



## ***MEDIA RELEASE***

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### **Disabilities rights subject of workshop**

**Belleville/Nov. 27, 2012** – About one hundred people came to learn more about emerging rights for people with disabilities at a recent workshop.

The workshop addressed questions including: what are the emerging legal rights issues for people with disabilities? what challenges do these people face due to cutbacks in special funding programs? how can services be improved to make them more accessible to people with disabilities?

The Community Advocacy & Legal Centre, based in Belleville, provided the workshop in partnership with the Toronto-based ARCH Disability Law Centre. Those in attendance included individuals with disabilities and representatives of organizations who work with them.

Michele Leering, executive director of CALC opened the session. She said the organizers want to increase knowledge and understanding of the legal issues, especially among “people who help people who need help.”

Leering introduced Laurie Letheren, a staff lawyer with ARCH who outlined the challenges. Letheren explained that at her organization, which covers the entire province, all the clients are people with disabilities. ARCH provides telephone summary advice and helps individuals get legal help. From the calls it receives, ARCH identifies “test cases” which it takes on to challenge a law or government initiative. She gave the example of Emily Eaton, a young girl with disabilities who wanted to attend a regular school. The fight with her school board took 18 years. The decision, when it came, was too late to help Emily, but may help others.

Letheren outlined several emerging issues for those with disabilities. They included the right to full inclusion, which she called “the grand objective our work is trying to promote.” Another issue is the right of those with disabilities to make their own decisions. “People have the right to make bad decisions,” said Letheren, adding that the person with disabilities must understand the challenges and knows the consequences. The challenges of using technology and the right to have disability needs accommodated were also of concern. “Accommodations aren’t luxuries, they are essential,” said Letheren.

Following Letheren’s address, Dan McCabe, a lawyer with CALC spoke about two planned cuts to provincial social assistance programs which he described as “very troubling.” The cuts are planned to the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit and the Home repairs Benefit. CALC describes the two programs as “homelessness prevention benefits” and urges the public to call or visit local MPPs to ask that the cuts be reversed. Petitions are available at CALC offices at 158 George Street and its satellite offices in Bancroft, Madoc, Napanee, Picton and Trenton. The petition is also available at the office of MPP Todd Smith.

For more information call CALC at 613-966-8686 (toll free at 1-877-966-8714; TTY at 613-966-8714) or visit [www.communitylegalcentre.ca](http://www.communitylegalcentre.ca).

The Community Advocacy & Legal Centre (CALC) is a non-profit community legal clinic principally funded by Legal Aid Ontario. The clinic was founded in 1980 and provides poverty law services to low income residents of Hastings, Prince Edward and Lennox & Addington counties. The clinic's main office is in Belleville, with satellite locations in Trenton, Picton, Napanee, Amherstview, Bancroft and Madoc. For more information, visit CALC's website at [www.communitylegalcentre.ca](http://www.communitylegalcentre.ca).

For further information about the contents of this press release, please call Michele Leering, Executive Director, at 613-966-8686, ext 27 or Toll Free at 1-877-966-8686, ext 27.

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