

Background

GOVERNMENT RESPONDS TO COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION (CBO) SUMMITS

Initiatives have been taken in response to the five community-based organization (CBO) summits held in September 2008. In addition to the announcement on October 23 about the creation of a new disability income strategy and the \$76.9 initiative to improve programs and services for people with intellectual disabilities, the following actions have been implemented.

Action Responses

2008 Tax Refunds

Recipients of social assistance programs will be able to keep any 2008 tax refund that is generated from the recently announced tax cuts. 2008 income tax refunds and tax credit received through the Saskatchewan Low-Income tax credit will be excluded from the calculation of social assistance benefits.

Saskatchewan Assistance Program Mileage Allowance

Mileage rates for the Saskatchewan Assistance Program increased by five cents per kilometre effective October 1, 2008. The mileage allowance is available to help clients attend medical appointments, funeral services for family members and other important matters. The new rates are 22 cents per kilometre for a private vehicle and 27 cents per kilometre when a driver is required. An additional two cents per kilometre will be provided for travel north of the 54th parallel. The Province also supports the travel needs of social assistance clients through initiatives such as the monthly mobility travel allowance provided to persons with disabilities and the Discounted Bus Pass Program.

Home Heating Allowance

Clients of the Saskatchewan Assistance Program (SAP) will continue to have their actual utility costs paid, based on billings. Clients of the Transitional Employment Allowance (TEA) and the Provincial Training allowance (PTA) will be protected from home heating increases. They received a 20 per cent increase to their home heating allowances effective October 1, 2008.

211 Telephone Service

“211” has been allocated as a toll-free number to supply the general public with information and referrals to a wide range of community, social, health and government services. The Saskatoon United Way, in partnership with the Saskatoon Food Bank, is leading the drive for a provincial 211 system. 211 services have been found to reduce the number of inappropriate calls to 911 services. The Province is contributing \$30,000 to develop a strategy to bring a 211 phone service to Saskatchewan. The telephone-based

component is valuable for people who have difficulty using or accessing in-person services, phone directories and websites, including some older adults, northern and rural residents, people with disabilities and people with low levels of literacy. CBO summit participants stressed the need for such a service. Included in the strategy is the development of a web directory that will support the telephone service and allow CBOs to connect and share information.

Long-term Contracts for CBOs

At the CBO summits, some CBOs identified the need for long-term contracts between government and CBO agencies as a priority. For example, an agency that provides support services to individuals with disabilities currently has to apply for funding annually. With this new initiative, the agency may enter into a multi-year contract to ensure funding and promote long-term case management for individuals in their care. The government plans to enter into long-term funding agreements with CBOs beginning in the 2009/10 fiscal year.

Creating an Open and Collaborative Relationship

Participants attending the CBO summits were told that the unedited results of each of the summits would be made available. The results are posted on the web page at www.socialservices.gov.sk.ca/cbosummit, along with the feedback summaries.