

September 16, 2025

**Mayor Sherry Bondy**

Town of Essex  
33 Talbot Street South  
Essex, ON N8M 1A8

**Subject: Request for Mayoral Proclamation - National Disability Employment Awareness Month**

**Dear Mayor Bondy:**

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), recognized each October, is fast approaching. It's a time to celebrate the contributions of people in the Town of Essex who have a disability, and the success of businesses that embrace inclusive hiring practices.

Too often, disability is left out of diversity, equity and inclusion conversations - yet disability *is* diversity.

NDEAM raises awareness across business, community, and society that disability inclusion in employment is not optional - it's essential. Employment and full participation in the economy, business, and community life are basic human rights for people who have a disability, as affirmed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which ratified in Canada in 2007.

For residents of Essex who have a disability and are eager, willing, and able to work, the path to equitable employment remains challenging. Attitudinal barriers are still among the most persistent obstacles to inclusion - right here in our community.

Local businesses must understand that disability inclusion is not just about AODA compliance or corporate social responsibility. It's a smart business strategy. Inclusive hiring drives innovation, growth, and profitability.

That's why I believe it's important to publicly recognize the value people who have a disability bring to our workplaces, our communities, and our society - and to acknowledge how much more opportunity still exists. A municipal proclamation of NDEAM in the Town of Essex would help shine a light on both.

As a Workforce Engagement Strategist with Project SEARCH Ontario, I see first-hand the impact of collaboration between government, business, and service organizations in advancing employment inclusion.

While many businesses today are focused on short-term challenges, the long-term benefits of inclusive hiring are clear. A 2018 Accenture study found that companies with inclusive hiring practices experience:

- 72% higher productivity
- 45% better workplace safety
- 30% higher profit margins
- 28% higher revenue
- And **twice** the net income of businesses that are not disability inclusive

This kind of hiring benefits not only Essex's major employers but also its Main Street businesses - helping them not just survive, but thrive.

That's why I'm writing to respectfully request that you proclaim *October as Disability Employment Awareness Month* in the Town of Essex. Your support would help recognize the achievements of workers who have a disability and strengthen the call for greater employment opportunities across all sectors.

As a proud member of the Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN), I can assure you that such a proclamation would be deeply appreciated by the many organizations and individuals working to create a more inclusive labour force.

Thank you for your leadership and for considering this important initiative.

With respect and much appreciation,

*Ofelia Dugal*

**Ofelia Dugal (she/her)**

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