

LEADING THE WAY

07/19/2010 - By Bryan Barbour & David Clark



L-R: Bryan Barbour, Mayor Gwen Gilbert, David M. Clark

Leading the way in Sarnia Mayor Mike Bradley's challenge that went out to all mayors throughout Ontario to "do the right thing and take up the challenge of hiring persons who have a disability".

Mayor Gwen Gilbert and Council of the Town of South Bruce Peninsula recently passed a resolution to "support the promotion of hiring individuals with disabilities in our business community" and that the "Town of South Bruce Peninsula lead the way by example". Mayor Gilbert and Council had accepted Sarnia Mayor Mike Bradley's challenge that went out to all mayors throughout Ontario to "do the right thing and take up the challenge of hiring persons who have a disability". This challenge was put forth by Mayor Bradley on January 26. Bryan Barbour and David Clark brought the challenge to Mayor Gilbert for consideration at the April 27th council meeting, at which they highlighted the background of the challenge, and presented information about their own challenges of getting work for people with disabilities. Barbour is the manager of Support Services with Bruce Peninsula Association of Community Living, and Clark is the Employment coordinator of Bruce Grey Shores Employment Services (a non-profit employment service for people with disabilities). "Many business owners have been very supportive of our efforts, and our goal is to continue to earn their respect and support" stated Clark.

Mayor Gilbert and the Council of the Town of South Bruce Peninsula are the first, as far as we know, in Grey and Bruce Counties to accept the challenge. Mayor Gilbert said, "Council was very pleased to accept the challenge by Mayor Bradley and are encouraging businesses to hire people with disabilities. We have discussed with administration about the possibility of work opportunities within our own municipal structure for those with a disability." By doing so, they are leading the way in supporting people with disabilities to have the ability to engage fully as citizens in their communities. Studies have shown that people with disabilities, which can include physical, intellectual, and psychological, are real assets to employers.

Various studies have shown that workers with disabilities, when compared to non-disabled

workers, are often on par with or exceed performance measures such as attendance, safety, quality of work, and have less job turn-over. Further, WSIB premiums are not adversely affected, job accommodation costs are usually less than \$500, and a UK study showed that people who have a disability together with their immediate family and friends, comprise 25% of the marketplace.

“We still run into employers who are not convinced” states Clark. There is stigma associated with disability, no matter what the studies show, but we plug along making gains with each successful job-match we get. “Matching employer’s needs with clients skills and experiences, combined with support to employers and employees, equals success”. From one of our participants: “[A job] gives him skills. . . lets him earn some extra money” and he “feels good working”. He is proud of his work. He wants his employer to be “happy with his work” and that the employer “knows he picked the right person [for the job].

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