

REGION OF OTTAWA-CARLETON  
RÉGION D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

REPORT  
RAPPORT

Our File/N/Réf.                      03-07-98-0127  
Your File/V/Réf.

DATE                                      20 October 1998

TO/DEST.                                Community Services Committee

FROM/EXP.                              Committee Co-ordinator

SUBJECT/OBJET                        **PRESENTATION - ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

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**REPORT RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Community Services Committee receive a presentation from the Ottawa-Carleton Multiple Sclerosis Social Action Committee.**

**BACKGROUND**

A request has been received from Mr. Alf Gunter, Chair, Ottawa-Carleton Multiple Sclerosis Action Committee, to make a presentation to the Committee on the Ontarians With Disabilities Act.

A fact sheet provided by Mr. Gunter is attached for reference.

This report is respectfully submitted.

*Approved by*  
*M. J. Beauregard*

Attach: (1)

**Presentation to Community Services Committee  
of the  
Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton  
re  
ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

It is expected that the Government of Ontario will introduce the Ontarians With Disabilities Act (ODA) to the Legislature in November of this year. This will keep a promise made by Premier Mike Harris during the election campaign of 1995. Various groups representing the disabled community have been lobbying the Government during their entire term of office in an attempt to obtain legislation that would allow persons with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate fully in society. This would require that province-wide standards of accessibility be developed in key areas, such as transportation, employment, and the provision of services and facilities to the public. The Government finally issued a discussion document this summer. Unfortunately, the document was so restrictive in scope and lacking in several key areas that legislation based on it would be of little, if any, value to disabled persons.

The three groups before you today have all played a significant role in this lobbying process. The ODA Committee is an ad hoc committee, which represents many organizations of persons with disabilities. They prepared an extensive position paper for the government's consideration and have also appeared before government representatives and the press at every available opportunity. The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada (MS Society) has spoken through its Ontario Division arm, and its President and the Ontario Social Action Committee, in particular. Although the MS Society represents only one disease, there are 12,000 persons in Ontario with MS, and they have a wide variety of disabilities. The MS Society appeared before the minister on August 04 and submitted a position paper on September 04. Disabled Persons Community Resources is an Ottawa-Carleton based organization that has made great strides in assisting disabled persons in this community. They have taken every opportunity available to them to lobby the government, both orally before the ministry in August and by offering a position paper.

All groups representing the disabled community, including those before you today, have similar views on the issues that need to be addressed by an ODA. Much of the legislation must be mandatory, as voluntary measures simply do not work. There must also be an enforcement mechanism, separate from the standard Human Rights Commission, which is experiencing delays in excess of five years. Also, priorities need to be established and a timetable agreed to. These are only some of the major issues that all groups consider important.

Alf Gunter, Chair, O-C MS Social Action Committee  
October 1998