

CANADA - ISRAEL INCLUSION MISSION

FEBRUARY 12 -20, 2019



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 11, 2019

INAUGURAL INCLUSION MISSION SETS OFF FOR ISRAEL

TORONTO, Ontario, Canada - Today, leaders and supporters from disability-serving organizations from across Canada begin a nine-day Canada-Israel Inclusion Mission to learn about ground-breaking Israeli models of accessibility and service provision. This is the first Canadian mission to Israel focused on disability and inclusion.

Israel is a world leader in technology and services supporting people with various disabilities. While there, delegates will experience a wide range of disability-focused innovations, including:

- ReWalk Robotics in Yokneam, an innovative medical devices company that is designing, developing, and commercializing exoskeletons allowing wheelchair-bound individuals to stand and walk.
- Lotem, Paratrek, and Nachal HaShofet, which work to make the beauty of nature accessible for people with disabilities.
- Beit Issie Shapiro, Israel's leading developer and provider of innovative therapies and state-of-the-art services for children and adults across the entire range of disabilities impacting on over half a million people annually.

Delegates represent a wide variety of organizations serving many communities, including Safehaven, Christian Horizons, and Community Living Toronto. A complete list of participating organizations can be found below. Sector leaders will also be joined by Pam Damoff, MP (L, Oakville North – Burlington, ON), Bryan May, MP (L, Cambridge, ON), John Barlow, MP (C, Foothills, AB).

The mission is co-hosted by Reena, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, and March of Dimes Canada and in Israel by Israel Elwyn, Joint Distribution Committee, Beit Issie Shapiro and Israel4All. A brief description of each organization is included below.

The opening program will be a panel discussion hosted by the Canadian Ambassador to Israel, Her Excellency Deborah Lyons, at her official residence.

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We wish to acknowledge the sponsorship of Reena Foundation and Azrieli Foundation who helped make this trip accessible.

A special thank you to CIJA (Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs), the Canadian Ambassador to Israel and the Israeli Consulate in Toronto for all of their assistance.

Follow the Inclusion Mission and updates from the field at #IsraelInclusion2019.

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- 30 -

CANADA - ISRAEL INCLUSION MISSION

FEBRUARY 12 -20, 2019



Reena is a non-profit organization which promotes dignity, individuality, independence, personal growth and community inclusion for people with developmental disabilities within a framework of Jewish culture and values. Since its inception in 1973, Reena has been a pioneer in the field, implementing new and creative ways of fostering inclusiveness and ensuring the rights of people with developmental disabilities. Its responsiveness to both the community and government has enabled the agency to grow to serve 1000 individuals and their families, each according to their needs, through a variety of programs – residential services, day programs, family respite and social programs, counselling and advocacy as well as training and professional development for staff and volunteers. Reena today manages an annual budget of \$47 million, \$50 million in capital assets reflecting over 30 locations across the Greater Toronto Area and is a transfer payment agency of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Ontario.

Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital creates a world of possibility by supporting children and youth living with disability, medical complexity, illness and injury. Established in 1899, Holland Bloorview is located in Toronto and serves children and youth from across Ontario and Canada. The hospital sees over 2,000 unique diagnoses annually, including brain injury, cerebral palsy and developmental delay. A holistic approach is taken to assist young people in achieving their goals. This includes physical and cognitive development as well as life skills such as employment readiness, transitioning to adult services and friendship. Children and youth also have access to programming in music, arts, fitness, science and technology. Holland Bloorview is guided by a goal to lead and model social change by eliminating stigma aimed at kids and youth living with disability. The vision of Holland Bloorview is to create the most meaningful and healthy futures for all children, youth and families.

March of Dimes Canada - March of Dimes is a community-based rehabilitation and advocacy charity for people with physical disabilities. Our goal is to enhance the independence and community participation of people with physical disabilities every day through a wide range of programs and services across the country.

March of Dimes Canada believes that everyone, regardless of physical or financial challenges deserves to be independent, able to work, learn and participate fully in their community.

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Israel Elwyn

Israel Elwyn believes in the principle of *inclusion* and that everyone has the right to be a full part of the community. Founded in 1984, Israel Elwyn today serves more than 4,500 children and adults with disabilities throughout Israel. Israel Elwyn's ultimate goal is to provide individuals with tools enabling them to make decisions about their own lives and to gain more independence for living and working in the community.

Joint Distribution Committee

Active today in some 70 countries, JDC works to alleviate hunger and hardship, rescue Jews in danger, create lasting connections to Jewish life, and help Israel overcome the social challenges of its most vulnerable citizens, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Our reach extends beyond the global Jewish community by providing high-impact disaster relief and long-term development assistance worldwide.

Beit Issie Shapiro

Beit Issie Shapiro is Israel's leading developer and provider of innovative therapies and state-of-the-art services for children and adults across the entire range of disabilities impacting on over half a million people annually. Beit Issie Shapiro promotes social change through a three-pronged approach: development and provision of cutting edge services, changing attitudes in society and advocating for better legislation, and sharing knowledge throughout Israel, as well as internationally, through research, consultation and training.

Israel4All

Israel4All is the premier tourism company in Israel for people with disabilities and special needs since 1998. Our mission is to be of service to special needs travelers with all kinds of disabilities including physical and mobility challenges, wheelchair/scooter users, slow walkers, the elderly, the hearing impaired, the visually impaired, developmental disabilities and people on the autistic spectrum as well as others. We are proud to provide a service that help people make their dream of visiting Israel come true.

Participating Organizations

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, Autism Ontario, Calgary Jewish Federation, Christian Horizons, Community Living Toronto, Downtown Jewish Community School, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, March of Dimes Canada, Norfolk Association for Community Living, OCAPDD, Reena, Rosni Canada, Safehaven, SHS Consulting