

September 13, 2024

RE: Join Us in Celebrating October as NDEAM

As you know, **Community Living Essex County** provides supports and services to over 700 children, youth, and adults with intellectual disabilities. Our aim is to help the people we support lead full, meaningful, and active lives in the community – including through gainful and purposeful employment.

October is **National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)**, a time to acknowledge and celebrate the workplace contributions of people with disabilities and the business successes and benefits of hiring a diverse, inclusive workforce.

This year, it's more important than ever to recognize the contributions of people with disabilities to workplaces, communities, and society – and to acknowledge that there is still much work to be done. A proclamation of Disability Employment Awareness Month will help spread awareness and further champion our cause.

Many local businesses are focused on staying open and meeting their staffing needs. With several sectors facing labor shortages in the coming decade, this hidden talent pool of educated and skilled individuals can help businesses expand their base of qualified candidates and prepare for the future.

For this reason, I am writing to ask that you proclaim October as Disability Employment Awareness Month in your Township. Your support will add to the celebration of the workplace accomplishments of people with disabilities across Essex County.

I also invite you to participate in a national event this October to further celebrate. We are participating in the **Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN)**, the **Canadian Association for Supported Employment (CASE)**, and the **MentorAbility Canada Initiative** in a coordinated national event called **Light It Up! For NDEAM**.

The event, started by ODEN in 2020, is happening on **Thursday, October 17th**, and will see buildings, businesses, municipal signs, landmarks, and bridges across the country lit in purple and blue for one night. Light It Up for NDEAM recognizes National Disability Employment Awareness Month and highlights how people with disabilities contribute to businesses and communities across Canada, helping companies succeed and stay competitive.

Please consider participating. Last year, almost 700 locations in 150 communities across Canada took part, and I would love to see our local communities help showcase inclusiveness across Essex County.

Sincerely,

Karen Bolger
Executive Director,
Community Living Essex County



