

PRESENTING

The Honourable
David C. Onley

AWARD

In tribute to our 28th Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, the *Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons* introduced **The Honourable David C. Onley Award** in 2014. The award recognizes examples of extraordinary service to Canadians who live with a disability.

TIM ROSE was born with spastic quadriplegia, a form of cerebral palsy that affects both his arms and legs. Doctors told his parents their son would never speak. Today not only does he speak, but as a business leader, advocate and changemaker, he speaks powerfully to help people with disabilities.

“My disability has given me so much in my life,” says Rose. “It has given me a perspective and lens on the world that very few get to have. My parents have been a huge influence, not only on who I am as a man, but also on my positive relationship with my disability and my identity. [I credit this to being] raised by two parents who encouraged me to push the envelope from day one.”

Striving to reach new heights is something Rose does with purpose, positivity and humour, because sometimes he says all you can do is laugh. He does however take his work to create positive change very seriously.

“I see a lot of people with my level of disability that don’t recognize the value they’re bringing to the world, and they’ve been told over and over again that they don’t bring value. We as a society for a long time didn’t value people with disabilities. Being on the forefront of that change and to be around other people with disabilities doing amazing work is what excites me.”

Despite a sterling education (he holds a Masters of Law in human rights with a focus on international disability policy and has spoken at conferences from the US to the UK), Rose has faced first-hand the struggle to find meaningful work. Through his own determination, he found success both as an entrepreneur and in employment consulting and mentoring.

“My goal,” he says, “was to support other individuals with disabilities because I too experienced significant discrimination on the employment front for a long time. I

think there is often a perception that if you hire a bunch of people with disabilities, you’re doing a good thing, which you are, but you’re also doing the smart thing. Study

after study has shown that people with disabilities are creative, they’re empathetic, they’re all those diversity buzzwords that corporations love...It’s not just about supporting people in entry-level roles. It’s about normalizing people with disabilities to move up within organizations, achieve leadership positions and serve on boards.”

In 2017, Rose left the employment sector for the finance world. He is currently Senior Consultant, Accessibility within the Client Experience Team at CIBC in Toronto. Since joining the bank, he has been working passionately to advance accessibility.

“What our team is trying to do is to support other areas of the bank to realize that designing accessible products, accessible services and thinking about accessibility from the beginning of a project...is the way to go,” says Rose. “In terms of the difference that I feel I’m making at CIBC, we’re on an accessibility journey that is ongoing...What I’m hoping to do is to make banking more inclusive for everybody and also to generally help to create a more accessible world where people with disabilities don’t experience some of the frustrations that they might have in the past.”

Rose is thrilled and honoured to be chosen as the 2022 recipient of The Honourable David C. Onley Award.

“To me it’s like winning an Oscar,” he says enthusiastically. “I wouldn’t get excited by meeting a Hollywood celebrity. I would get excited by meeting David Onley.”

Rose continues, “I feel like I’m still only at the start of my career in a way and the start of my dream, so I feel a responsibility to keep going, to keep pushing the envelope and doing things a little bit differently while reframing the way that people see disability.”

