

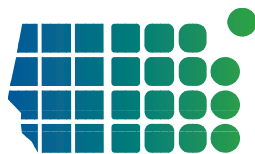
Alberta Disability Strategy

Core Supports and Appendices

Second of two Alberta Disability Strategy documents

A strategy prepared by the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities and presented to the Alberta Government for consideration.

2002



THE PREMIER'S COUNCIL
ON THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
Alberta

PREFACE

This document provides supplementary information and data in support of the Premier’s Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities’ Alberta Disability Strategy. The Strategy is available under separate cover by contacting the Premier’s Council office.

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Glossary of Terms

This glossary provides information about terms used in the Alberta Disability Strategy and its appendices.

Accountability Framework

A venue of four policy instruments that can assist politicians and bureaucrats with evaluating and monitoring the status of Albertans with disabilities.

Barrier

The scope of limitations encountered by Albertans with disabilities that participate in community, education, employment or recreation.

Community Supports

A single, province-wide program that integrates current disability support programs and funding under one philosophy and set of criteria. This model provides individualized support, enabling persons with disabilities to have choice in the marketplace and independently make decisions about their needs and service providers.

Cost of Living with Disability

The sum total of an individual's general living and disability related expenditures.

Disability

The reduction of functional capacity or activity due to an impairment in the person's mental or physical structure or functioning.

Disability Lens

A framework for analyzing the inclusion of persons with disabilities in government services, programs, policy, and legislation.

Financial Accessibility

The degree to which persons with disabilities can access assistive devices, adaptive technology, housing, alternate communication, education and training programs, and alternate transportation without sustaining undue hardship.

Full Citizenship

A status of citizenship where Albertans experience an equitable degree of participation in all aspects of Alberta society: labour participation, education attainment, cultural activities, religious practice, relationships, family life, and recreational and political activities.

Personal Supports

A range of technical aids, assistive devices, and personal services that are necessary to accommodate the functional limitation created by the individual's impairment in daily activities (also referred to as disability supports)

Financial Supports

A variety of financial resources that assist Albertans with their basic needs or extra costs associated with their disability due to temporary or permanent unemployment or to insufficient earnings from existing employment.

Education and Learning Supports

Supports that are specific to the learning needs of a student with disabilities in a variety of learning environments.

Employment Supports

Personal, technical, or accessibility aids in the employment environment that are necessary for full participation of persons with disabilities in the labour force.

Labour Force Participation Rates

The ratio of persons working or actively seeking work to those who are not actively seeking work or employed

Individualized Funding

A means of financial assistance that is directly allocated to the individuals, which reflects the cost of living and disability supports that are necessary for them to participate or reside in a community of their choice.

Performance Outcomes

Statements identified through community consultation that represent the goals or end result of a given activity.

Performance Indicators

Statements identified by community that represent some component of an identified outcome. Indicators function as guides for evaluating if an activity is achieving its related outcome.

Performance Measures

A means for measuring information from an activity, cross-referencing it with an identified performance indicator and evaluating the aggregate against the original performance outcome.

Safety & Security

Support that allows an individual to be involved and active in everyday life. For example, transportation to go to work, school or recreational activities; home care to help an individual with basic needs and get ready for the day; housing that is safe, affordable and physically accessible; living and communication aids, etc.



Core Supports

I. Full Citizenship

OVERVIEW

Citizenship implies presence of a collective identity and sense of agreement amongst individuals about the rights and responsibilities that are necessary for diverse populations to cohabitate. For individuals to experience the status of full citizenship there must be opportunities for full participation in all aspects of society regardless of socio economic status, ability, gender, culture, religion, age, or political philosophy.

Persons with needs or interests that are considered to be different from the general population often require the support of government to ensure that their diverse needs are satisfied. Government can provide this support by creating laws that prohibit discrimination of citizens with diverse interests and needs and entering into agreements that promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Some of the laws and agreements that support the rights of Albertans to experience full citizenship include the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Alberta's Human Rights, Citizenship, and Multiculturalism Act.

Historically, Canadians with disabilities have been viewed as an apolitical population and as a lifelong liability to

government. Historically, it was not anticipated that persons with disabilities would graduate from an accredited education program, live independently or work in a career that would provide a salary comparable to non-disabled persons. Consequently, during the creation of existing laws, persons with disabilities were often not fully considered within the scope of interests represented by politicians.

For Aboriginal persons this has been even more problematic. Three levels of government are involved in providing services and programs for Aboriginal people with disabilities, and the activities of these three levels are often not coordinated. The overall result is Aboriginal people with disabilities, in addition to the common issues, frequently face unique barriers to achieving full citizenship. However, many Albertans are beginning to claim their citizenship rights.

Full reclamation of citizenship rights for persons with disabilities will require the recognition and full utilization of relevant legislation as a foundation for facilitating social change.

Legislative Context of Citizenship in Canada

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that, “every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal participation and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability.”

Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship, and Multiculturalism Act

Alberta’s human rights legislation protects the diversity of interests and equality of rights of Albertans with and without disability. The citizenship of Albertans with disabilities is protected by the Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship, and Multiculturalism Act by prohibiting discrimination in the areas of employment practices, tenancy, services and facilities, or accommodation that is generally available to the public. The Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Board administers this legislation with the intention of, “returning the complainant to the position he or she would have been in if the discrimination or harassment had not occurred.”

International Declaration of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

In 1975, the United Nations facilitated an agreement among the international community called the International Declaration of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Canada’s agreement to this Declaration means the citizenship rights of Canadians with disabilities were nationally

supported and internationally endorsed. The role of the Declaration is to provide a guideline to political bodies for ensuring that the interests of persons with disabilities are equitably represented in Canadian laws and policies. Some of the citizenship rights in the Declaration include a right to equitable civil and political rights and the right to medical and psychological treatment, social rehabilitation, education, vocational training, and financial aid, which will enable full participation in community.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Although the issue of citizenship for persons under the age of 18 years is controversial amongst Canadians, children with disabilities are recognized within the context of the Alberta Disability Strategy as having citizenship rights to full participation in living, learning, recreational, cultural and religious activities. The Convention on the Rights of Children is an international instrument that represents a collective recognition of the rights of children. Canada ratified the Convention in 1991.

In the Convention on the Rights of Children, children with disabilities are explicitly recognized as having unique interests and needs which require support from families, communities, and governments so that their full potential is realized. Article 23 of the Convention outlines the collective agreement of these unique interests and rights of children with disabilities.

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Among these is recognition that children with disabilities require a standard of living that ensures dignity, promotes self-reliance and encourages full participation in society. Article 23 also notes that children also require opportunities to achieve their maximum global development by having equitable access to education, health care, recreational opportunities, vocational services, cultural activities, and religious practices.

Elements for Creating an Environment of Full Citizenship

There is no singular way to create full citizenship for Albertans with disabilities because they are a heterogeneous population with diverse interests, needs, and beliefs. However, there are four supports that are widely recognized as fundamental to the creation of an environment leading to full citizenship. These are:

- Personal Supports.
- Education and Learning Supports.
- Employment Supports.
- Financial Supports.

The success of creating an environment of full citizenship is based on the presence of these supports in an individual's life, the degree to which the individual's needs are matched with these supports, and the coordination of these supports across various systems.

At the present time, Alberta has no formal protocol for coordinating disability supports across systems. Consequently, there is not an equitable distribution of disability supports available to all Albertans with disabilities. These broad areas of support are discussed in greater detail in subsequent

The existence of these legal/constitutional guarantees notwithstanding, some of the potential threats to citizenship for many Albertans include laws and policies that are too narrow in scope and neglect the interests of persons with disabilities, and education programs that fail to accommodate the learning needs of students with disabilities.

sections, but the following is intended to introduce the components.

Personal Supports

Personal Supports or disability supports refer to a range of technical aids, assistive devices, and personal services that are necessary to accommodate the functional limitation created by the individual's impairment in daily activities. At the present time, the Alberta government provides personal supports, with limited success, to Albertans with disabilities across lifespan in three sectors: Personal Care Services; Technical Aids, Assistive Devices and Adaptive Technology; and Transportation and Housing. Personal supports are the most essential aids identified by persons with disabilities and their family/support persons for full participation in society.

Education and Learning Supports

Education and Learning supports are fundamental for students with disabilities to realize and maximize their learning potential across lifespan. In order for students to fully participate in their learning environment there must be an opportunity to exchange information and to participate in

school culture. Barriers to communication or to participation in school activities, which are not offset by learning supports, have the potential of jeopardizing the learning capacity, education attainment, and labour force participation of persons with disabilities.

Employment Supports

Employment supports refer to aids in the workforce environment that are required by persons with disabilities. A secondary function of employment supports is to equip employers with accurate information about disability and employment, and accommodating persons with disabilities in the workforce. Some employers are hesitant but most employment supports in the workplace involve altering work schedules, adapting equipment with technical devices, and renovating the workspace to meet the accessibility needs of the employee.

Financial Supports

Disability-related expenditures can create a financial hardship on Albertans and their family/support persons. These expenditures are the product of environments that are not inclusive of the needs that persons with disabilities require in living, learning, working or recreational activities. Albertans who are unable to pay for disability-related costs themselves usually rely on assistance from family members or some form of financial support program.

There are a variety of federal and provincial funding programs available to persons with disabilities who are not able to work in the labour force on a full time basis or who are not able to finance their cost of living with their existing employment. The eligibility criteria for various financial support

programs are dependent on diagnosis, age of onset of disability, permanency of disability, functional limitation, and probability of returning to work. Consequently, many Albertans must endure multiple assessments to fulfill program requirements or navigate numerous systems to access the maximum amount of financial support for disability-related needs.

Outcomes and Strategies

Specific Outcomes

1. Civil, constitutional and human rights will be assured for all Albertans.
2. Alberta's communities will be barrier free and physically accessible. All Albertans will be able to access the buildings, spaces, services and programs that they desire.
3. All Albertans will have the opportunity to participate in and provide leadership to public policy processes, and to activities and associations that define their community.

Visionary Outcome:

All persons are included in all aspects of Alberta society.

Short-Term Strategies

Strategy 1: Utilize the Disability Lens.

The disability lens is a tool designed to help those responsible for developing policy, programs, services or other initiatives to ensure that they have respected the rights and needs of persons with disabilities. A disability lens must be applied to all activities of government (provincial, regional and local) and to all initiatives funded by government (e.g. education, employment and recreation) to be comprehensively effective. (See Accountability Framework section)

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Strategy 2: *Conduct a full, collaborative review of complaints to the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission and recommend ways to enhance the effectiveness of the human rights complaints process relating to persons with disabilities (e.g. timing and follow-up).*

The intent of the review would be to understand the patterns and systemic issues involved and to generate recommendations for proactive legislation, regulations and standards that would deal with the underlying problems and barriers.

Strategy 3: *Develop and launch a province-wide disability awareness campaign.*

Attitudinal and systemic barriers add significantly to the daily challenges faced by Albertans with disabilities. Social marketing principles, which have proven to be effective in health promotion, must be applied to change attitudes and behaviours regarding persons with disabilities. The primary message would be that persons with disabilities also have abilities and they have untapped potential for contributing to our society and economy.

Strategy 4: *Identify provincial and federal initiatives targeted at the health issues causing the high number of disabilities among Aboriginal people and make a coordinated effort to involve all provincial government ministries.*

Strategy 5: *Provide information for people with disabilities about available services and opportunities and where to access them.*

Recommended Strategies

Appeals

1. Require all government programs for persons with disabilities to have a speedy, objective, independent, transparent and advocate-supported appeal process. Appeals for persons with disabilities should be quasi-judicial, like other appeals conducted by the government.
2. Require current appeal processes to ensure greater consistency in timelines, rules and mechanisms. The processes should have arm's-length objectivity and speedy timeframes for appeals to be initiated.
3. Simplify appeal processes.
4. Implement a single appeal's mechanism for all programs for persons with disabilities that are linked to the proposed enhanced Community Supports model (see description in Personal Supports section) and supported by the equivalent of a community legal aid clinic for persons with disabilities.
5. Ensure that appeal hearings are held in locations that adhere strictly to the Barrier Free Design Building Codes as prescribed by the province of Alberta.
6. Support the appeals recommendations of Alberta Learning's Special Education Review, if appropriate.

The Building Code

7. Appoint representatives of persons with disabilities, including an Aboriginal person and a community service provider, to the Building Code Committee.

8. Add a disability sensitivity and awareness component to the training manual for building inspectors.
9. Require Building Code standards for all public washrooms.
10. Include accessible fire exits in the Building Code.
11. Add sections to the Building Code to address the needs of persons with visual impairments or who are blind, persons with hearing impairments or who are deaf (i.e. colour contact on curb cuts, stair nosing, texturing, tactile numbers on doors, visual alarms) and persons with mobility impairments such as arthritis (i.e. lever taps, adapted door handles and adapted doors in public buildings).
12. Expand the range of buildings covered under the Building Code to include buildings less than 4,000 sq. meters, historic buildings, and all renovated buildings.
13. Review the monitoring and enforcement of the Building Code.

Alternative Communications

14. Establish an Alternative Communications Advisory Committee (ACAC) as an ongoing conduit between community groups and provincial government ministries.
15. Require all provincial government ministries to establish task groups to develop outcomes, performance indicators and strategies for implementing an Alternative Communications Policy. These groups would report regularly to the ACAC.
16. Develop new partnerships with community groups to better understand and address the diversity of needs plus identify optimal service delivery mechanisms and providers.
17. Increase the funding for interpreter services.
18. Use an outcomes monitoring system to measure the effectiveness of alternative communications in improving access to required services for persons with disabilities.
19. Use a disability lens to remind decision-makers responsible for all new government initiatives that they are obligated to ensure accessibility to information and consultation.
20. Develop a text-only version of the Alberta Government Web site to be used by persons with visual or auditory impairments.

Accessible Transportation

21. Address the current lack of accessible transportation and infrastructure for rural/remote communities.
22. Establish monitoring standards for special transportation grants to local governments.
23. Establish procedures to ensure that Alberta Infrastructure checklists are being used and that appropriate decisions have been taken prior to releasing government funding for transportation initiatives.
24. Expand the efforts of the Barrier-Free Advisory Committee to include travel between communities and throughout Alberta.
25. Ensure that municipal, provincial and federal initiatives are linked and effectively facilitate inter-provincial travel.
26. Provide transportation subsidies in the form of a public transportation pass for persons with disabilities who receive AISH or other income assistance similar to available seniors' passes.

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27. Require Alberta Transportation to include in their business plan performance measures related to the availability of appropriate, accessible and affordable transportation in Alberta communities.

Mobility Rights

28. Develop a community assessment tool and community participation index that local authorities can use to determine the accessibility of their facilities and programs. This must take into account that accessibility extends beyond physical access.
29. Require local governments to state goals and monitor performance in relation to:
The provision of accessible/affordable transportation and housing.
Access to buildings/programs/services.
The availability of personal supports.
30. Using information obtained from the above performance monitoring, publish guides to community accessibility to be used as feedback to municipal authorities and a resource for persons with disabilities who are relocating.
31. Encourage administrators of disability support programs to create methods of taking their service to communities where services are not currently located.
32. Introduce the concept of individualized funding to as many programs as possible. Individuals need to have the resources in their own hands to purchase required supports and support services locally.
33. Work with all governments to address the need for housing for First Nations, Metis and Inuit persons with disabilities.

Sensitivity and Awareness

34. Develop a cultural awareness-training manual for all provincial government ministries and service providers to ensure the culture of Aboriginal peoples is understood.
35. Make disability sensitivity/awareness training and Aboriginal cultural sensitivity training mandatory for all front-line workers in the provincial government who deal with the public.
36. Develop and implement an evaluation tool to monitor the treatment of persons with disabilities.

Accessible Justice

37. Ensure accessibility to the justice system for persons with disabilities by:
 - Ensuring that they have advocate support as required.
 - Expanding the federal Court Challenges Program to the provincial level to cover Section 15 equality rights violations at all government levels.
 - Increasing sensitivity in the justice system to systemic barriers affecting the behaviour of persons with disabilities.
 - Ensuring that communications about justice matters are available in alternative formats and understood by persons with disabilities. A person may have disabilities that limit his or her comprehension of the impact of the information being conveyed.

Participation in Public Processes

38. Develop a community participation index as part of the outcomes monitoring system.

39. Require provincial government ministries, regional authorities and other agencies that seek provincial funding to state how they have involved, or plan to involve, persons with disabilities in the development and delivery of the initiative.
40. Develop a strategy to involve Aboriginal persons with disabilities in the development and delivery of programs and services that affect them.
41. Develop a strategy to ensure the inclusion of Aboriginal persons with disabilities in public policy planning and decision making processes and to have an equitable representation of this group on public boards, regulatory bodies, etc.
42. Ensure representation of persons with disabilities on public boards, regulatory bodies, etc.
43. To ensure strong advocacy for persons with disabilities in the future, recruit young people to participate in succession planning and community mobilization initiatives.

II. Personal Supports

OVERVIEW

To maintain their dignity and ensure their personal health and safety, Albertans with disabilities need to know that they will have the personal supports they require. All Albertans have the right to be known and respected for their abilities. For persons with disabilities, the first step towards achieving this goal is to ensure that supports are in place to provide for the basic needs of the individual. Not until basics such as food, shelter, daily living requirements, safety/security, etc. are ensured can Albertans realistically start to develop their abilities, integrate into and participate in society.

Personal supports refer to a range of goods and services, technical aids and equipment, personal services and brokerage that offset

the effects of a disabling condition. Personal supports are also known as disability supports. Disability supports refer to technical aids and personal services required by many Albertans to get to school, to participate in their community and workplace, to reside in a community, and to participate in their choice of recreational activities. These supports assist persons with disabilities to, for example, enjoy a standard of life comparable to non-disabled citizens.

Several provincial and federal government ministries are involved in providing personal supports but they are largely uncoordinated, often inadequate and cumbersome to access. To address this issue, the federal, provincial and territorial governments through In Unison and the

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Social Policy Framework made commitments to improve collaboration by working towards:

- Improving access to disability supports.
- Enhancing the portability of these supports.
- Helping to offset the cost of the supports.

- Separating access to supports from eligibility for income and other programs.
- Ensuring that work-related supports are available.

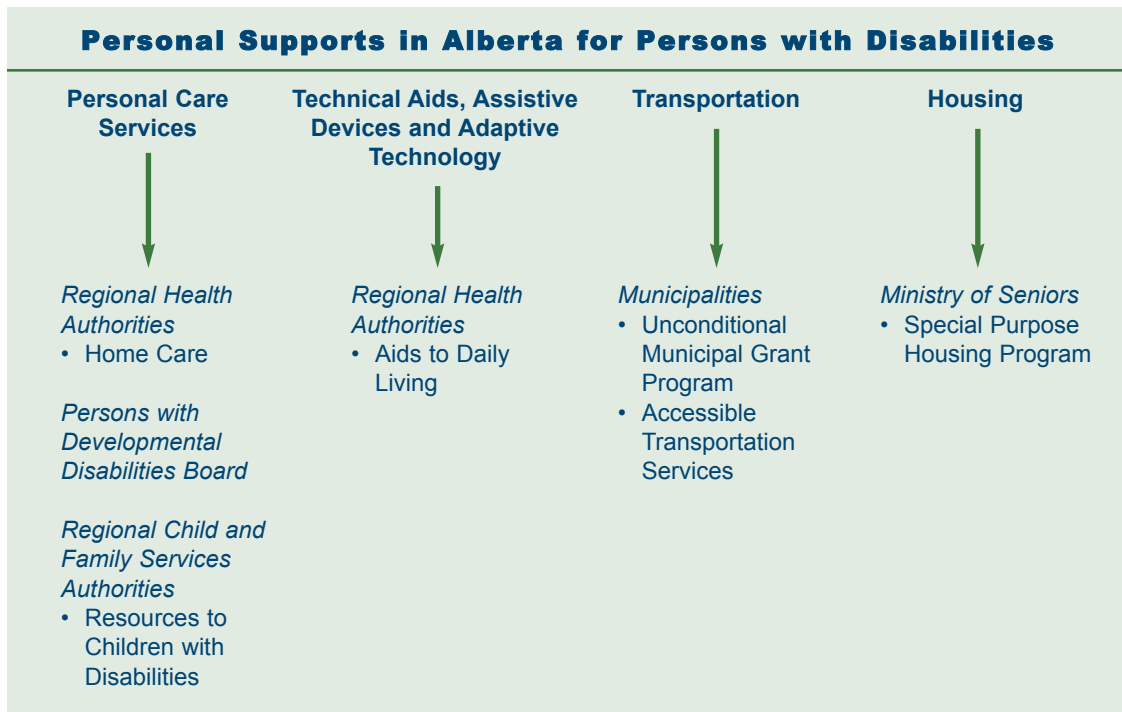
These commitments have not yet resulted in any significant improvements in services to individuals.

Context of Personal Supports in Alberta

There are four elements of personal supports for persons with disabilities:

- Personal care services.
- Technical aids, assistive devices and equipment.
- Transportation.
- Housing.

Depending on the type and severity of impairment, individuals with disabilities may require one or more elements of disability supports. Albertans with disabilities may access personal supports from regional authorities and/or governments (provincial and municipal).



Personal Care Services

Some individuals may require personal care services for a wide range of needs – meal preparation, personal hygiene, medical care, respite, house maintenance, etc.. Without personal care services, some persons with disabilities would be required to reside in formal care environments such as hospitals or institutions. In Alberta there are three authorities that administer personal care services: Regional Health Authorities, Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) Boards, and Regional Child and Family Service Authorities.

Home Care Program

There are 17 Regional Health Authorities that administer home care services to Albertans. The home care program is designed to aid persons who have just left the hospital and require short-term support, persons with long-term physical limitations who can reside in the community with the assistance of disability supports, and persons with terminal illnesses who choose to remain in their homes for as long as possible. Funding for home care services varies among authorities with an intended maximum support of \$3,000 per month.

In the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities review of the program, there were a number of issues that were identified by service providers and users. Some of these include lack of portability of personal care services across Regional Health Authorities and inconsistency of available home care supports within and across Regional Health Authorities.

These issues create frustration and crisis amongst persons with disabilities and their families. The absence of coordination and consistency of services has compounded users' suspicion of the program's intent to promote independent living in communities.

Persons with Developmental Disabilities Program

Services to support adults with developmental disabilities and their families/guardians are administered and delivered through the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Provincial Board's six Regional Boards. The Persons with Developmental Disabilities Program provides a range of disability supports such as direct service and community living supports (i.e. roommates, home support, respite care).

A primary mandate of the program is promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in community life. The program centres its individual supports on the following principles:

- Supports must assist a person to be fully included in community life in the roles he/she has chosen.
- Supports must be determined based on individual needs in the context of local community and family.
- Supports must focus on strengthening the individual's connection to natural supports.

Resources to Children with Disabilities

There are 18 regional child and family service authorities in Alberta that administer the Resources to Children with Disabilities Program (RCDP). Children with disabilities who are under 18 years of age, reside in the

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custody of their parents, and are living in Alberta are eligible for funding from the RCDP to cover the extraordinary costs associated with their disability. The program also provides information to parents/support persons about personal support services available in the community. The concept of “extraordinary costs associated with disability” is defined in the RCDP as those expenses that are above and beyond costs normally associated with providing for and caring for a child and incurred due to the nature and severity of the child’s disability.

Parents of children with disabilities do not have to complete a means test prior to applying for the program. However, the program does assume that parents/support persons have available resources to pay for their child’s personal supports in advance and then submit receipts to the program for reimbursement. The RCDP’s policy of reimbursement of personal supports does not support families with low-income status because they are not in a financial position to wait for reimbursement without jeopardizing other financial commitments.

Depending on the severity of the child’s disability and the availability of resources in the child’s community, the RCDP will aid the parent/caregiver with transition planning from children’s services to adult-based services (e.g. AISH, PDD, Alberta Mental Health etc.). In a program review by the Premier’s Council of the RCDP, service providers and users identified a number of barriers to parents/support persons accessing funding. For example, funding is based on child’s needs but eligibility is based on medical diagnosis.

Overall, parents/support persons reported to be satisfied with the RCDP. However, they also expressed a feeling that children in care of the child welfare system had greater access to personal supports and medical care than their children. The issue of local custodianship was cited as a major concern by parents accessing the program.

Technical Aids, Assistive Devices and Equipment

Persons with disabilities have cited technical and adaptive aids as essential tools for many Albertans to fully participate in their living, learning, working and recreational environments. In Alberta, adaptive aids and assistive devices may be provided to individuals with disabilities by the various school boards, Ministry of Learning and the 18 Regional Health Authorities and school boards.

Aids to Daily Living Program

Similar to the Home Care Program, the Aids to Daily Living Program is administered by the Regional Health Authorities. The personal supports provided by the Aids to Daily Living Program consist of “basic equipment and supplies for more independent functioning in the person’s home or in a home-like setting”. In order to access personal supports from this program, Albertans must:

- Show proof of chronic disability or illness, long-term disability (more than six months), or terminal illness.
- Be an Alberta resident for a minimum of six months.
- Possess Alberta Health Care Coverage.

Albertans with disabilities who are receiving financial support through the Worker’s Compensation Board, Veteran

Affairs Act, Motor Vehicle Claims/Criminal Injuries Compensation, or the Medical Services Branch are considered to have sufficient coverage and are not eligible for personal supports from this program.

The Aids to Daily Living Program has a cost sharing agreement with users where the user is responsible for 25% of services and equipment per fiscal year up to a total of \$500, unless users can show receipt of AISH or SFI benefits, Alberta Widows' Pension, Premium Assistance Plan or show proof of low income status. This program has a designated list of approved personal supports. There is no option for users who wish to purchase personal supports that are not on the program's approved list. This agreement devastates some individuals financially and often means such individuals go without a needed item or service.

Some of the limitations identified in a review by the Premier's Council of the Aids to Daily Living program include limited appeal scope and no option for individualized funding.

Transportation and Housing

There are limited options for Albertans with disabilities to obtain accessible and affordable housing or transportation in their communities. In Alberta social housing units are not identified by their degree of accessibility. Various community organizations have provided anecdotal evidence of a wait list for accessible housing. Albertans with disabilities who own property have opportunities to access funding for renovations to their existing property. However, these funding programs are based on an individual's income and the market value of their property.

Consequently, persons just above the low-income status – market basket or low-income cut-off – are usually not eligible for support.

Personal supports issues related to housing issues include the lack of accessible housing units in Alberta, renovation grants for improving the accessibility of existing private and public buildings, and disability tax credits for improving the accessibility of private buildings.

Accessible transportation options vary across Alberta. Albertans who reside in urban areas tend to use more public transportation services than their peers residing in urban communities. An on-going concern cited by persons with disabilities is the lack of flexibility of transportation programs to accommodate the needs of Albertans with disabilities. Personal supports issues related to transportation needs include grants for accessible transportation in communities (Unconditional Municipal Grant Program), cost supplements for public transportation options, and disability tax credits for private transportation options.

Unconditional Municipal Grant Program

In 1993, the Unconditional Municipal Grant Program (UMGP) was created by Alberta Municipal Affairs to replace five grants: Police Assistance Grant, Public Transit Operating Assistance Grant, Urban Parks Operating Grant, Municipal Assistance Grant, and the Family and Community Support Services Program. In 1994, Alberta Municipal Affairs phased out the Municipal Assistance Grant and Alberta Children's Services assumed responsibility for the Community Support Services Program.

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The UMGP is administered by each of the eligible 319 municipalities in Alberta to assist with paying for parks, public transit, police assistance, and accessibility (transportation and buildings).

Municipalities that were incorporated prior to 1993 are eligible to receive the UMGP each year based on an amount of \$3.19 per capita. The per capita rate is based on 1993 census records. Certain municipalities receive extra funding if they have a formal transit system or where they have identified themselves to government as piloting a formal transit system. The UMGP does not designate or divide the funding among the designated areas. The UMGP does not have any accountability mechanism to reflect that dollars designated for the grant are dollars allocated in those areas.

A Need for Personal Supports Amongst Albertans with Disabilities

In 1991, the last time a major census of persons with disabilities was done, Albertans with disabilities required almost 170,000 technical supports. The number of individuals involved in receiving supports was somewhat less, given that some persons required more than one personal support. The use of personal supports identifying personal assistants was significantly higher than the other categories of support.

Alberta has long recognized that the right to participate also implies a right to access personal supports needed to overcome a barrier related to having a disability. Consequently, several different ministries offer a wide variety of programs that aid individuals with disabilities living, learning, and working in their communities.

Challenges Associated with Obtaining and Maintaining Personal Supports

There is no study that conclusively identifies the costs associated with personal supports. However, there is qualitative research that identifies frameworks for estimating these costs. Included in these frameworks is an identification of those disability supports that are funded by governments and/or individuals with disabilities and their families.

The issue of who is responsible for the cost of personal supports is an ongoing and contentious debate between all three levels of government and persons with disabilities. Some governments argue that the cost of disability supports is the responsibility of individuals with disabilities and their family, unless these individuals do not have the resources. Where individuals with disabilities are unable to finance the prescribed supports then governments should fund only medically required supports.

Persons with disabilities argue that disability supports are expensive and are not incurred by non-disabled persons. Disability related costs tend to place some Albertans and their support persons at a financial disadvantage and may promote reliance on government supports for non-disability supports to cover the basic cost of living. Consequently, disability supports must be funded by governments to relieve financial stress on families/support persons, encourage full participation in the community, to facilitate participation in the marketplace, and to create an inclusive environment that promotes equity of opportunity across lifespan.

Outcomes and Strategies

Specific Outcomes

1. Affordable technical and personal supports for independent community living is available at home, school, work and play.
2. All Albertans will have choices and the right to determine the type of support required; where and how that support is provided.
3. The Alberta government and municipalities provide funding for housing and transportation that meet the needs of persons with disabilities.
4. Families and others receive the support and funding they need to provide effective and appropriate care for persons with disabilities.

Visionary Outcome

Albertans with disabilities will receive the support they require to independently function with dignity at home, school or work.

Short-term Strategies

Strategy 1: Enhanced Community Supports Model.

The government of Alberta must take a more proactive stance in fulfilling its responsibilities for developing, organizing, funding and coordinating programs for persons with disabilities. There is a pressing need for better coordination and for a more comprehensive approach in this area.

The 1990 Premier's Council Action Plan recommended an enhanced Community Supports model, and the Council is again calling for the implementation of this model. A Community Supports model would provide individualized funding through a single, province-wide program

that integrates all current disability support programs under one philosophy and one set of criteria. This model would apply to persons with all disabilities and to all provincial government ministries along with their regional authorities.

The model would address the need for persons with disabilities to independently make decisions about their individual needs and whom can best provide them, and have guarantees that their safety/security needs will be met.

It is proposed that a committee to support this direction be established with representation from persons with disabilities, their advocates and government. The committee would discuss and develop interdepartmental policies and procedures for the development of:

- A holistic approach for providing programs and services for people with all disabilities.
- An individualized funding model for persons with all disabilities.
- A format for implementing a service plan tailored to the individual's needs.
- An objective independent brokerage approach to develop and ensure accountability to a person's plan.

Those who are involved in creating the enhanced Community Supports model will need to consider:

- Equity issues coming out of the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Governance Act. Currently, higher levels of service are being provided to a segment of the disabled population.
- The realities of regionalization and cultural diversity.
- The importance of individualized funding and choice.

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- The level of service that ensures that an individual's basic safety/security needs are met.
- How personal support needs overarch other needs that are required to achieve full citizenship.

Strategy 2: Individualized Funding

Individualized funding is tailored to individual need and managed according to the individual user's preferences and priorities (i.e. price, schedule, location, quality). This approach would respond to gaps or inadequacies in existing service arrangements and would encourage the individual and the community to plan and to be accountable.

Individualized funding could be applied directly to the individual and/or family for a number of needs. For example, respite services for the individual and his or her support network or personal support at school, at work, at home or socially.

Recommended Strategies

General/Systemic

44. Develop strategies for linking existing disability support programs through an enhanced Community Supports model (one-stop shopping).
45. Index individualized funding to reflect inflation and the real cost of living with a disability, including the costs associated with specialized devices and services, medications, special nutritional requirements and living in a rural/remote community.

User Control and Choice

46. Ensure that the allocation of supports is flexible and responsive to individual needs rather than by arbitrary regulations that categorize people with different disabilities.

47. Provide supports in accordance with the individual's personal, informed choice (rehabilitation plan, educational and career objectives, etc.)
48. Evaluate support services to ensure minimal intrusion into the individual's life in the assessment, planning and delivery of supports.
49. Provide equitable safety/security needs to persons with disabilities, regardless of where they live.

Transitions

50. Encourage Alberta Children's Services and Alberta Human Resources and Employment to jointly monitor Children's Services' caseloads in order to provide seamless transitions from Children's Services into adult services.
51. Improve transitions in all adult support services such as AISH, Supports for Independence, Canada Pension Plan-Disability and Student Financing for Students with Disabilities.

Portability

52. Develop regulations and standards of service that coordinate and improve the consistency of support services across regions.
53. Provide individual users with an entitlement card that removes the need for new assessments when a person moves from one region or office to another.
54. Make the interpretation of policies and programs related to safety/security needs more consistent within regional health authorities and key provincial government ministries.
55. Review current government funding models, i.e. Services to Children with Disabilities, to determine the best way of meeting the needs of persons with disabilities of ALL ages.

Aids to Daily Living

56. Expand Aids to Daily Living programs to include equipment related to employment and education at all levels (e.g. voice-activated computers).
57. Include broader representation from persons with disabilities and their advocates in current and future reviews of Alberta Aids to Daily Living.
58. Include a user satisfaction survey in current and future reviews of the administration and delivery of Aids to Daily Living programs conducted by Alberta Health and Wellness.
59. Structure Aids to Daily Living programs so that the user decides what goods and services are required and where they are purchased.

Home Care and Personal Care Support

60. Set standards for training programs for home support workers and offer incentives to attract more workers to the field.
61. Provide special funding within home care for persons with long-term disabilities. Separate the funding program into two streams: those who require services for more than one year and those who require services for less than one year.
62. Develop a comprehensive assessment tool for home care and personal care support, to increase collaboration and coordination between government and voluntary agencies regarding assessments for home care.
63. Give care recipients and families access to an independent assessment if they disagree with the health authority's assessment of their care needs to live independently in the community. Establish an arbitration or appeal mechanism for use when the two assessments disagree.

64. Make use of assessments that have already been done, to reduce intrusiveness and enhance portability.
65. Expand the roles and responsibilities of Personal Care Attendants beyond the provision of basic needs. Attendants could help to complete forms and help access the full range of community opportunities that are available to the average citizen.
66. Establish portability between regions. This is not currently available within the home care structure.
67. Conduct a salary review for staff and personal care staff working in community home care, assistive and continuing care centres and community group homes.
68. Establish self-managed care as a choice in assistive care centres to support existing staffing structures.
69. Increase the dollars for self-managed care to reflect inflation and local economies.

Respite Support

70. Expand the recommendations of the Long-Term Care Review Policy Advisory Committee's Healthy Aging: New Directions for Care final report to include persons with disabilities of all ages.
71. Review all community-based personal support programs to determine whether respite support is appropriate and adequate.
72. Provide respite support funding on an individualized funding model to allow for flexibility, personal control and local investment in a range of appropriate care opportunities or models. (See the Services to Children with Disabilities model, which includes funding for respite care.)

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73. Introduce a new coordinated access process to assess needs and ensure appropriate referrals to the full range of continuing care services, whether those services are provided at home, in supportive living arrangements or in continuing care centres.
74. Establish healthy aging as a priority for government, including a greater emphasis on promoting healthy lifestyles, preventing illness and injury, and empowering and engaging seniors and persons with disabilities of all ages.
75. Shift the focus so that the first priority is for people to remain in their homes and other types of supportive living arrangements.
76. Enhance access to information on respite options and services. Ideally, this service will be coordinated through the offices of the proposed enhanced Community Supports program. A coordinated booking or intake system would facilitate one-stop service for the caregiver.
77. Expand training opportunities for those involved in the informal respite system (e.g. privately contracted or unpaid support, and social/recreational programs).
78. Review the formal respite capacity of assistive care centres and community services.
79. Where individualized funding is not provided for, establish mechanisms for formal providers of respite services to bill the funder directly once the individual or family requiring respite care has been approved for funding.
80. Through a partnership among Children's Services Authorities, Persons with Developmental Disabilities and regional health authorities, develop a joint

strategy for providing respite funding, services and support to individuals and families.

Services to Children with Disabilities

81. Broaden eligibility for Services to Children with Disabilities to include all children with disabilities that are identified as having "extra costs associated with their disability."
82. Provide parents/guardians with a Services to Children with Disabilities benefits card that allows them to access a pre-approved amount of service, supports, assistive devices or adaptive technology and that facilitates a direct billing between the service provider and the Alberta government. Out-of-pocket expenses place unnecessary hardship on families and increase the paper work for Services to Children with Disabilities staff.
83. Include members of the extended family and other informal care providers in Services to Children with Disabilities funding for respite services.
84. Strengthen partnerships between Services to Children with Disabilities and home care for children in order to deliver collaborative services and supports.

Housing

85. Expand the eligibility criteria for the Home Adaptation Program to include all persons with disabilities.
86. Disassociate eligibility for the Home Adaptation Program from the income of the person with a disability, their family or caregiver.
87. Revise the Alberta Community Development business plan to include performance measures of the

- availability of accessible and affordable housing in Alberta communities, with a monitoring process.
88. Re-establish the provincial co-op housing program, which had an excellent track record of meeting the needs of persons with disabilities.
 89. Research and develop an independent funding scheme for subsidized housing for persons with disabilities who are currently in their own home or in a rental property.
 90. Support the tri-level homelessness initiative (federal/provincial/municipal), which is looking at options to expand shelter and permanent housing options.
 91. Plan accessible housing in concert with support services (e.g. safety/security and growth needs).
 92. Have all levels of governments work together to establish programs and services to:
 - Help developers with capital and operational funding.
 - Develop public education to dispel the “not in my backyard” syndrome.
 - Provide monies directly to a qualified individual to purchase the required materials, manpower and services to ensure their place of residence is accessible.
 93. Create incentives for developers to build accessible and affordable housing that adheres to the Building Code requirements related to disabilities.
 94. Give priority to persons with disabilities in subsidized housing projects.
 95. Increase the funding for the rent supplement program.

III. Education and Learning Supports

OVERVIEW

The Alberta School Act guarantees that all children residing in Alberta will have access to the education system and to a program that addresses their learning needs. Alberta Learning has publicly stated that a primary goal of the Ministry is, “to develop a high-quality, life-long learning system for Alberta.” This goal is consistent with the learning interests of Albertans with disabilities that are:

Responsive - The learning system is able to meet the education needs of all students, community, and the economy.

Flexible - The learning system is flexible by providing a wide scope of programs through various learning modalities.

Accessible - All Albertans can access and participate in the learning environment.

Affordable - Cost will not be a barrier to inclusive learning environments. The learning system is affordable to all Alberta students regardless of learning needs.

In order for individuals to fully participate in the learning environments of early childhood, primary, secondary, or post-secondary education programs, they may require one or more education supports.

Education supports refer to the personal, technological, and accessibility needs that may be required by students with disabilities for full participation in a

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learning environment. Supports identified in the personal and employment support sections of this report may be similar in content but the difference amongst these categories rests in the context of the environments, i.e. living, working, or learning. Some of the education supports for students with disabilities include multi-sensory learning programs and assistant/teaching supports.

The availability of education supports for students with disabilities appears to be dependent on several factors. Two examples include the nature and severity of the disability, and the school board's degree of support inclusive of school policies and appropriately trained teachers.

The provision of education supports in the learning environment that enable persons with disabilities to fully participate in their education programs is a key contributor to positive school – student interaction. Other benefits to students with disabilities who have positive early school experiences include healthy peer interaction, increased self-confidence to pursue further education, increased self-awareness of education supports that they may require in an employment environment, and a more successful transition with transferring their learning interests and needs to future employment interests and needs.

Context of education and learning supports in Alberta

The latest national Health and Activity Limitation Survey reports that approximately 7% of children, 15 years and younger and residing in Alberta households, have one or more disabilities. For funding purposes, Alberta Learning classifies students with disabilities into severe, moderate, and mild categories.

The negation of education supports for students with disabilities has been identified as a risk factor for early school drop out and subsequent challenges with the individual obtaining meaningful employment. A 1991 study showed that only 41% of persons with disabilities aged 15-64 living in Alberta had some post-secondary education. Twelve per cent had never attended high school.

On average, Albertans with disabilities are reported to have lower education attainment levels than their non-disabled peers. This discrepancy in education attainment between persons with and without disabilities appears to originate from the learner's inability to fully participate in education programs due inaccessible learning environments, denial of funding for accommodation in the classroom, and a host of other factors.

Lower levels of education attainment have been found to directly impact an individual's opportunities to access the employment market. Persons with disabilities who completed higher levels of education were shown to be more successful in obtaining and maintaining full-time employment than those who completed less than secondary grade levels.

A 2002 Alberta Learning study of 11,033 Kindergarten to Grade 6 classes showed that there were 7,884 classes that had students with special needs integrated into the classrooms. There were 402 special needs classrooms that provided education to 4,587 students with special needs. Special needs refer to students registered in the Alberta

school system and identified as gifted, severely disabled, and mild or moderately disabled.

Among the integrated classrooms:

- 38% (4,147) of the classes reported having students with severe special needs.
- 7% (716) of the classes reported having students with mild/moderate special needs.
- 27% (3,021) of the classes reported having students with mild/moderate special needs and students with severe special needs.

Given the demographics of disability amongst Alberta's children, the Alberta government has attempted to respond to the learning interests and needs of all Albertans by supporting a lifespan of education programs. These include early childhood services, primary, secondary, and post-secondary integrated and specialized classrooms.

It is difficult to account for the nature of education supports used by students with disabilities because Alberta Learning does not collect data on the number or type of education supports used by students who receive special needs funding. This report relied on various qualitative studies and anecdotal accounts of types of learning aids used by students with disabilities as reported by teachers, students, school personnel, education consultants, and rehabilitation specialists (as provided by the Alberta School Board Association (1999) and Alberta Learning (2001)).

A second source of information about education supports was the distribution of special needs funding across various

disability categories. The majority of special needs funding for students registered in Kindergarten to Grade 12 programs was allocated to persons with disabilities categorized in the mild/moderate special needs program. The largest minority of special needs funding was given to students categorized as having severe special needs.

Without a data source for how the money is being used in the identified special needs categories it is difficult to comment on the nature of education supports within those categories or compare the variability of those supports across various populations of students with disabilities. Alberta Learning does collect data on special needs codes that each registered student with disabilities is assigned when funding is allocated to them.

Early Childhood Services

Parents of children with severe disabilities who are two and half years old may access education supports and programs through Alberta Learning's Early Childhood Services (ECS) program. Parents of children with mild or moderate disabilities cannot access ECS funding until the child is three and a half years old or older. The goal of the ECS program is to provide children with a foundation for learning prior to their entrance into kindergarten. The scope of the ECS funding covers one-to-one instructional programs, learning resources, adaptive technology, and assistive devices.

In 2001, there were 5,380 ECS students receiving mild/moderate special needs funding for education supports and services and 3,881 ECS students receiving severe special needs/program unit funding for education supports and services.

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ECS programs provide a critical foundation for future learning opportunities for Albertans. It is important that early identification and support is provided to parents/support persons of students with disabilities before the child is registered in kindergarten.

Primary and Secondary Education

The range and scope of special needs programs and supports varies significantly among schools and school boards. Although Alberta Learning cites a philosophy of inclusion as a priority, the absence of education supports in the schools can quickly result in the (unintended) warehousing of some students.

The nature of a learner's disability and characteristics of his/her learning needs dictate the intervention and types of education supports that enable individual learning. Although a student's assessment dictates the amount of funding provided to schools, the student's school ultimately determines how the special needs funding is collectively utilized for the special needs population registered at the school.

Parents and support persons of students with disabilities report frustration that schools do not fund some individualized programs or specialized education supports. School board representatives and school personnel express frustration at the lack of resources to provide the education supports recommended by others. They also feel burdened by the responsibility for ensuring that limited special needs funding benefits the greatest number of students. Existing education budgets do not readily allow for flexibility with individualized accommodation of education supports.

There are significantly more students with mild/moderate special needs than those with severe special needs. The allocation of funds reflects this fact. There is enormous variability in the education supports that may be required in the learning environment of persons with severe and mild/moderate disabilities. It is difficult to comment on the equity of education supports in the Alberta school system without data to assess the availability and nature of education supports for Alberta's students with disabilities.

Post-Secondary Education

In order to fully participate in post-secondary learning environments some students require education supports. According to a 1991 national survey on Canadians with disabilities, 9,040 individuals were identified as participating in a post-secondary program. Some of the required education supports identified by these post-secondary students included alternate communication mediums, and adaptive technology and assistive devices.

A number of Alberta's post-secondary institutions have an on-site disability resource centre, such as the University of Alberta's Specialized Support and Disabilities Services, the University of Calgary's Disability Resource Centre, Grant MacEwan College's Services to Students with Disabilities, NAIT's Services to Students with Disabilities, and NorQuest College's Learning Supports Services. These centres support new and on-going students with awareness of needs like accessing adaptive technology or requesting education supports from the faculties.

Generally speaking, the financial responsibility of funding education supports in post-secondary learning environments

rests with the post-secondary institutions. Post-secondary institutions have a duty to accommodate students with disabilities, unless the institution can establish that it would experience undue hardship. Where there is conflict of opinion, a student or the institution have the option of a quasi-judicial or judicial interpretation of the relevant laws.

There are two funding options available for students with disabilities to access education supports:

1. Canada Study Grant: Up to a maximum of \$5,000 per academic year is available for students with disabilities for funding education supports. These may include a tutor, interpreter, personal assistant, assistive device or adaptive technology, and learning disability assessments.
2. Maintenance Grant: Up to a maximum of \$6,000 per academic year is available to disadvantaged students (single parents and students with disabilities) for financial assistance with a disability-related expenditure related to their learning needs.

A Need for Education and Learning Supports

The context of education supports has identified an accessible learning environment - including access to information and accessibility to a learning environment – as important. The most recent information available about the national context of education supports provides little information on this topic.

The physical accessibility of the learning environment is essential to a student's participation in social, emotional, and

academic aspects of his/her studies. In a national study, students identified accessible transportation (9%) and accessible classrooms (8%) as important to their full participation in school.

There is a need for greater understanding of education supports for people with disabilities throughout the learning spectrum. Program evaluations and research studies that concentrate on school expenditures and funding codes are only a part of the information that is required for identifying and planning an equitable learning environments in Alberta.

Challenges Associated with Education and Learning Supports

There are a number of issues in Alberta that have the potential to restrict full and equitable access to lifelong learning opportunities. Two examples include budget restraint programs that have reduced support for children in classrooms with special needs, and inadequate preparation of teachers, instructors and professors for working with students with disabilities.

Outcomes and Strategies

Specific Outcomes

1. All persons will have the support they need to participate in education at all levels and throughout their lives.
2. All persons will enjoy choice and self-determination in planning for their primary, secondary, post-secondary and lifelong education needs.
3. Alberta's education system will be responsive, accountable, inclusive, and accessible.
4. Alberta's education programs will be culturally sensitive and respect diversity.

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Visionary Outcome

All Albertans will have access to the educational opportunities required to reach for and achieve their full potential.

Short-term Strategies

Strategy 1: Review the appeal process at the elementary and secondary level, with a view to:

- Making appeals quasi-judicial.
- Speeding up the process. Current appeals often take one to two years and in the meantime learning opportunities are missed.
- Ensuring objectivity. Current appeals are rarely independent. The final arbiter is generally a senior school board official, which means that the family is appealing a decision made by an employee of that board.
- Ensuring that students and their families know about their right to appeal and have the advocacy support necessary to appeal effectively

Strategy 2: Link and integrate educational supports to make learning truly lifelong.

Alberta has some very effective programs for supporting pre-school, elementary, secondary and post-secondary students and for additional training related to career/employment needs. However, available supports vary with the administrative unit, the level of education under consideration and the level or type of disability.

The proposed enhanced Community Supports model (see Personal Supports section) would help to ensure that supports are in place at all ages. In any case, priority must be given to coordinating and/or integrating the learning supports provided under the following policies:

- Services to Children with Disabilities/Children with Special Needs.
- Early Childhood Services.
- Educational Placement of Students with Special Needs.
- Special Education Policy.
- Special Transportation Funding.
- Access to learning objectives of Employment Assistance for Persons with Disabilities (EAPD).
- Education, financial and assistive technology supports policies of Disability Related Employment Supports (DRES).

To make this linkage strategy work, assessments would have to be relatively standardized across the province and would move with the student or learner. Assessments would move from one program to another, from one part of the province to another, from one level of learning to another (e.g. Early Childhood Services to elementary to secondary to post-secondary).

Strategy 3: Dramatically expand counseling support.

Currently, individualized program plans tend to be driven by medical, psychiatric and psychological assessments and prescriptions. More involvement of both the learner and the family is required, as full citizens have the right to information, options and personal choices.

Counselling support will help facilitate positive education and training experiences that translate into achievement of life goals and/or appropriate employment. The approach would build on the provincial government's Student Health Initiative that links service providers and involves the

counselling support and peer mentoring capabilities of Alberta's disability organizations whenever possible. Ideally, student counselling should link with the career counselling of Employment Assistance for Persons with Disabilities employability initiatives.

Strategy 4: *Implement and monitor the recommendations of Alberta Learning's Review of Special Education in Alberta Final Report.*

The issues raised in this review should accurately reflect the concerns of persons with disabilities, their families and support persons, and involved professionals. Persons with disabilities and their advocates will further review the 66 recommendations as the process unfolds, but they appear to make eminent sense. The final report also contains many additional suggested solutions that will guide continued debate and discussion for the next few years.

Recommended Strategies

Accountability

96. Require school boards to use a monitoring system to ensure that funds are actually being used in the designated manner.
97. Make programs for persons with disabilities a requirement for all school boards and all post-secondary educational institutions. They should not be an option, given the high rate of disability in our communities.
98. Conduct an overall review of school board initiatives to assess progress towards the goal of including persons with disabilities in home schooling and classrooms, with appropriate support.
99. Revise evaluation systems to recognize that students and parents/guardians are full partners in the education of their

children. Measure student and parent/guardian satisfaction levels with learning opportunities, supports and administration.

100. Make funding policies more flexible to permit persons with disabilities to re-enter adult education programs easily if they have had to interrupt their studies because of the disability or an illness.

Portability

101. Require all school boards to use a common definition of disability.
102. Implement technical and personal supports that can move with the learner without need for re-application.
103. Provide assurance that other special needs funding can move with the individual, as program needs change or mature.
104. Have education supports stay with the students as long as they are in full-time education, without disruption at age 17/18. This measure is best handled in the context of an enhanced Community Supports model but is required even if such a model is not implemented in the near future.
105. Establish a relationship with the federal government to ensure that the same level of supports follow a First Nations person from off the reserve to on the reserve.

Assessments

106. Conduct timely assessments. Revise the Alberta School Act to state that school boards shall identify children with disabilities.
107. Ensure that assessments account for cultural biases that may misrepresent a child's needs.

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Early Childhood Services (ECS)

108. Continue the partnership of Alberta Learning with other provincial government ministries, school boards and community organizations to develop and support early childhood school programs for children with disabilities. Current examples that have enormous potential include the Student Health Initiative, the Aboriginal Head Start program and the Children's Mental Health Initiative.

School-Based Recreation and Physical Education

109. Increase the physical education/recreation budgets for school boards so that programs and facilities can be made more accessible and inclusive.
110. Make funding available for the purchase of necessary adaptive equipment to facilitate student access to all school programs.
111. Develop guidelines to determine when special or alternative programs are appropriate and to identify the funding required.
112. Make a focused and collaborative effort involving school boards and the Active Living Alliance for Canadians with Disabilities to orient schools to the need, perspectives, skills and equipment required to include children and youth with disabilities. (The program is in place, but additional resources are required to get the message out.)

Access to Schools and Learning

113. Increase funding under the Building Quality Restoration Program so that all Alberta schools have the potential to be utilized by persons with disabilities.
114. Ask Alberta Learning to undertake an inventory of the number of schools that are not accessible, establish a standard of accessibility or "visit ability" and establish an appropriately funded upgrade program to help schools achieve the desired standard.
115. Ask Alberta Learning to review the adequacy of current provision for alternative communications in classrooms and libraries (e.g. voice recognition programs and interactive computer technology). The review should be based on the Alberta government's Alternative Communications Guidelines.

Funding for Post-Secondary Education

116. Give special consideration to repayment of student loans by persons with disabilities.
117. Work towards integration of the policies and support initiatives of Alberta Learning and parallel programs of Alberta Human Resources and Employment and Alberta Health and Wellness.
118. Seek increased recognition and involvement of persons with disabilities in this area.

IV. Financial Supports

OVERVIEW

Persons with disabilities are over represented in the group of Albertans that don't have enough income to provide "the basics" – food, shelter, clothing, health care and the ability to care for their children. Some are able to achieve a minimal standard of living most of the time, but run into difficulty when the unexpected happens. (E.g. illness, an increase in rent, the need to pay a damage deposit or having to find a new daycare) In addition, Canadians across lifespan have a wide scope of expenditures related to their disability that Canadians without disability do not have to endure. These expenditures are often identified as financial stressors for the person/family member supporting the individual or the individuals themselves.

Not unlike the broader population, 1991 national survey data identified prescription and non-prescription drugs as the major "out-of-pocket" costs not covered by government programs or private insurance.

For individuals who are able to cover their disability-related expenditures, they are typically able to do so because they are employed and are reasonably compensated for this employment. Labour force participation studies indicate the majority of Canadian adults with disabilities do not access financial supports to fund disability costs or support their basic needs.

Approximately 88% of Canadians with disabilities report some kind of personal income and 60% report employment income of some kind. The remaining group depend on other sources of income or report no income at all. Of the approximately 10% of Canadians with disabilities identified as having no personal income at all, family and friends were viewed as the primary sources of financial support.

Canadians with disabilities that access non-employment funding supports appear to primarily get this funding from social assistance programs.

Context of Financial Supports in Alberta

Financial Supports or Income Supports refer to a variety of monetary supports available to Albertans who are not able to finance their basic needs due to temporary or permanent unemployment or to insufficient earnings from existing employment. Examples of programs that provide financial supports to Albertans with disabilities are AISH (Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped) and Workers Compensation Board Benefits.

The availability of financial supports is dependent on the age of onset and the cause of the disability. For example, persons who are born with a disability may only have access to financial supports based on their eligibility for an existing disability that relates to a social support programs. In contrast, persons who sustained their disability through the negligence of another person have the option of suing an individual to obtain financial supports from

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the defendant's insurance policy. Further, persons who sustain their disability within the context of employment have the option of obtaining temporary financial support from the Workers' Compensation Board. Persons with disabilities may access more than one financial support program to assist them with basic and disability-related expenditures.

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)

The largest provider of financial supports to persons with disabilities in Alberta is the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped program. Alberta Human Resources and Employment is responsible for administering this program through various employment and labour offices in Alberta. Eligibility for AISH depends on the individual having a severe handicap that causes a substantial limitation in the individual's ability to participate in the labour force. Albertans residing in the community are eligible for a maximum AISH benefit of \$850 per month. In many places in Alberta, it is impossible to live a dignified life on \$850 per month. Albertans residing in a hospital or nursing home are eligible to receive a modified AISH benefit, which consists of room and board, and a handicap benefit.

In 2000, approximately 26,700 Albertans accessed the AISH program to cover basic and disability-related expenditures. Alberta Human Resources and Employment estimates that there were 29,305 AISH recipients for the 2001/2002 fiscal year. Albertans receiving AISH have access to medical supports including Alberta Health Insurance and Alberta Medical Services Card (covers optical, dental, prescription, ambulance services, and other health-related

needs). Prior to the completion of an AISH application, Albertans are required by AISH policy to apply for Canada Pension Plan disability benefits.

A review of the AISH program by the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities and various community contacts identified a number of issues. For example, AISH benefits do not reflect the financial expenditures incurred by Albertans for disability-related supports not funded by government programs. Also, there is no agreement between AISH and Alberta Children's Services to transition children with disabilities into the AISH program once they become adults.

Supports for Independence – Assured Support

Alberta Human Resources and Employment administers a second income support program called Supports for Independence (SFI). The SFI program provides income support to persons with or without disability. In 2001, approximately 28,700 Albertans accessed the SFI program for income support. Within SFI, there is a disability-related income program referred to as the Supports for Independence Assured Support program.

This program provides financial supports that cover housing, food, transportation, clothing, medical, familial responsibilities, and re-entry into the labour market. The expectation of this program is that the recipient will access supports on a "short-term" basis until his or her disability is no longer a barrier to employment. Alberta Human Resources and Employment has a number of specialized employment programs to assist Albertans in their re-entry into the workforce (See Employment Supports section).

Workers Compensation Board (WCB) Benefits

The WCB program is a disability insurance program funded by employers for Alberta employees to access in circumstances where an employee has sustained injury in the employment environment. This disability insurance program protects employers from litigations by providing an avenue for employees who are injured during work-related responsibilities to access financial support for employment-related injuries, lost income, and health care. The WCB program is a short-term financial support program that has an expectation that the individual will return to their original position or a position with comparable compensation.

Canada Pension Plan – Disability Benefits

The CPP Disability Benefits program is a federal pension program available to Canadians who are no longer able to work full time due to disability but have contributed to CPP for a minimum time period during their employment, are under 65 years old, and have been identified as disabled under the Canadian Pension Plan legislation.

Unlike the AISH program, the CPP Disability Benefits program provides income support but not medical benefits. The CPP benefits program pays out a monthly benefit to eligible Albertans that are based on the individual's period of employment, medical information and earnings.

For Albertans receiving the CPP benefit and deemed by their medical doctor to be candidates for re-entry to the workforce, there is an opportunity for

employment/education retraining through the Canada Pension Plan Vocation Rehabilitation program.

This program provides individuals with a disability benefit and financial support for education and re-employment until such time that the individual's income has exceeded the allowable program limits. In 1999-2000, the Canadian government paid \$2.6 billion in benefits to 287,000 people with disabilities and \$245 million in benefits to 97,000 children of people with disabilities who contributed to CPP.

Disability Tax Credits

The Canadian taxation system provides disability tax credits for persons with severe and prolonged mental or physical disabilities and their family/support persons. For Albertans who are not paying into the tax system, some but not all of their credits may be transferred to family members that provide them with care on a regular basis. The scope of tax credits available to Canadians with disabilities includes the Federal Disability Supplement, moving expenses, tuition, medical expenses, personal support fees paid to a group home, and renovations to existing property and new construction to increase accessibility.

A Need for Financial Supports in Alberta

Not all individuals with disabilities require financial supports. Individuals who do require financial supports usually find their basic and disability related costs exceed their available resources. Persons with disabilities do have a higher cost of living than persons without disabilities due to the inaccessible nature of society to accommodate the diversity of needs of these citizens.

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Numerous attempts have been made by governments to rectify this inequity and increase the economic power of persons with disabilities. This has largely been done through supportive programs aimed at increasing levels of education and employment. While these initiatives are important to increasing the user capacity of persons with disabilities, it is of equal importance that these programs produce employment options that can sufficiently support the disability expenditures experienced by many Albertans. Persons with disabilities will not be able to cover all of their own costs until they experience equitable opportunities in the labour market and experience equitable purchasing power.

Challenges Associated with Financial Supports

The challenge associated with financial supports for individuals has two views:

- From the perspective of the provider, or provincial government, the challenge is identifying the scope of need, coming to terms with who is responsible for meeting this need and to what extent, so that all Albertans can fully participate in their communities.
- From the perspective of the recipient, a person with disabilities or their family/support persons, the challenge is justifying and explaining to funding bodies that many Albertans are being forced to live in poverty by marginal employment options, inflexible employment laws, poor supports for families caring for children with disabilities, and high expenditures for disability supports.

In an average year it is estimated that a person with disabilities or their family/support persons will pay \$1,000 to \$25,000 for disability related expenditures over and above basic living expenses. Consequently, persons with disabilities or their family/support persons need to make incomes that are \$1,000 to \$25,000 more than persons without disabilities just to have a comparable disposable income.

All Albertans value their independence. Appropriate and adequate employment opportunities that allow individuals to care for themselves are the optimum option. However, many Albertans are often concerned that their attempts to take part in training, education and the competitive workforce will lead to their loss of “disability” status and the invaluable additional supports it often provides. For many, this is a significant work disincentive. Criteria for acceptance under any of the programs clearly relate to an ability to work. Recipients therefore often carry the label of “permanently unemployable” just so they can maintain the valuable supports they need to get by.

Existing social assistance programs are not flexible enough to respond to the diverse and changing needs of Albertans. Program responses need to be individualized within the context of the person’s disabilities and actively involve persons with disabilities in the determination of their needs. One size doesn’t fit all.

Outcomes and Strategies

Specific Outcomes

1. The government of Alberta's programs and policies will address the impact of disability, not the presence of disability.
2. The government of Alberta will involve persons with disabilities in the development and design of Alberta Human Resources and Employment policies and programs.
3. All Albertans will have financial security sufficient to meet daily living needs.
4. Disability financial supports will be seen as an investment, not a handout that carries the stigma of welfare.
5. Disability financial supports will enable all Albertans to make informed choices, and to participate in and to be included in all aspects of Canadian citizenship. The strengths, needs and preferences of all people must be respected.
6. Disability financial supports will reflect the real cost of living with a disability.
7. Disability financial supports will treat persons with disabilities with respect by giving them the option to self-declare, as all Canadians do in the taxation system.
8. Disability financial supports will be designed to provide an incentive to seek employment options. Currently, many Albertans are afraid that getting a job or taking job training could cause them to lose their "disability status."

Visionary Outcome

All Albertans will have access to a standard of living and quality of life that ensures their health, safety, comfort and dignity.

Short-Term Strategies

Strategy 1: Separate income and personal supports for Albertans with disabilities.

Ideally, personal supports will help to overcome the barriers associated with living with a disability. Eligibility for income supports will be a separate matter, with monthly income payment levels simply based on the cost of living a life of dignity. In the case of Aboriginal people, this policy would apply on and off the reserve.

A person with a disability who is able to find paid employment that supports basic living needs will not lose the personal supports that are required to take part in work and live in the community. Nor will he or she lose enhanced disability-related health benefits, which are critically necessary.

Strategy 2: Revise Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) to reflect the real cost of living with a disability.

Recommended Strategies

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)

119. Revise the provisions of the AISH program as follows:
 - Separate eligibility for medical benefits from program eligibility. Increase the basic AISH payments in 2002 to reflect the cost of living and the real cost of living with a disability.
 - Raise income exemption levels to \$500 per month or 50% of the AISH benefits.
 - Adjust annually the AISH amount by the cost of living index. Stop claw-back of AISH to offset Canada Pension Plan – Disability cost-of-living increases.

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- Allow family and friends to offer financial assistance without reducing AISH benefits.
- 120. Implement mandatory disability awareness and sensitivity training for AISH administrators.
- 121. Require staff to be supportive when assisting consumers with the completion of applications, gathering data and correcting referrals to another department when appropriate.
- 122. Make AISH program descriptions and applications available in alternative communication formats, in keeping with government policy.
- 123. Use the same model for AISH as for the income tax system, relying on self-declaration with a mechanism for an audit.
- 124. Provide advocacy support for recipients of disability-related income support.

More Flexible Income Support Programs

- 125. Develop financial supports that encourage responsibility, personal accountability and self-management of funds.
- 126. Make eligibility regulations less complex and easier to understand.
- 127. Make it unnecessary for applicants to transfer to other programs to receive the benefits they require. Currently, AISH recipients go to Assured Supports if they require a hearing aid and those who need an ambulance service may need to go to Extended Care benefits.
- 128. Review programs to ensure consistency of benefits and equal entitlement regardless of the program.
- 129. Make the extended medical benefits the same as those available to seniors.

- 130. Ensure that financial supports are adaptable enough to cover additional costs such as damage deposits, utility hook-up costs and increases in utility rates.
- 131. Review financial supports to address discrimination against or unfairness towards single people with disabilities.

Enhanced Employment Opportunities

See Employment Supports section for specific recommendations.

More Flexible Transitions between Income Support and Employment

- 132. Provide an income supplement for a seamless transition from Services to Children with Disabilities to AISH at age 18 and from AISH to Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement at age 65.
- 133. Rapidly reinstate AISH after an unsuccessful employment attempt.
- 134. Continue entitlement to personal supports after entry or return to the labour market.
- 135. Continue extended care health benefits after a person with a disability returns to work.
- 136. Encourage temporary, short-term or part-time workplace experience without losing benefits.
- 137. Take a series of initiatives to quantify the extra costs of living with a disability in order to separate personal supports from income supports and encourage housing and estate planning for persons with disabilities.

Advocacy and Appeal Processes

- 138. Handle appeals in a quasi-judicial, fair, transparent and respectful manner, and provide timely hearings.

- 139. Ensure that staff that deal with AISH applicants are supportive – that they help persons with disabilities to complete applications and gather data, as well as refer them to the appropriate office department as required.
- 140. Establish a provincial standard for all staff to follow in interpreting policy and regulations relating to AISH applications.
- 141. Inform all recipients of disability supports about the appeal processes that are in place.
- 142. Provide the assistance of an advocate before and during an appeal process.
- 143. Send denied applications directly to the appeal process without an administrative review.

V. Employment Supports

OVERVIEW

In 1997 the federal, provincial, and territorial governments endorsed an employment support initiative entitled the Employment Assistance for People with Disabilities (EAPD). This initiative was developed to respond to workplace, systemic and physical barriers that challenged persons with disabilities from fully participating in the Canadian workforce. The emphasis of the program was on employment assessment and counselling, provision of assistive technologies, and incentives for employers. The EAPD agreements were reinforced by federal partnership with provinces and territories and the creation of In Unison, a federal disability strategy. Through In Unison, this partnership has identified several employment-related commitments. Two examples are promotion of work and volunteer opportunities and encouragement to employers to make appropriate job and workplace accommodations.

The provision of employment supports is essential to the establishment of full citizenship amongst all Albertans. In 1991, the labour participation rate for Albertans with disabilities was reported to be 66% compared to a rate of 84% for the general population. Without the assistance of employment supports, persons with disabilities will continue to be under-represented in workforce participation statistics, earn less income than their non-disabled peers, and require ongoing government assistance for funding basic and disability supports required in daily living.

While 44% of persons with disabilities are not actively a part of the workforce, more than half of this population reported they would be capable of full participation if barriers and disincentives were permanently removed. Canadian men without disabilities had an average employment income of \$30,000 in 1991 compared to \$22,129 for

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men with disabilities. Canadian women without disabilities had an average income of \$18,000 compared to \$13,425 for women with disabilities.

Employment supports refers to the range of services and aids required by Albertans and employers in the workplace. Similar to personal supports, the type of employment supports required by an individual is dependent on the type and severity of disability, the nature of the workplace environment, and employment duties of the position.

Employment supports for an employee with disabilities may include altering the work schedule or restructuring the job, among other changes.

Persons planning to or already employing persons with disabilities have indicated that having access to employment supports significantly impacted their decision to employ them and the subsequent success or failure of the work arrangement. Some of the employment supports identified as significant to employers included funding for accommodation costs and information and assistance with accommodating the workplace.

Context of Employment Supports in Alberta

Employment supports for Albertans with disabilities is a shared responsibility of the Alberta and federal governments. However, the Alberta government has the responsibility for administering employment supports through Alberta Human Resources and Employment. The Ministry has five programs that deliver employment supports across Alberta. They include Disability Related Employment Supports, Skills for Work, Train-on-the-Job, Skills Development, and Self-Employment.

Depending on the need for employment and the availability of services in the individual's community, a person may access one or more these supports.

Disability Related Employment Supports

Throughout Alberta, the Career Development Centres or Canada-Alberta Service Centres receive funding to deliver the Disability Related Employment Supports (DRES) program to Albertans

residing in the community. Supports covered by DRES funding are goods and services that are beyond the employment supports provided by mainstream services. Albertans with disabilities may require services that are no longer in duration or more expensive than traditional mainstream services. The DRES program is a supplement to existing mainstream programs for individuals with disabilities who are destined for the labour market. The four disability related employment supports covered by this funding are education supports, workplace supports, assistive technology and financial supports.

The provision of DRES is based on an individual's employment plan that outlines specific activities with estimated timelines for completion. The employability assessment and employment plan identify required interventions for the individual with disabilities to progress towards full employment.

The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities has had an opportunity to review the disability related employment supports programs in the regions of Calgary South, Edmonton Canada Place, Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, Hinton, Lloydminster, and Peace River. Funders, persons with disabilities, and service providers identified several issues during the review of DRES. Two examples are poor portability of employment supports across regions, and limited staff knowledge about the program and its funding administration.

A Need for Employment Supports Reported by Albertans with Disabilities

A 1991 study showed that when questioned about their requirements for work, 20% of Albertans with disabilities identified employment supports as a necessary component of their workplace environment. Of the Albertans with disabilities identified as unemployed or not in the labour force, less than 37% indicated employment supports as necessary for their potential employment environment.

Various programs funded by Human Resource Development Canada and Alberta Human Resource and Employment have indicated that some employers require assistance with, for example, locating accessible technology or assistive devices. By identifying the needs of employers for employment supports, the provincial and federal governments have been better able to plan for programs that address employment supports and deliver the outcomes desired by Albertans, employers and governments.

The majority of employment supports identified as necessary for work by Albertans with disabilities are job redesign, modified or reduced hours, and accessible washrooms. Depending on the nature and severity of disability, the 1991 national study identified one or more employment supports as necessary within the workplace environment for employed Albertans with disabilities.

Challenges Associated with Employment Supports

Despite the numerous initiatives aimed at improving employment supports for persons with disabilities, provincial human rights statistics suggest that employers are continuing to struggle with understanding the:

- Legal obligation of “duty to accommodate”. “Duty to accommodate” is a legal obligation that requires employers to take reasonable steps, without suffering undue hardship, to accommodate an employee that is identified as having a protected ground of discrimination based on human rights law. Other grounds protected by human rights legislation that have been cited as requiring an accommodation are religion, gender and race.
- Options for accommodating a person with disabilities in the work environment.
- Balance of “undue hardship” in assessing accommodation options. The concept of “undue hardship” has been defined as an accommodation that would impose an unreasonable hardship on the employer and that the hardship is unacceptable based on issues like financial cost, impact of a collective agreement, problems with employee

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morale, flexibility of work force and facilities, size of employer's business, and safety. Accommodations that impose an inconvenience or operational upset are not sufficient to satisfy the undue hardship test.

- Cost of accommodations in the workplace and responsibility for funding the accommodations options. The Job Accommodation Network reports that 80% of job-related accommodations for persons with disabilities are less than \$500.

Outcomes and Strategies

Specific Outcomes

1. Persons with disabilities will have the same opportunity as non-disabled Albertans to choose from employment options.
2. All Albertans will have the support they require to prepare for employment.
3. All Albertans will have the support and information required to access and make informed choices from a range of employment opportunities and to progress along a chosen career path.
4. Persons with disabilities will be valued members of Alberta's workforce.

Visionary Outcome

All Albertans will have access to the employment and career opportunities required to reach for and achieve their full potential.

Short-Term Strategies

Strategy 1: Move aggressively toward a holistic approach to employment services for persons with disabilities.

Albertans who are entering or re-entering the workforce often require long-term support and/or a commitment from

employers, governments and related agencies. This support and commitment is not currently available for persons with disabilities. The best way of providing it would be to develop ongoing partnerships amongst people with disabilities, service organizations, corporations and government.

The provincial ministries of Human Resources and Employment, Community Development, Health and Wellness, Justice, and Learning must work together to improve all programs and services dealing with the employability of Albertans with disabilities. These programs may include, but are not limited to, Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped, Supports For Independence, contract-funded employment service providers and career counsellors, and home care programs run through regional health authorities across the province.

It is important to recognize the need to address personal supports, early career planning, education and workplace supports as part of quality employment services and successful entrance into the workforce.

Strategy 2: Mobilize Alberta's major employers.

There is a clear need to empower, support and require action from Alberta's major employers. The provincial government and government-supported employers (educational institutions, hospitals, municipalities) must actively support workplace equity practices and serve as examples of best practices in hiring qualified people with disabilities. All employers must work in partnership to obtain and sustain employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

The government of Alberta has an obligation to lead by example in embracing the principles of employment equity and demonstrating the value of including all Albertans within a diverse workplace.

Recommended Strategies

Enhanced Employment Opportunities

144. Remove all disincentives to employment from disability financial support and encourage AISH recipients to seek employment of their choice.
145. Establish employment programs that:
 - Encourage lifelong learning and personal growth opportunities.
 - Encourage returning to work by removing barriers.
 - Encourage volunteering as a choice of activity.
 - Encourage and support persons with disabilities to become entrepreneurs.
146. Develop mentorship/apprenticeship program opportunities for employers and persons with disabilities.

Coordination

147. Require all government funded employment agencies to offer service to persons with disabilities in preparing for, gaining and maintaining employment.
148. Require all provincial government ministries and regional authorities to clearly indicate in their business plans how they will meet the employment needs of persons with disabilities, including but not limited to:
 - School boards requiring students to engage in formal career planning activities with a qualified school counsellor on a one-to-one basis.

- Indicating, on individualized education plans for students receiving specialized supports, how the student will be assisted in preparing for future employment.
 - Regional health authorities clearly indicating that they will provide personal care supports to persons with disabilities in the workplace, not just at home.
 - Children's authorities clearly indicating how they will work with adult services such as AISH and adult home care to ensure a smooth transition to employment.
149. Appoint a disability liaison officer in each government ministry. This person, whose role would be similar to that of the provincial ombudsman, would act as an information source and resource to the community, to persons with disabilities and to those who provide services for people with disabilities. The disability liaison officer would have specialized knowledge about the implications for service provision resulting from having a disability, and would be knowledgeable about the ministry's programs and services for persons with a disability.
 150. Set-up partnerships among people with disabilities and agencies, government and the private sector providing employment services.
 151. Ensure that policies and regulations are standard and consistent across the province.

Employment Supports

152. Significantly broaden the definition of employment supports to include all assistance and support required by

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people with disabilities in order to enter and maintain employment. The definition should recognize that some persons with disabilities require more intensive support or more long-term support at work than is legislated by the human rights provision for “duty to accommodate.”

153. Have the supports provided follow the individual wherever he or she chooses to seek employment.
154. Coordinate personal supports initiatives that may be accessed by persons preparing for employment (e.g. Disability Related Employment Supports, student loan provisions for maintenance, Special Opportunity Grants for Students with Permanent Disabilities).

Awareness

155. To increase the probability that persons with disabilities will successfully enter and maintain employment, have the Alberta Human Resources and Employment business plan make a commitment to:
 - More aggressively reach persons with disabilities and the agencies that serve them.
 - Inform persons with disabilities about the services and programs they might be eligible for.

Renewed Thinking on Outcomes

156. Contract funded employment service providers currently require participants to commit 15 to 20 hours per week to training programs. Many people with disabilities are excluded from these programs because of this unrealistic requirement. Allow employment

service providers to determine how many hours per week should be required on an individual basis.

157. Encourage employment counsellors to focus on meaningful involvement and development in the vocation chosen by the client, rather than full-time, paid employment.
158. Require employment service providers to evaluate their programs in order to be eligible for further funding, but also provide them with specific funding for proper evaluation of the success of their programs and for planning future programs. Programs must have reasonable goals and evidence-based outcomes.

Funding

159. Introduce a funding mechanism to provide contracts to employment service providers that serve people who need extensive support and preparation to enter or re-enter employment. This funding mechanism would be parallel to the current contracts to service providers that serve people who are almost employment ready.
160. Apply the philosophy of individualized funding (dollars following the person) to employment supports. This approach would increase choices and reduce pressure to stay in a less than optimal employment situation because of fear of losing needed supports.
161. Review and revise employment programs for persons with disabilities to acknowledge the additional support and time required by some participants to secure employment.

Model Employers

162. Encourage Alberta Human Resources and Employment, persons with disabilities and the private sector to work together to fund, develop and recognize best practices in employing persons with disabilities and in seeking out qualified persons with disabilities for their organizations.
163. Develop a new funding mechanism for developing best practices and demonstration projects at each phase of the employment continuum.
164. Create a partnership among persons with disabilities, Alberta Human Resources and Employment, volunteer and not-for-profit agencies and the Personnel Administration Office to:
 - Encourage employers to proactively commit to employment diversity programs.
 - Recognize employers who have demonstrated this commitment.
165. As the single biggest employer in the province, the Personnel Administration Office together with all government departments, should demonstrate effective leadership by embracing the principles of employment equity and demonstrating the value of including persons with disabilities in a diverse workforce.

Mainstream Employment Services

166. Require all mainstream employment service providers to train staff to:
 - Serve customers with disabilities (using alternative communication formats, tools and adaptations as required).
 - Be aware of the barriers to successful employment these people face and the types of support they require.
 - Understand concepts such as the employer's duty to accommodate, barriers to physical access and alternative communication formats.

Legislated Removal of Barriers

167. Review the Alberta Human Rights legislation and amend it to include immediate and definite penalties for non-compliance with the duty to accommodate in the workplace. (See also Strategy 2, Full Citizenship section.)
168. Provide enhanced support to complainants to the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission as they prepare, put forward and follow through on their complaints.



Accountability Framework

INTRODUCTION

According to the 1991 Health and Activity Limitation Survey, 17% of Albertans and 16% of Canadians were identified as having one or more disabilities. The 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey identified that 31% of Canadian Aboriginal persons had one or more disabilities. The disabilities included in these studies were mobility, agility, mental health, speech, auditory, visual, and learning. Albertans may require a variety of personal supports, technical or assistive devices, employment supports, education and training aids, and financial assistance - whether they reside in institutions or in the community.

The Alberta government has 11 ministries that administer approximately 34 disability-related services or supports. Each program has its own eligibility requirements and serves populations differentiated by age, socio economic status, education, employment status, severity of impairment, and nature of disability. Consequently, the eligibility of persons with disabilities for supports varies significantly depending on their impairment, age, and socio economic status.

However, the accessibility of disability supports in Alberta also depends on the individual's awareness of the supports, capacity to request assistance, and the availability of the services in the person's community (i.e. rural/remote). Recent changes to government policies and

planning have reduced the scope of disability supports from full intervention (early intervention, prevention, and on-going support) to secondary and tertiary intervention (supports post diagnosis). The disability community has expressed its frustration with the Alberta government for not consulting stakeholders on its decision to reduce the scope of disability supports.

In 2000/2001, the Government of Alberta spent approximately \$1.7B on disability supports. Despite this large expenditure, Albertans with disabilities report:

- Unequal access to supports based on disability and age.
- Inaccessible workplace and learning environments.
- Discriminatory attitudes in the work, business, healthcare, and education environments.
- Unaffordable and inappropriate housing options.
- Limited access to necessary adaptive technology and assistive devices.

The root of these concerns appears to stem from the absence of a government policy for persons with disabilities to guide the annual expenditure of the \$1.7B. This issue is further complicated by inconsistent interpretation and application of program policies across the myriad of regional service delivery agents, authorities and governance systems.

Existing Reporting Framework – Programs for Persons with Disabilities in Alberta

Ministries with responsibility for disability-related programs and services in Alberta:

1. Children's Services
2. Health and Wellness
3. Learning
4. Human Resources and Employment
5. Community Development
6. Gaming
7. Transportation
8. Municipal Affairs
9. Seniors
10. Infrastructure
11. Justice/Solicitor General

Each Ministry **defines its own reporting framework** for review of activities and reports findings to the Government.

There is **no common reporting framework** to evaluate and report on disability related supports and services in Alberta.

GAPS

- Inter-relationships amongst programs.
- Costs associated with delivering services across 11 ministries.
- Scope of disability supports for Albertans with disabilities.
- A provincial disability policy framework.

An accountability framework has been developed in response to the following provincial climate of disability issues:

- The absence of an Alberta government disability policy framework.
- The significant percentage of the provincial budget designated to funding disability supports.
- The lack of understanding by government and community of the inter-relationships amongst disability supports.
- The impact of governance models on the delivery of programs for persons with disabilities.
- The limited opportunities for comprehensive and coordinated input into programs by various stakeholders: persons with disabilities, family members, service providers, and funding bodies.

The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities has identified an accountability framework that is focused on:

- Collecting information from the various stakeholders.

- Identifying common interests across disability and lifespan that can form the foundation of a provincial disability policy.
- Evaluating the inclusiveness of new and future government activities.
- Measuring existing disability services with standards identified by local and international disability entities.
- Monitoring the Alberta government's commitment to full citizenship for Albertans with disabilities.

What is an Accountability Framework?

The goal of the Alberta Disability Strategy is to improve the status of persons with disabilities in Alberta. An accountability framework is an outline for identifying, evaluating, and monitoring disability issues in Alberta and on a national level. The accountability framework consists of four tools designed to gather information about activities in the living, learning, working, recreational and political environments of persons with disabilities. The products from the accountability framework are structured

APPENDIX C: ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

to aid the Alberta government in its design of a disability policy that will assist with:

- Administrating and evaluating disability supports.
- Monitoring the inter-relationships amongst supports.
- Implementing the commitments made to Albertans with disabilities by the provincial and Canadian governments.

Throughout the development and implementation of the Alberta Disability Strategy, stakeholders have acknowledged the need for securing the commitments made to persons with disabilities by the Alberta Government. The cyclical pattern of government initiatives related to disability has resulted in little to no satisfaction for Albertans with disabilities.

Components of the Accountability Framework

The four tools in the accountability framework of the Alberta Disability Strategy include:

- Inventory of Programs and Services for Persons with Disabilities.
- Disability Lens.
- Cross-Canada Scan of Provincial and Territorial Disability Initiatives.
- Status Tool – Performance Outcomes, Indicators, and Measures.

The relationship amongst the tools is in the information that is produced by the various analyses of disability issues. These tools may be used individually or collectively.

Inventory of Programs and Services for Persons with Disabilities

The Inventory is a policy analysis tool for identifying information about existing disability-related services that are financed

by the Government of Alberta. The Inventory includes questions about the scope of the program, service delivery, service recipient interests, financial challenges, quality control, barriers to inclusiveness, and family and assistants' interests. Information yielded from the Inventory is directed into two areas:

- Feedback for programs and services.
- Baseline of information about programs and services.

An intended outcome of the Inventory is the establishment of relationships between the Council and program representatives. The function of the Inventory in the Alberta Disability Strategy is to provide analysis of disability interests in Alberta. A secondary function of the Inventory is to provide evaluative information on the identified programs, which is based on criteria in existing literature and research on disability.

In the short-term the primary user of the Inventory would be an external stakeholder of the government involved with persons with disabilities in Alberta. In the current stages of the Alberta Disability Strategy, the Premier's Council has assumed responsibility for developing and carrying out the initial run of the Inventory.

The user would select a program or service that has identified persons with disabilities as users and receives funding from the Government of Alberta. Secondly, the user would apply the program information to the Inventory. Because the Inventory was not designed to collect cumulative data, each program or service must be reviewed separately. Some of the information sources for the Inventory include legislation, policy and other materials that directly reflect the program or service (i.e. pamphlets, user guides etc.).

The questions in the Inventory are designed to force a “yes” or “no” response. Where the question is not answerable from the prepared materials of the program, the user would arrange to speak with a program manager for clarification. The user will make the notation to reflect this deficit in

the comments section of the Inventory and highlight the specifics of the question in the summary report. The product of the Inventory is an analysis report of the programs and services for persons with disabilities in Alberta for a given time period.

Applying the Inventory of Programs and Services for Persons with Disabilities to Existing Disability Supports

Select Program or Services for persons with disabilities to be reviewed

Ministries and Related Programs and Services for Persons with Disabilities that are funded by the Alberta Government:

Children’s Services

Resources for Children with Disabilities, Alberta Partnership on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Child Health Initiative

Community Development

Persons with Developmental Disabilities, Premier’s Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, Brain Injury Initiative, Blind Persons Rights Act, Protection of Persons in Care, Human Rights and Citizenship Commission

Gaming

Community Facilities Enhancement Program

Health and Wellness

Aids to Daily Living, Home Care, Alberta Mental Health, Alberta Alcohol and Drug Addictions Centre

Human Resources and Employment

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped, Supports for Independents-Disabled Persons, Self-Employment, Skills Development, Train on the Job, Skills for Work, Office of the Public Guardian, Disability Related Employment Supports, Employability Council, Supports to Dependent Adults

Infrastructure

Barrier Free Design Committee

Justice

Office of the Public Trustee

Learning

Special Needs, Special Needs Bursary

Transportation

Parking Placard

Seniors

Home Adaptation Program

Transfer program related information into the 10 sections of the Inventory

Sections of the Inventory

- Program Description
- Target Population
- Geographical Considerations
- Life Stage Considerations
- User Interests
- Quality of Services
- Communication
- Barriers
- Financial Assistance
- Family and/or Caregiver Support

Responses from each section are summarized, assessed, and directed into the following areas:

- Baseline Information: Disability-related programs in the Government of Alberta
- Information Source for involving government in the research and development of ADS.
- Feedback resource for Programs.

APPENDIX C: ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

Cross Canada Scan of Provincial and Territorial Disability Initiatives

In June 2000, the Council conducted a scan with 6 of the 11 representatives from the Council on Citizens with Disabilities. The tool consists of 12 questions that solicit information about provincial and territorial initiatives related to In Unison and provincial/territorial-funded supports for persons with disabilities. The provinces and territories are asked about their framework for accountability and whether there is a provincial or territorial disability policy.

Information from the pilot of the scan has contributed to the development of the Alberta Disability Strategy and accountability framework. In order to monitor and share information about disability activity in Alberta and across Canada, it is recommended that future applications of the scan be conducted annually and information shared with various stakeholders.

Disability Lens

The Disability Lens refers to a framework for identifying and analyzing government services, programs, legislation and policies for their inclusiveness of the interests of persons with disabilities. A premise of this framework is that persons with disabilities have not been recognized by governments as participatory stakeholders in the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of their activities. Traditionally, they have been viewed as receivers of government activities versus active participants in the creation, implementation, and evaluation of government activities. This absence of their voice has produced an opportunity to create a framework for identifying disability interests in government activities.

The Alberta Disability Lens was developed with the goal of improving the inclusiveness of disability interests in government activities. Consequently, its primary audience is the Alberta government. The anticipated secondary users of the lens are identified as municipal governments, federal government departments based in Alberta, organizations receiving funding from the provincial and municipal governments, community organizations, and the corporate community.

The Alberta Disability Lens is divided into three sections: basic lens, demographic perspective, and sectoral perspective. The first section consists of a series of 20 questions that aid the user in identifying the inclusiveness of the user's initiative. To assist the user with answering these questions, existing inclusiveness frameworks have been provided for reference. Section two consists of five segments that acknowledge the homogeneity of the interests and viewpoints of persons with disabilities. The perspectives included in section two include children, women, seniors, Aboriginal persons, and multicultural persons. The third component of the Alberta Disability Lens represents the issues that transcend disability classification and includes employment, education, housing, transportation, and recreation/active living.

After the user has completed the three sections, there is an opportunity to assess his/her responses and to rate the initiative for its inclusiveness of persons with disabilities. Depending on the rating of inclusiveness, the user will be referred to a collection of strategies for improving or maintaining the inclusiveness rating of the initiative under review.

Applying the Alberta Disability Lens to New Government Activities

User selects an activity to review for its inclusiveness of persons with disabilities

Section 1: Inclusive Checklist

- Step 1: Background of Commitment to Inclusivity
- Step 2: Rating the Inclusivity of your Organization
- Step 3: Assessing the Accessibility of your Organization
- Step 4: Analyzing the Additional Barriers in the Environment that Threaten Inclusivity
- Step 5: Rating the Initiative For Its Inclusion of Safety and Security Considerations
- Step 6: Confirming the Involvement of Persons with Disabilities

Use references at the end of the tool for directions on answering inclusivity questions

Identify the target group for your initiative and use the corresponding component of the Section 2: Demographic Perspective

Section 2: Demographic Perspective

- Perspective 1: Aboriginal Persons
- Perspective 2: Aging and Seniors
- Perspective 3: Children and Youth
- Perspective 4: Women
- Perspective 5: Cultural Diversity

Identify the area of focus in the initiative and use the corresponding part of Section 3: Sectoral Perspective

Section 3: Sectoral Perspective

- Perspective 1: Employment
- Perspective 2: Education
- Perspective 3: Housing
- Perspective 4: Transportation
- Perspective 5: Recreation

RATE THE INCLUSIVITY OF THE ACTIVITY

APPENDIX C: ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

Status Tool

The status tool is a policy analysis tool that assesses issues impacting the status of Albertans with disabilities through a study of performance outcomes, indicators, and measures. From a series of community consultations, stakeholders have identified the global and sectoral outcomes to be included in the Alberta Disability Strategy. The performance outcomes consist of two parts: visionary and specific. The global outcome is to improve the status of persons with disabilities. The global outcome of full citizenship reflects the importance of the four core supports of the Alberta Disability Strategy: Personal Supports, Education and Learning Supports, Financial Supports and Employment Supports. (See specific sections elsewhere in this report for details regarding these supports and expected outcomes).

The measurement portion of the Status Tool is the data collection instrument used to gather and evaluate information about persons with disabilities in Alberta. It is anticipated that the Premier's Council will

be the primary user of the Status Tool so that information on the status of persons with disabilities can be reported to government and the community on a yearly or bi-yearly basis. A second identified user of the Status Tool might be the ministerial business planning units in the Alberta Government. Where applicable, ministries can participate in the data collection of the Status Tool and report on the outcomes and indicators in their respective business plans.

The initial application of the instrument will act as a benchmark or baseline for the existing status of persons with disabilities in Alberta in the areas of Employment, Personal Supports, Financial Supports, Education and Learning, and Full Citizenship. Subsequent applications of the instrument will be compared to the baseline. The comparison information will be used to inform government and stakeholders about how the systemic changes in disability supports are impacting or not impacting the status of Albertans.

Applying the Status Tool

Apply the Status Tool to an identified Sample from Alberta's Persons with Disabilities Population



Establish benchmarks for the status of persons with disabilities in Alberta from the initial application of the status tool.



Report on the status of persons with disabilities to community and the Alberta government



Apply Status Tool on a yearly or bi-yearly basis




CONCLUSION

It is difficult to conclusively comment on the implementation of the accountability framework since its activities are directly dependent on its relationship to the Alberta Disability Strategy. It is anticipated that the accountability framework will be used by the Alberta government and provincially-funded entities to assist with the following activities:

- Aid decision-makers in developing and analyzing policy and legislation that is inclusive of persons with disabilities. Evaluate the inclusiveness of provincial activities regarding persons with disabilities.
- Monitor Alberta's status on disability initiatives in relation to other provinces and territories.
- Report on the progress to improve programs and services for persons with disabilities.

As the implementation process for the Alberta Disability Strategy is identified, the various tools in the accountability framework will be assigned to their designated roles and implemented as part of the evolution of the Strategy.



Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

LIST OF MEMBERS

The Premier's Council is composed of up to 15 volunteer members. Rob Lougheed, MLA, is the current chair of the Premier's Council. Council members represent a broad background of cross-disability knowledge and a diversity of geographic locations in Alberta. In December 2001, eight members were reappointed to the Council.

Rob Lougheed, Council Chair

Rob Lougheed is the Premier's Council Chairman and has spent most of his life in the field of education. The MLA for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan has over 28 years of experience as an Alberta educator. In addition to being an MLA and his position as Chair, Rob currently serves as a member of the following committees: Standing Policy Committee on Learning & Employment, Capital Region Caucus, the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts, the Farm Property Assessment Review Committee, and the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Standing Committee.

Gordon Bullivant

Gordon Bullivant of Calgary was the Chair of the Education and Learning Supports Committee and a member of the Full Citizenship Committee for the development of the Alberta Disability Strategy. He is the Past President of the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada and continues as the Chair of the National Legal Committee and member of the Professional Advisory Committee. He is an active member of the Calgary Stakeholders Group for Learning Disabilities and represents the Premier's Council on the Advisory Committee for Alberta Learning's Review of Special Education.

Gordon is the Executive Director of the Foothills Academy, a centre for children with learning disabilities. It is recognized internationally for its expertise in teaching techniques, research and practical application of program needs to children and youth with learning disabilities and/or Attention Deficit Disorder. Gordon has been active in the special needs community for over 30 years.

Shirley Dupmeier

Shirley Dupmeier of Medicine Hat has been re-appointed to the Premier's Council for a second term. She was a member of the Financial Supports Committee and the Personal Supports Committee for the development of the Alberta Disability Strategy. She has extensive experience working with issues surrounding visual impairment and other disabilities and is a liaison with many disability organizations in Medicine Hat.

Andrea Fugeman Millar

Andrea Fugeman Millar of Calgary, formerly of Millarville, was a member of the Full Citizenship and Education and Learning Supports Committees for the development of the Alberta Disability Strategy. She is a presiding Justice of the Peace within the criminal justice system and a Tribunal Adjudicator in administrative law. She is the Director of the Provincial Learning Disabilities Association as well as for the Society for Violence-Free Children. Andrea is a national legal advisor for the Canadian Learning Disabilities Association. She is the former Co-chair of Windsong Child and Family Services, a position she held for four years. She has been a volunteer for many organizations, including the Indian Friendship Centre of Calgary and the Aboriginal Community Services Association.

Gerald Gordey

Gerald Gordey, formerly of Vegreville and now residing in Edmonton, was the Chair of the Alberta Disability Strategy's Financial Supports Committee. He has a long history of community involvement and has contributed to many disability organizations as an advisor or volunteer. Gerald has been a County Councillor, School Board Chair, representative of the Vegreville Health Unit Board, and advisory member of a voluntary hospital board. He has served on the Board of Directors for Edmonton Social Services for the Disabled, Alberta Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled, Alberta Special Olympics, and the Handicapped Hunter Review Committee. He is also the former chair of the Vegreville Association for Living in Dignity (VALID), a volunteer organization responsible for providing services to persons with disabilities in the Vegreville region.

Judy Hellevang

Judy Hellevang of Calgary was a member of the Full Citizenship Committee and the Education and Learning Supports Committee for the development of the Alberta Disability Strategy. As a volunteer, Judy has been associated with the Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre (DDRC) of Calgary for 19 years. She facilitates the DDRC's Board Advisory Committee, which is made up of people with developmental disabilities. Judy has been an advocate for many people with disabilities and continues to promote their rights.

APPENDIX D: PREMIER'S COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Jim Killick

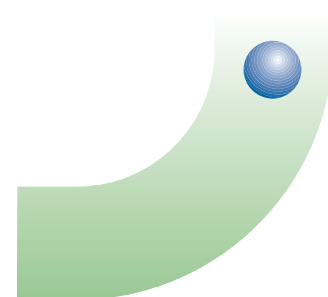
Jim Killick of Legal was Chair of the Coordinating Committee for the Alberta Disability Strategy, as well as Chair of the Personal Supports Committee and member of the Employment Supports Committee. Jim has been actively involved in the field of community rehabilitation in the province for approximately 20 years in the areas of counselling, program development and administration. He is presently working with the Canadian Paraplegic Association and continues to be involved as a participant in numerous community associations working towards removing the barriers facing persons with disabilities.

Carrielynn Lamouche

Carrielynn Lamouche is a Metis consultant from Gift Lake, one of Alberta's eight Metis settlements. She possesses a degree from the Royal Conservatory of Music and a Master's degree in Social Work. An Aboriginal person with disabilities, she works with governments in the area of social programming. She also assists governments, businesses and educational institutions to identify and remove barriers that prevent or discourage persons with disabilities from full participation in the community. Among her extensive committee work is service on the Aboriginal Healing Foundation Board, the Provincial Human Rights Multicultural Education Fund Advisory Committee and the Canadian Institute of Health Research Ethics Standing Committee.

Margaret Conquest

Margaret Conquest of Edmonton was the Chair of the Employment Supports Committee and a member of the Personal Supports Committee for the development of the Alberta Disability Strategy. Margaret has a Masters of Science in the Health Promotion Program at the University of Alberta. She studied the impact of acquired disability and rehabilitation services on the sexual health of women with spinal cord injuries and continues to chair or present at National and Provincial Conferences. She is actively involved in therapeutic recreation programs and health promotion for persons with disabilities.



FORMER MEMBERS

PREMIER'S COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

(Terms ended in December 2001)

Anne Belohorec

Anne Belohorec lives in Sherwood Park and served two terms on the Premier's Council. She was Chair of the Full Citizenship Committee and a member of the Education and Learning Supports Committee in support of the development of the Alberta Disability Strategy. She is a registered nurse and is currently a Board Member of the Alberta Division of the MS Society. She chairs the Society's Individual and Family Services Committee. She enjoys speaking on health and wellness issues and has her own holistic health practice.

Sandra Newhouse

Sandra Newhouse of Calgary sat on the Full Citizenship Committee and was a member of the Education and Learning Supports Committee for the development of the Alberta Disability Strategy. She has been an active member in the Children's Hospital Aid Society, which provides support and services for children with special health needs. She has been involved as a volunteer member of many organizations in Alberta including the Alberta Children's Health Foundations, Women in Need Society, Grace Hospital Foundation, and the Alberta Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled.

Patricia Pardo

Patricia Pardo of Calgary was a member of the Education and Learning Supports Committee. She has spent the last 15 years of her career examining disability, diversity and equity related issues. She has also had the opportunity to work with post-secondary students with disabilities by teaching at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. She has a PhD in Educational Psychology specializing in disability and multicultural organizational

change. She is the Director of the Disability Resource Centre and an adjunct professor with the Faculty of Education at the University of Calgary.

Ruth Peterson

Ruth Peterson of Edmonton was a member of the Personal Supports Committee and brought over 50 years of personal experience to the Premier's Council. Ruth was a registered nurse who helped establish the first Cerebral Palsy Association of Alberta in the 1950s. She is a past president of the Easter Seals Ability Fund. She served as a board member of the Saskatchewan Council for the Disabled and the Canadian Council of Rehabilitation. She has been active on several committees regarding people with physical disabilities and represented the Premier's Council at the Healthy Aging Symposium, Neuro-Trauma Conference and Human Rights Commission.

Lionel Remillard

Lionel Remillard of Bonnyville was a member of the Employment and Financial Supports Committees of the Alberta Disability Strategy. He has had a long career as an educator and has extensive experience working with persons with disabilities. He is a former director of the Smokey River District Association for the Mentally Handicapped and has served as President of the Alberta Association for the Mentally Handicapped.

George Schmidt

George Schmidt of High Level was a member of the Alberta Disability Strategy's Employment Supports Committee. He has served in many community service positions including as a Town Councillor and has held senior management positions in various health care organizations.



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