



BELLWOODS COMMUNITY  
ADVISORY COUNCIL (BCAC)

# IT'S TIME TO HAVE OUR VOICES HEARD

## About Bellwoods

Bellwoods is a charitable, not-for-profit organization that provides community-based support services for adults with physical disabilities, empowering them to live independently within the community. Our team of Personal Support Workers (PSWs) and Independent Living (IL) staff deliver services to clients residing at one of our supportive housing sites or through Attendant Outreach (AO) services, which are offered in clients' homes, at school, or in their place of employment. We also provide a Reintegration Care Unit, a short-term transition program designed to assist individuals in reintegrating into the community following an illness or debilitating injury.

## About Bellwoods' Community Advisory Council (BCAC)

Bellwoods Community Advisory Council (BCAC) serves in an advisory capacity and reports directly to the Bellwoods Board of Directors. The Council provides a platform for client representatives and allies to collaborate, share insights, and exchange information on program and service planning at Bellwoods. It also plays a critical role in addressing broader systemic issues that impact the lives of individuals with disabilities. The Council is committed to supporting the development and implementation of Independent Living services both within Bellwoods and the wider community. The Council works to advocate for the rights and needs of people with disabilities, ensuring their voices are heard at every level.





## BCAC's Advocacy Work

BCAC continues to raise growing concerns over the lack of progress in addressing the needs and rights of people with disabilities. The absence of tangible action in critical areas continues to affect Bellwoods' clients and millions of Canadians living with disabilities. For example:

- There remains no clear plan to fulfill the promises made regarding the Canada Disability Pension.
- Staff shortages in the community services sector persist, compromising the quality of support.
- Accessibility issues persist, despite existing laws like the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) (2005) and other relevant accessibility policies.

BCAC calls for real leadership and a commitment to action from all levels of government—one that demonstrates courage, determination, and activism in support of the rights and well-being of people with disabilities.

## BCAC Advocacy Survey Findings

In Spring 2024, BCAC conducted a client advocacy survey to better understand the most pressing issues for the disability community. The survey revealed the following as the “most important advocacy issues” for people with disabilities:

1. Accessibility
2. Access to an enhanced continuum of professional supports (e.g., OT, PT, Mental Health services)
3. Adequate housing
4. Healthcare (access to and quality of services)
5. Adequate income (e.g., Canada Disability Benefit, Disability Tax Credit)
6. Enhanced PSW support

However, when asked to prioritize the “most important advocacy issues” that BCAC and Bellwoods should focus on, respondents indicated the following shift in order of importance:

1. Enhanced PSW support
2. Access to an enhanced continuum of professional supports
3. Healthcare (access to and quality of services)
4. Accessibility
5. Adequate income

*These results emphasize the need for immediate attention to enhance PSW support and ensure a robust continuum of professional care to meet the diverse needs of people with disabilities.*



## Client Suggestions for Increased Involvement in Advocacy Efforts

Clients also shared valuable suggestions for increasing client involvement in advocacy and ensuring a stronger, united voice for the disability community. These suggestions include:

**Accessibility:** *Ensure that all events, materials, and communications are fully accessible to people of all abilities.*

**Inclusive Events:** *Plan activities and events that welcome people of all abilities and foster a sense of community.*

**Policy Advocacy:** *Advocate for laws and regulations that protect and promote the rights of people with disabilities, ensuring they have an equal opportunity to participate in society.*

**Collaboration:** *Build stronger relationships and networks with other organizations and individuals within the disability community to amplify our collective voice and work toward common goals.*

**Education & Training:** *Provide training, resources, and support to help people with disabilities develop their advocacy skills. This includes public speaking, networking, and policy analysis, empowering individuals to be strong advocates for themselves and their communities.*

## Moving Forward: Your Role in Advocacy

BCAC remains steadfast in our mission to promote inclusivity and accessibility for all. However, change requires collective effort. We encourage all clients, families, staff, and community members to engage in advocacy work and help push for the changes we urgently need. Together, we can ensure that the voices of people with disabilities are heard loud and clear at the policy table, driving forward positive change in health care, housing, accessibility, and more.

*Let's work together to build a more inclusive, accessible society for all people, regardless of ability.*

