



The “Special Needs” Planner

Prepared by Graeme Treeby of The “Special Needs” Planning Group

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Enriching Lives

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ODSP Updates

The Ontario Disability Support Program has been changed effective November 1, 2006. Many of these changes can be viewed as enhancing the lives of people with disabilities. The changes can be categorized as:

Finding Work:

Improved access to a range of employment services, such as job placement and retention services, to help ODSP recipients find real, sustainable jobs.

Increasing the employment start-up benefit from \$253 to \$500 to help recipients cover the costs of participating in a training program, looking for, starting or changing jobs. (e.g., uniform, equipment, professional fees)

Providing up to \$600 for up-front informal child care costs while recipients look for a job, participate in training or start a new job.

Introducing employment requirements for spouses who do not have a disability or care giving responsibilities and giving them better access to employment services to help them find jobs so they can contribute to improving the lives of their families.

Keeping More of What They Earn:

Replacing the current \$160 employment earnings exemption with a 50% flat rate exemption combined with a new \$100 monthly work related benefit for each adult family member who is working.

Increasing the maximum amount recipients can deduct for informal child care from \$390 to \$600 per month.

Increasing the deduction for disability work related expenses such as attendant care and specialized technology or equipment from \$140 to \$300 per month.

Moving Toward Financial Independence:

Providing ongoing health related benefits to recipients who leave ODSP for employment until they receive employer health coverage so that people don't have to worry about how they will pay for their prescription drug, dental and vision care expenses.

Creating a new, one-time employment transition benefit of \$500 for recipients who leave ODSP for employment to help cover the costs of starting a job.

Improving rapid reinstatement rules to allow recipients who leave ODSP for employment to return to ODSP at any time if their job does not work out.

ODSP Rate Increases by 2%

The March 23, 2006 Provincial budget announced a rate increase of 2%. The Room and Board allowance will increase from \$730 per month to \$745 and the maximum Individual allowance will increase from \$958 per month to \$977.

Where There's a Will, There's a Way!!

As parents of people with disabilities, we all know that the future for our loved ones depends on how effective we are at planning our affairs. Then why is it that so many of us have not yet completed our wills and Henson Trusts? Without these documents, it is unlikely that our wishes will be carried out when we die. Therefore, we encourage you to complete your wills and trusts. If you need a lawyer who knows what to do, contact us and we will send you a list.



Hospital Window

(A great note for all to read it will take just 37 seconds to read this and change your thinking:)

Two men, both seriously ill, occupied the same hospital room. One man was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour each afternoon to help drain the fluid from his lungs. His bed was next to the room's only window. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back. The men talked for hours on end. They spoke of their wives and families, their homes, their jobs, their involvement in the military service, where they had been on vacation.

Every afternoon when the man in the bed by the window could sit up, he would pass the time by describing to his roommate all the things he could see outside the window. The man in the other bed began to live for those one hour periods where his world would be broadened and enlivened by all the activity and colour of the world outside. The window overlooked a park with a lovely lake. Ducks and swans played on the water while children sailed their model boats. Young lovers walked arm in arm amidst flowers of every colour and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance. As the man by the window described all this in exquisite detail, the man on the other side of the room would close his eyes and imagine the picturesque scene. One warm afternoon the man by the window described a parade passing by. Although the other man couldn't hear the band - he could see it. In his mind's eye as the gentleman by the window portrayed it with descriptive words.

One morning, the day nurse arrived to bring water for their baths only to find the lifeless body of the man by the window, who had died peacefully in his sleep. She was saddened and called the hospital attendants to take the body away. As soon as it seemed appropriate, the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to make the switch, and after making sure he was comfortable, she left him alone. Slowly, painfully, he propped himself up on one elbow to take his first look at the real world outside. He strained to slowly turn to look out the window beside the bed. It faced a blank wall.

The man asked the nurse what could have compelled his deceased roommate who had described such wonderful things outside this window. The nurse responded that the man was blind and could not even see the wall. She said, "Perhaps he just wanted to encourage you."

Epilogue:

There is tremendous happiness in making others happy, despite our own situations. Shared grief is half the sorrow, but happiness when shared, is doubled. If you want to feel rich, just count all the things you have that money can't buy.

"Today is a gift, that's why it is called the Present"

From the Editor:

Our lives often become far too focused on the facts and figures of our family member's disabilities. Sometimes we just need to read something for the pleasure it provides. I have found these short stories to be an inspiration and a joy to me and hope that they have a special place in your hearts too. Over the years, people have forwarded them to me knowing that they need to be shared with people in our community. If you have any inspirations like these, I'd love to hear from you.

For information or comments, Contact:

Graeme Treeby at: (905) 640-8285

or

graemetreeby@sympatico.ca

www.specialneedsplanning.ca



The "Special Needs" Planning Group, 70 Ivy Cres, Stouffville, Ontario, L4A 5A9