

Dear Editor:

Recently there has been a great deal of media coverage on the efforts of some families to have Bill 1148 (employment standards legislation) amended to allow for people who have intellectual disabilities to be paid less than employees who do not have a disability. As agencies that have worked towards ensuring that people with disabilities are not segregated or considered "less" in society, we were saddened to see this.

Community Living Ontario and Community Living Upper Ottawa valley hold the position that if a person is to be considered an employee of a workplace, they deserve to be treated like all other employees. They should be allowed to eat lunch in the same lunchroom, they should be allowed to use the same washrooms and the employment standards of what they are paid should be as applicable to them as someone without a disability. This is true employment.

Employees who have an intellectual disability who are in the workforce hold a variety of different jobs: full-time, part-time, casual, contract, temporary and permanent. They all choose what type of commitment they wish to make towards employment, as do any of us. Not every person is suited to every kind of job - we all have different strengths and abilities. The key is finding that match, and that's something Community Living Upper Ottawa Valley has a great template of success that can be shared to help everyone achieve their full potential.

Instead of amending legislation to pay someone who has an intellectual disability less, let's work together to show employers and the community, how to be inclusive. At their core, most people believe in fairness and equality and are proud to be part of that message.

It is important in our community, and across all of Ontario, that we do not revert to the days where people with disabilities were segregated from society. As a region, Renfrew County has been an inclusion leader in Ontario. Let us continue that great tradition. Please reach out to either of us for assistance.

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