources**

#### **Internet Child Exploitation (ICE) Counseling Program**

Tel: 1-800-579-2888 Website:

[http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/English/ovss/internet\\_child\\_exploitation\\_brochure.asp](http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/English/ovss/internet_child_exploitation_brochure.asp)

#### **Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres**

Lists sexual assault / rape crisis centres in Ontario, which offer many services for women who have been sexually assaulted. Website: <http://www.occcc.ca>

#### **Ontario Network of Sexual Assault / Domestic Violence Treatment Centres**

Tel: 416-323-6400 - Lists sexual assault and domestic violence treatment centres throughout Ontario, which provides medical and counseling services for women who have been abused. Website [http:// www.satcontario.com](http://www.satcontario.com)

**Toronto Rape Crisis Centre** - Crisis – 416-597-8808 - Other business 416-597-1171

Website: <http://www.trccmwar.ca/> - Offers support after a sexual assault, either recent or in the past

#### **Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect Program (Toronto)**

Tel: Mon-Fri 9 am-5 pm 416-813-6275, Emergency: 416-813-7500 Mon-Sun 24 hours & ask for the SCAN team member on-call, Website:

[www.sickkids.ca/scan](http://www.sickkids.ca/scan) - Offers care, support and assessment to children and adolescents who may have been abused.

**Scarborough Hospital Sexual Assault / Domestic Violence Care Centre for Independent Living** Tel: 416-495-2555

## **Peel Region Sexual Assault / Domestic Violence Program**

Tel: 905-848-7580 x 2142

## **Women's College Hospital Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Care Centre (Toronto)** Tel: 416- 323-6040

### **Counseling and Family Services**

#### **Barbra Schlifer Clinic**

Offers counseling, legal, interpretation, information and referral service for women survivors of violence. Tel: 416-323-9149, TTY 416-323-1361 Website: <http://www.schliferclinic.com>

#### **Black Youth Helpline**

Information, referral and support for black youth: provides parenting and school support. Tel: 416-285-9944. Website: <http://www.blackyouth.ca/>

#### **Family Services Association of Toronto**

Counseling services for people and families facing many issues, including violence, death, divorce, parenting problems, and depression; multiple languages. Tel: 416-595-9230 Website: <http://www.fsatotonto.com>

#### **Family Services Ontario**

Lists a number of family service organizations in Ontario. Website: <http://familyserviceontario.com>

#### **Naseeha Muslim Youth Helpline**

Support for Muslim youth: Monday to Friday, 6:00-9:00pm  
Tel: 1-866-NASEEHA (627-3342)  
Website: <http://www.naseeha.net>

#### **Women's Counseling, Referral and Education Centre**

Phone and e-mail referrals to affordable feminist counselors, therapists and other support service. Tel: 416-534-7501 email: [phoneline@wcrec.org](mailto:phoneline@wcrec.org)

### **General Resources for People with Disabilities**

**2-1-1** Website [www.211toronto.ca](http://www.211toronto.ca) -Provides 24 hour information and referrals to community-based and government services and programs.

**3-1-1** Website [www.toronto.ca/311](http://www.toronto.ca/311) -Provides 24 hour information and referrals to City of Toronto services and/or divisions for inquires such as garbage pick-up, daycare, emergency shelter, apartment repairs, etc.

**519 Church Street Community Centre** – 416-392-6874, Website [www.the519.org](http://www.the519.org) - Offers support to people who are gay, lesbian or transgendered, medical and psychiatric abuse survivors, and homeless people; programs are both for crisis and long term support

**Augmentative Communication Community Partnerships Canada (ACCPC)** - 416-444-9532,, E-mail: [accpc@sympatico.ca](mailto:accpc@sympatico.ca) Website <http://www.accpc.ca/>, 131 Barber Greene Rd., Toronto ON M3C 3Y5, -ACCPC promotes improved quality of life for individuals who use Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) by increasing social awareness and developing socially innovative projects to enhance community participation for people who use AAC.

**Anne Johnston Barrier Free Health Station** 416-486-8666, TTY: 416-486-6759, Website <http://www.ajhs.ca/ajhs.htm>, - Offers information on sexuality, a peer support program, counselling, and workshops on health issues for seniors and people with disabilities.

**Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre** – 416-396-7606, Website [www.bbnc.ca](http://www.bbnc.ca) - Programs are designed to provide quality, inclusive services that promote active living, wellness and full inclusion among persons with disabilities and illnesses. Program provides 1) information and referral services, and assistance with accessing community resources 2) counseling on diverse issues related to health and disability, 3) offers assistance with self-advocacy and 4) offers learning-based workshops on a wide range of disability-related topics.

**Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA)** – 416-944-0087 Website: [www.equalityrights.org/cera/](http://www.equalityrights.org/cera/) - Non-profit human rights organization that promotes human rights in housing and the removal of barriers that keep disadvantaged individuals and families from accessing and retaining the housing they need.

**Centre for Independent Living in Toronto** –416-599-2458, TTY:416-599-5077, E-mail: [ilskills@cilt.ca](mailto:ilskills@cilt.ca), Website: [www.cilt.ca](http://www.cilt.ca) - Offers support to people with disabilities in developing their independent living and self-advocacy skills, information and referral, peer support, parenting with a disability and information on applying for attendant services.

**Citizens With Disabilities – Ontario (CWD-O)** - Website: <http://cwdo.org/d/> CWD-O addresses the broader needs of persons with multiple disabilities, emphasizing the need to resolve systemic problems. CWD-O has established Local Action Committees (LACs) across Ontario, made up of disabled persons, their friends and relatives who will provide coordinated advocacy initiatives in four critical areas. 1) Accessibility 2) Employment 3) Housing 4) Transportation.

**Disability Issues Committee City of Toronto, - 416-392-0132**

Website: <http://www.toronto.ca/diversity/dica.htm> Diversity Management and Community Engagement, City Manager's Office, Toronto City Hall, 11th floor, East Tower, 100 Queen Street West, Toronto, ON M5H 2N2.

**DisAbled Women's Network (DAWN) Ontario Email:**

[dawnontario@sympatico.ca](mailto:dawnontario@sympatico.ca), Website: <http://dawn.thot.net> Box 1138 North Bay, ON P1B 8K4, -DAWN Ontario is the only provincial, feminist cross-disability organization in Ontario providing leadership in advocating for Inclusion and Equality of Women with DisAbilities.

**Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario (ERDCO)**– 416-657-2211, E-mail: [erdco\\_ca@yahoo.ca](mailto:erdco_ca@yahoo.ca), Website: <http://www.erdco.ca/> - ERDCO promotes inclusion and full citizenship for ethno-racial people with disabilities through the principles of anti-racism, anti-oppression, universal access and equity.

**The Gerstein Centre** Crisis Line: - 416-929-5200 Referrals Only: - 416-929-9897  
E-mail: [admin@gersteincentre.org](mailto:admin@gersteincentre.org)

Website: <http://gersteincentre.org/contact.html> -Provides crisis intervention to adults, living in the City of Toronto, who experience mental health problems. The Centre provides supportive counselling for immediate, crisis issues and referrals to other services for on-going, non-crisis issues.

**Health Services Appeal and Review Board (HSARB)** – 416- 327-8512,  
Website <http://www.hsarb.on.ca/english/> - Conduct appeals and reviews under fourteen different statues such as decisions of agencies under the *Long Term Care Act* respecting eligibility for service as well as other health services.

**Hearing Every Youth through Youth (HEY Y)**, - 416-423-4399, TTY: 1-888-423-4399 Website <http://hey.y.net/index.php> -It is a non-profit volunteer organization that runs an anonymous community phone line, designed by youth in Toronto. The phone is answered by youth volunteers who are skilled in dealing with many of the issues. Information is completely confidential and anonymous.

**Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC)** – 416-597-5820, Toll Free: 1-866-245-4072, E-mail: [isac@lao.on.ca](mailto:isac@lao.on.ca) , Website <http://incomesecurity.org/> 425 Adelaide Street West, 5th Floor, Toronto, ON ,M5V 3C1 -ISAC was established in 2001 by Legal Aid Ontario to serve low income Ontarians by conducting test case and Charter litigation relating to provincial and federal income security programs. These programs include Ontario Works (OW), the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), (un)Employment Insurance, and the Canada Pension Plan (CPP). ISAC's legal work takes place in the broader context of law reform, public legal education and community development.

**Landlord and Tenant Board** – 416-645-8080, Toll-free:1-888-332-3234, Website: [www.ltb.gov.on.ca](http://www.ltb.gov.on.ca) -Provides information on residential rental units and resolves disputes between most residential landlords and tenants. Staff can answer questions about: legislation that governs tenants, tenants' rights and responsibilities under the law, specific applications, rules on maintenance and repair of rental properties, and rules on automatic rent reductions.

**ODSP Action Coalition, Toronto Region** - E-mail:

[torontodisabilityaction@yahoo.ca](mailto:torontodisabilityaction@yahoo.ca),

Website:[www.geocities.com/torontodisabilityaction](http://www.geocities.com/torontodisabilityaction) -Toronto Region ODSP Action Coalition is open to all recipients, legal clinics, agencies, service providers, family and friends living and/or working in the GTA. They usually meet the last Friday of each month, at the 519 Church Street Community Centre.

**Ombudsman Ontario** –Complaints Line 1-800-263-1830, TTY 1-866-411-4211

Website [www.ombudsman.on.ca/](http://www.ombudsman.on.ca/) - Investigate complaints about provincial government organizations. When they find something wrong they can make recommendations to resolve the problem, and if these are not acted upon, they can report the case to the Legislature. The Ombudsman can also help resolve complaints informally.

**Ombudsman for the City of Toronto**, - 416-392-7062, TTY: - 416-392-7100,

Website: [ombuds@toronto.ca](mailto:ombuds@toronto.ca), -Its mandate is to address your concerns about the service you receive from the City of Toronto, and investigate complaints of administrative unfairness. The Office is independent from the city, impartial, and its services are both confidential and free of charge. It is an office of "last resort" – not your first stop. You must try to work out issues with the city division before presenting your case to the Ombudsman. The Office intends to be responsive and accountable to you and the City.

**Ontario Federation for Cerebral Palsy**– 416-244-9686, Website:

<http://www.ofcp.on.ca/> - The Ontario Federation for Cerebral Palsy is an organization committed to supporting independence, inclusion, choice and full integration of all persons with cerebral palsy .-To provide solutions, through service, advocacy and research, which further equal opportunity, self-sufficiency, dignity and quality of life.

**Ontario March of Dimes - Government Relations and Advocacy**, - 416-425-

3463, ext. 7326, E-mail: [advocacy@marchofdimes.ca](mailto:advocacy@marchofdimes.ca),

Website: <http://www.marchofdimes.ca/EN/ADVOCACY/Pages/Advocacy.aspx>

From crafting parliamentary submissions to hosting special events, Ontario March of Dimes' advocacy efforts are dedicated to the goal of full equality and participation in society for people with physical disabilities.

**Sherbourne Health Centre** - 416-324-4180, E-mail: [info@sherbourne.on.ca](mailto:info@sherbourne.on.ca),

Website <http://www.sherbourne.on.ca/> -Provides innovative primary health care,

counselling, support, outreach, health promotion and education programs to individuals of southeast Toronto. It offers a broad range of primary healthcare programs and services: family health team clinics, comprehensive Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) primary health care and health promotion, LGBT youth health and mentoring, LGBT parenting and families, mental health counselling, wellness workshops and support groups, homeless programs.

**Springtide Resources/Education Wife Assault** –416-968-3422, TTY: 416-968-7335, Website <http://www.springtideresources.org/> - Informs and educates the community about the issue of wife assault/woman abuse in order to decrease the incidence of physical, psychological, emotional and sexual violence against women and the effect that women abuse has on children.

**Voices from the Street**, (416)-504-1693 x. 228, Email: [speakersbureau@bellnet.ca](mailto:speakersbureau@bellnet.ca) – Voices from the Street is comprised of individuals who have had direct experience with homelessness, poverty, and/or mental health issues. The organization works to put a human face to homelessness and involves people with direct experience as leaders in a public education process. Each spring, twelve to fourteen individuals are chosen to take part in a training program—three days a week over a four-month period. The curriculum includes workshops on developing a personal narrative, public speaking skills, conflict resolution, developing key messages, facilitation skills, and diversity training.

## **IMPORTANT LEGAL PHONE NUMBERS**

### **ARCH, A Legal Resource Centre for Persons with Disabilities**

Telephone: (416) 482-8255

Toll Free: 1-866- 482-2724

TTY: (416) 482-1254

TTY Toll Free: 1-866- 482-2728

Fax: (416) 482-2981

Fax Toll Free: 1-866-881-2723

Website: <http://www.arch-online.org/>

### **Canadian Human Rights Commission**

Telephone: (416) 973-5527

E-mail: [info.com@chrc-ccdp.ca](mailto:info.com@chrc-ccdp.ca)

Toll Free: 1-888-214-1090

Website: <http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/>

Fax: (416) 973-6184

TTY: 1-888-643-3304

### **Community Legal Education Ontario (CLEO)**

Telephone: 416-408-4420

E-mail: [cleo@cleo.on.ca](mailto:cleo@cleo.on.ca)

Fax: 416-408-4424

Website: <http://www.cleo.on.ca/>

### **Legal Aid Ontario (LAO)**

Telephone: (416) 979-1446

E-mail: [info@lao.on.ca](mailto:info@lao.on.ca)

Toll Free: 1-800-668-8258

Website: <http://www.legalaid.on.ca/>

Fax: (416) 979-8669

TTY: 416-598-8867

### **The Law Society of Upper Canada**

Telephone: 416-947-3300

E-mail: [lawsociety@lsuc.on.ca](mailto:lawsociety@lsuc.on.ca)

Fax: 416-947-5263

Website: <http://www.lsuc.on.ca/>

### **Ontario Community Legal Clinics**

<http://www.legalaid.on.ca/en/area.asp#toronto>

### **Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC)**

Inquiries: (416) 326-9511

Toll Free: 1-800-387-9080

TTY (Local) (416) 314-6526

TTY (Toll Free) 1-800-308-5561

E-mail: [info@ohrc.on.ca](mailto:info@ohrc.on.ca)

Website: <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/>

**To Stay in Contact With the Safe Engaged Environments  
Disability (SEED) project group, please join our Facebook  
page:**

**SEED Facebook Page:**

[http://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group\\_127635667313687](http://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group_127635667313687)

## **APPENDIX I: The Safety Ambassador Project Proposal**

1. The Safety Ambassador Project would form a steering committee consisting of a majority of people with disabilities as well as community partners who represent people with disabilities to oversee the Safety Ambassador Project.
2. The Project would be “train the trainer”. People with disabilities would be the Safety Ambassadors.
3. The Project would develop an application process whereby those interested could apply to become Safety Ambassadors.
4. The Project would hire a coordinator to guide, train, and supervise Safety Ambassadors.
5. The Safety Ambassador Coordinator, in conjunction with the Safety Ambassadors, would do interactive presentations or workshops based on safety issues raised by people with disabilities such as the SEED Final Report and AODA customer service standards. The Safety Ambassadors would raise disability and safety awareness to first responders, i.e. police, fire, ambulance workers, medical clinicians, other disability organizations, government, frontline workers, colleges and universities, etc. The presentations would allow for feedback and evaluations, so that the Project could keep improving, learning and engaging.