



ABILITIES CENTRE OTTAWA

A community hub for healthy living

THE NEED

The Abilities Centre Ottawa will meet an already pressing need in our region and will prepare the city to address the needs of an increasing proportion of its population that will benefit from the recreational, training and rehabilitative services and programs that it is uniquely designed to deliver. Ottawa's Abilities Centre, now in the preliminary stages of development, will be a community hub for healthy living where everyone is welcomed.

One in seven Canadians are living with inherited or acquired health conditions that impact their activities of daily living, such as difficulty walking, lack of dexterity to open a jar, ability to read or hear without aids, and the effects on learning and memory caused by dementia or brain injuries. (Statistics Canada, 2014).

In Ottawa and its surrounding area, programs and facilities that promote healthy active living, rehabilitation and recreation that can meet the needs of persons with activity limitations are few. Those that do exist are generally not equipped or staffed to work safely and effectively with people of every age and ability. Or, they are designed only for people with disabilities, thereby perpetuating their isolation and exclusion from the larger community.

As a result, a significant number of people in our region with physical or cognitive limitations lack access to amenities and services that many of us take for granted. These people include 7,000 children under 14; 90,000 adults; and more than 67,000 seniors (65+).

THE SOLUTION

The Abilities Centre Ottawa

Abilities Centre Ottawa, which is modelled after Whitby's successful initiative, will welcome all residents of our city and neighbouring communities, regardless of age or ability.

For this unique community resource to succeed, the user base must include a significant number of community members who choose it as their preferred fitness and recreational facility.

To attract this user base, the Abilities Centre Ottawa will meet the needs and interests of **everyone**; whether their need is to maintain or improve health, train for competition, recover from an accident or medical procedure or better manage physical, emotional and behavioural challenges. All members will benefit from our community's investment in Ottawa's first-ever fully inclusive recreational facility. Regardless of ability, everyone can participate in physical fitness programs, arts, music and life skills training in a safe, comfortable and welcoming environment.

To address the diverse, unique needs of members, clients and families, and to ensure universal access to all, the Abilities Centre will:

- acquire state of the art fitness equipment
- employ and train knowledgeable staff
- provide specifically tailored programs
- ensure that the necessary supports (transportation, social services, counselling, etc.) are properly coordinated

A successful facility based on this business model already exists in Whitby, Ontario. The Abilities Centre–Durham Region has received international awards and provides an example of a viable, well-managed and financially sustainable healthy living facility.

All phases of planning, development and construction of our own multi-purpose Abilities Centre Ottawa will leverage the experience of the Whitby Centre's leadership. They are committed to provide strategic advice and tangible support.

The late Jim Flaherty worked diligently to ensure that the Abilities Centre—Durham Region succeeded. He was inspired by his dream that it would be the first of many similar projects across Canada. As a result, the Whitby Centre is offering its enthusiastic cooperation to the Ottawa project.

AMENITIES

The centrepiece of Ottawa's Abilities Centre will be the Field House, comprising

- three full-sized basketball courts (one converts to an indoor soccer pitch)
- a 200-metre six-lane track for training, rehabilitation and national/international competitive events.

The Field House will be surrounded by

- exercise rooms with universally accessible cardio/fitness and weight-training equipment
- fully accessible locker rooms, shower rooms and bathrooms
- life skills training rooms equipped with kitchens and bathrooms designed to facilitate recovery from debilitating illness or accident and to regain independence
- a theatre
- music and art spaces to support the Centre's recreational and leisure programs (spaces that could also be rented to other community groups when needed)
- a therapeutic pool
- 15,000 square feet of commercial rental space specifically designed to accommodate sport organizations (for athletes and Para-athletes), which will benefit from economies of scale, shared infrastructure costs and coordinated services and programs.

Equipped in these ways, the Abilities Centre Ottawa will, in addition to fulfilling its primary role as an inclusive and accessible recreational facility, serve Ottawa as a:

- designated 'emergency preparedness centre' uniquely equipped to provide care and support to all persons with and without disabilities at times of major catastrophe (flood, power outage, toxic spill, ice storm, security threat, etc.)
- site for local, regional, provincial, national or international competitions

- resource to Ottawa's health services professionals pursuing innovative research into recreation and its established and potential role in healthy living and rehabilitation
- facility space that can be rented for large events/conferences

CAPITAL BUDGET

Taking the experience of the Abilities Centre–Durham Region into account, adjusting for inflation and considering the specific requirements of the National Capital region, it is estimated that the required Capital Budget to design and build Ottawa's own Abilities Centre is approximately \$50 million. We anticipate that funds will be secured from all levels of government and private contributions (corporations, foundations, and individuals) in roughly equal shares.

CHARITABLE STATUS

The Abilities Centre Ottawa is incorporated as a private not-for-profit organization. We anticipate receiving a registered charitable designation in the coming months. Until our designation is finalized, the Abilities Centre Foundation–Durham Region has kindly agreed to issue tax receipts on our behalf to those visionary investors who are prepared to support a truly accessible and inclusive resource for the people of Canada's capital city in its early stages.

LEADERSHIP

To date, the Abilities Centre initiative is being championed by a small group of committed individuals serving as the Centre's Founding Board of Directors (See Appendix A). They are supported by a strong Advisory Committee. As well, interest has been expressed by officials within the federal, provincial and municipal governments, the property development industry and other major employers and individuals with experience stewarding projects of a similar scale.

Two individuals have inspired this project and are attracting supporters. Recreation Therapist **Emily Glossop** has supported the development and dreams of hundreds of children living with serious physical, emotional and

behavioural challenges. She also calls upon her experience as a guide to one of Canada's most successful Para-Alpine skiers. A passionate advocate for inclusion, Emily has witnessed the determination and accomplishments of children and adults who have achieved more than they, their families or their communities could ever imagine.

Todd Nicholson led Canada's National Paralympic Sledge Hockey Team for over 15 years as Captain. During his 23 years on the national team, Todd competed in five Winter Paralympic Games, numerous world championships and international tournaments. Respected and recognized for his longstanding commitment and his experience as a Parasport athlete, Todd was inducted into the Ottawa Sports Hall of Fame in 2014. He is currently the Chairperson, International Paralympic Committee Athlete Council and a member of the International Olympic Committee Athletes Commission. He serves on the Governing Board of the International Paralympic Committee where he represents all athletes from all sports and all nations within the Paralympic movement.

NEXT STEPS

The immediate next step toward opening Ottawa's Abilities Centre in 2020 is securing the support, commitment and expertise required to launch a capital fundraising campaign and oversee the property acquisition and facility design. These are people who share a vision of a community that provides equal resources and opportunity to all.

For more information, please visit our website at www.AbilitiesCentreOttawa.org or email Emily Glossop at AbilitiesCentreOttawa@gmail.com