fondation HABILITAS foundation

CAMPAIGN FOR A NEW

Wheelchair Department

Giving people with mobility challenges a brighter future at the Constance-Lethbridge Centre



GOAL:
$1,000,000



"My wheelchair, which I've named Rosie because she's pink, completely changed my world.
The team took the time to listen and make sure it truly fit me perfectly. They added special controls so I can adjust my position, and extra padding so I'm comfortable all day.
They always find a creative way to make things work for me.
Now, I have the freedom to live my life again—to go grocery shopping, to take my children to the park.
I can do things on my own.
It's given me back a sense of independence that I didn't think was possible."
- Diane, Constance-Lethbridge patient

Opening the World, One Wheelchair at a Time

Imagine going to a movie or to a restaurant with friends. You sit in a relatively comfortable chair for two hours. Without thinking, you shift your position — you cross your legs, lean forward, adjust your posture.

Now imagine remaining in that same position for most of the day.

For many people who use a wheelchair, this is a daily reality. Much of their day is spent seated, relying entirely on a wheelchair to support their body, to get around their environment, and to participate in life.

The Constance-Lethbridge Rehabilitation Centre believes that every individual deserves access to the world around them — the opportunity to live fully and to take part in everyday moments many of us take for granted.

Founded in 1937, the Constance-Lethbridge Centre is a leader in care for adults living with neurological and neuromusculoskeletal conditions, traumatic brain injury, stroke, and chronic pain. The Centre provides specialized therapy and skills training with an approach that focuses on the individual's needs rather than their diagnosis.

At the heart of this work is the Wheelchair Department — a highly specialized program dedicated to creating mobility solutions that are as unique as the people who use them.

A wheelchair is not just a piece of equipment. It is safety, comfort and quality of life. It is the ability to take part in the world.

Each wheelchair is carefully developed to support comfort, function, and independence, enabling individuals to navigate their daily lives with greater confidence — at home, at work, and in their community.



More than a wheelchair

As the largest wheelchair program in the province, more than 6,700 manual and powered chairs were created and delivered at the Constance-Lethbridge Centre last year.

But this is not mass production.

Each wheelchair represents something deeply personal.

For the patients served, a wheelchair is freedom. It represents access, the ability to move through the world, to connect, and to belong.

It means being able to move safely through one's home, to prepare a meal, to go to work or school, to spend time with family and friends, and to take part in the community with confidence. It also means less pain, fewer complications, improved breathing and digestion, and better long-term health.

And just as importantly, it means being seen, included, and the ability to participate fully in life with dignity.

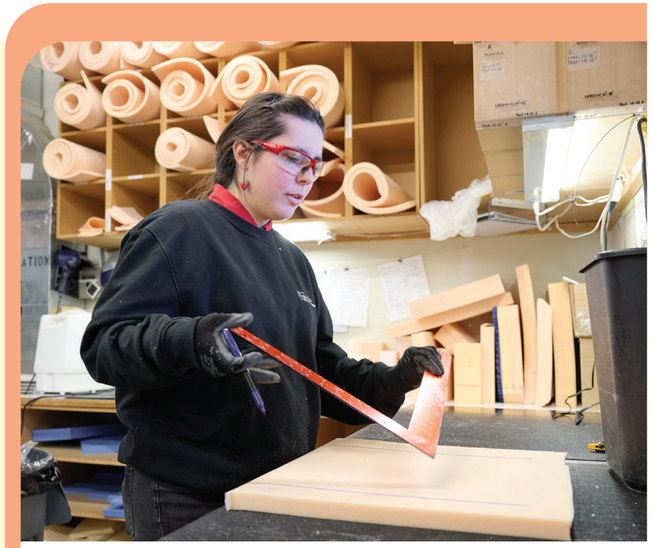
That is why the Centre's fabrication department does not operate like a factory. There is no assembly line. No one-size-fits-all solution.

Each wheelchair is thoughtfully designed around the uniqueness of the individual: how they move, how they sit, how they live, and what their goals are in life. Specialists combine clinical expertise with hands-on craftsmanship, working closely with occupational therapists and a multidisciplinary team. Every measurement, every adjustment, every detail is considered.

Because when a wheelchair is built right, it does more than support the body. It restores autonomy, enhances safety, and opens the door to full participation in life.

"My role is to understand the needs of my patients when creating the cushions for their wheelchair. Even if two people may have the same diagnosis, their realities are very different. It's through listening and empathy that I'm able to help them give them a device that truly meets their needs and gives quality of life."

- Roxanne, Orthotics and Prosthetics Technician, Constance-Lethbridge Centre



Roxanne customizing the foam cushion in the wheelchair production department.



The busiest wheelchair department in Québec

Last year alone, the Constance-Lethbridge Centre created and performed repairs on more than 10,000 wheelchairs, the largest number in the province. This demand continues to grow.

The department serves adults from Montéeal, Laval and the South Shore, and ensures accessibility through interpretation in multiple languages when needed.

It is the only department that visits patients in their homes if they are unable to visit the Centre in person. Individuals have a variety of conditions, including stroke, polio, spina bifida, multiple sclerosis, ALS, cerebral palsy, post-trauma or genetic disorders. For many patients, this is not a one-time service. As their conditions are lifelong, they return for ongoing support—adjustments, repairs, and upgrades as their needs evolve.

What truly sets the department apart is its level of customization. A great deal of clinical expertise has been developed at the Centre in the personalization of seating options in the different types of wheelchairs for comfort and functionality.

From specialized seating to advanced digital controls (such as joysticks or headrest-operated systems), each solution is tailored to the individual. The team also collaborates with the centre's adapted driving programs, helping individuals regain even greater independence.

But with growing demand and increasing complexity, the current space can no longer keep up. And when systems are stretched, the wait times grow.

For someone waiting for their wheelchair, this delay is not just inconvenient. It affects every aspect of daily life.



Expanding Capacity. Transforming Lives.

Demand for customized wheelchairs is rising, driven by an aging population and increasingly complex needs.

While wait times at Constance-Lethbridge remain among the lowest in the region, even a short delay has real consequences.

Each additional day without the right wheelchair affects a person's independence, comfort, and quality of life.

Today, the department faces critical space limitations.

There is not enough room to efficiently store incoming wheelchair frames, and for those awaiting delivery to patients.

Workshop space is limited, restricting the specialized work needed to tailor each wheelchair, including the creation of custom-cut cushions in a variety of materials, as well as the installation of digital controls (for tilt, recline, and elevation), knee pads and braces, Bluetooth and environmental controls, suspension systems, and other specialized supports and accessories.

And key processes—from assembly to adjustments and repairs—are slowed by the current layout.

An expansion will change this.

With more space and a redesigned workflow, the team will be able to work more efficiently, reduce bottlenecks, and increase capacity.

The result:

- **Shorter wait times**
- **Faster access to essential equipment**
- **Increased capacity for creation of new wheelchairs and repairs of existing ones**

Because when someone receives the right wheelchair sooner, everything improves sooner.

Designed Around the Patient Experience

Every wheelchair journey begins with a comprehensive evaluation.

An occupational therapist and wheelchair technician work together to understand the individual's lifestyle, needs, and abilities. From there, a customized solution is designed—whether manual, tilt/push, or motorized.

Once the frame arrives, each component is carefully assembled and adapted.

To meet growing demand, the Centre is redesigning and expanding the department with a clear goal: to create a more efficient, patient-centered experience.

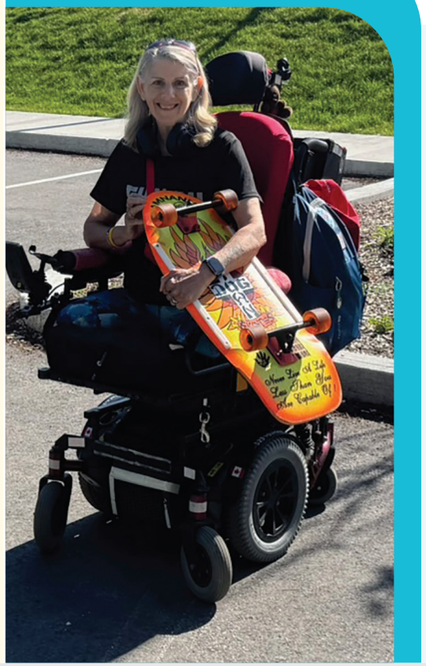
The project will include:

- ✓ **Expanded delivery and inventory space to improve workflow for the 70 specialists in the department**
- ✓ **Larger, better-equipped work areas for customization and repairs**
- ✓ **A new entrance and reception area designed to be bright, welcoming, and accessible**

These changes will do more than improve operations.

They will create a smoother experience for patients—from their first appointment to final delivery.

And ultimately, they will allow more individuals to access the equipment they need to live independently.



"The Wheelchair Program at the Constance-Lethbridge Centre has not only supported my mobility, but has truly empowered me to live a full and meaningful life. It has allowed me to remain independent, care for my family, stay active in my community, and continue doing the things that bring me joy and purpose each day.

What makes this program so special is the combination of expertise, compassion, and genuine respect for my unique needs. The team sees the whole person and works tirelessly to help each one live as fully and independently as possible."

- Katherine, grandmother, skateboarder and lifelong advocate for living fully and fearlessly



"I like to say that our department is the department of small miracles. The little details that seem trivial in our daily lives can make a huge difference in the life of a person with reduced mobility.

I believe that the smiles of our patients and the thanks we receive are part of what motivates me, along with the variety I find in my work environment: client relations, problem-solving, and learning. Especially when it comes to a challenge that seemed 'impossible!'"

- Nell, Positioning technician, Constance-Lethbridge Centre



fondation
HABILITAS
foundation

You can help us make this transformative new environment a reality, and create a unique place of hope and possibility, with the faster access to wheelchairs for more people in need.

The Habilitas Foundation (the official foundation of the Constance-Lethbridge Centre) is championing this project that will give independence and quality of life to so many with motor impairments and mobility challenges.

For more information on how you can make a difference, visit us at:

www.habilitas.ca