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VIA E-Mail and Chapter Mail

**Distribution:**

Chapter/ Unit Chairs & Executive Directors  
Ontario Government and Community Social Action Committee  
Ontario Executive Committee & Board  
Social Action E-Network  
Client Services/ Chapter Resources Staff  
*(Please forward to other interested members)*

**Government Relations and Social Action Alert**

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**Ontarians with Disabilities Act**

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) 2004 (Bill 118) was unanimously approved at second reading in the Ontario legislature on December 2 and sent to the Standing Committee on Social Policy for further review. If passed – which seems very likely early in 2005 – the legislation would replace the current ODA approved in 2001.

The proposed legislation is a dramatic improvement over the existing legislation and would set mandatory and enforceable accessibility standards in the public and private sectors, features lacking from the current ODA. The proposed legislation meets a number of MS Society of Canada recommendations, which we made during the consultations held earlier this year.

One criticism is that the full effect of the legislation would not come into force until 2025, although there would be accessibility standards to be met every five years. In addition, the bill does not provide financial support to meet the accessibility standards. The MS Society will provide input to the Social Policy Committee when it reviews the legislation beginning in the new year.

If you have any comments on the proposed legislation, please provide them to the Ontario Government and Community Social Action Committee c/o Deanna Groetzinger: e-mail: [deanna.groetzinger@mssociety.ca](mailto:deanna.groetzinger@mssociety.ca) or fax: 419 922-7538.

## **Vehicle modification program response**

Many people wrote, e-mailed and phoned in response to the article in the September 2004 *MS Ontario* about the cancellation of the Retail Sales Tax Rebate. The article also contained information about an expansion to the Home and Vehicle Modification Program.

The MS Society is taking these concerns to the Minister of Community and Social Services and to the Minister of Finance. A number of people pointed out the cancellation seemed arbitrary and unfair.

People with MS and their families are also encouraged to apply to the Home and Vehicle Modification Program, which is administered by the Ontario March of Dimes. Go to [www.dimes.on.ca](http://www.dimes.on.ca) and click on Programs and Services and then on AccessAbility™ or call 1-877-369-4867.

## **Consultations on CCAC competitive bidding process and Local Health Integration Networks**

During November and early December, MS Society representatives from both the division office and chapters have been involved in numerous consultations and workshops designed to improve the way the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care provides services. We let the government know how it could better improve services for people with MS.

The Ministry of Health and Long-term Care is examining how CCACs deliver services through external agencies and companies which are chosen through a competitive bidding process. Almost people with MS responded to an MS Society survey to find out how people with MS are affected by the bidding process, which at times results in a change to the agencies or companies providing services. On December 15, Deanna Groetzinger, vice-president, Communications, and Marny Hamilton, assistant vice-president, Client Services, will meet with Elinor Caplan, who is leading the review, to provide details from the survey.

MS Society volunteers and staff also participated in workshops about the proposed Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs), which is the new way the provincial government will coordinate service delivery. If the process goes ahead as anticipated, the 14 new LHINs will come into effect on April 1, 2005. Between now and April 1, the MS Society and many others will be providing input into this new way of delivering services in the community.

For more information, go to the Ministry of Health website at [www.health.gov.on.ca](http://www.health.gov.on.ca). At the upper left hand side of the screen, click on Transforming Health Care and then click on Local Health Integration Networks.

## **Government Relations and Social Action Alerts Online**

The Government Relations and Social Action Alert newsletter is available online. This issue and previous ones are posted to the MS Society website. Just go to [www.mssociety.ca/ontario](http://www.mssociety.ca/ontario) and click on Social Action.

Deanna Groetzinger  
Vice-President, Communications

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