

# **SASKATCHEWAN'S DISABILITY STRATEGY**

## **Questions and Answers for December 3<sup>rd</sup> Announcement**

### **What are we announcing?**

The news release is announcing that Government is initiating work on six priority areas taken directly from the Citizen Consultation Team's (CCT) Final Report "*People Before Systems: Transforming the Experience of Disability in Saskatchewan - The Saskatchewan Disability Strategy*":

1. Availability of accessible and safe transportation in communities;
2. Respite services for families with children and adults experiencing disabilities;
3. Improvements to existing accessibility legislation or the development of new accessibility legislation;
4. Residential services for people experiencing disability;
5. Service co-ordination and navigation of services required for those experiencing disability; and,
6. Awareness and understanding of the rights of people experiencing disabilities.

The Public Service Commission also launched their Disability Employment Action Plan today, which aims to improve employment for persons experiencing disability within Executive Government.

### **What are the key elements of the Strategy?**

- The Strategy builds on four key drivers of transformation:
  1. Achieving a person-centred province;
  2. Responding to the impact of disability;
  3. Respecting and protecting human rights; and,
  4. Recognizing that accessibility and inclusion benefit us all.
- These drivers will provide a new direction for disability programs and services for our province for years to come.

### **Why are we making this announcement on the Disability Strategy?**

- This announcement fulfills a commitment to respond to the Disability Strategy made on June 22, 2015 by fall 2015, when Government received the CCT's report.
- By making this announcement, Government is signalling to the disability community that it will begin work in these priority areas that are foundational in nature and that will lay the groundwork for further work and future change.

### **Why make this announcement now – knowing Government is in a difficult fiscal situation?**

- All of the proposed actions can be viewed as "foundational" in nature. This work is required so that when financial resources do permit, the necessary groundwork has been completed in order to move forward.
- The Disability Strategy provides us with a 10 year plan and is very comprehensive in nature. We are not able to act on every recommendation at once – and the implementation planning will require this focussed set of priorities.
- The Disability Strategy is about changing the way the system responds to people experiencing disability and putting people first – we can't simply add money to existing programs that may not be getting the results needed. We need to focus our priorities to get the changes we want and then invest wisely.

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### Why announce this on December 3<sup>rd</sup>?

- December 3<sup>rd</sup> is the United Nation's International Day of Persons with Disabilities. A number of events are planned across Saskatchewan, so this provides a fitting opportunity to release the response.
- The 2015 theme as determined by the UN is: "Inclusion matters: access and empowerment of people of all abilities." This year's theme aligns very well with the proposed Disability Strategy announcement.

### Are we confident these are the "right" initiatives to be announced first?

- Yes. This initial response, while broad in nature, reflects many of the main themes from the public consultations. Transportation, respite, residential supports, navigation of the system, increased awareness of rights and increased accessibility were key themes we heard at each consultation.

### Who else is involved in the implementation of the Strategy?

- Many of the responses to the Strategy require the support and leadership from other organizations, including businesses, community-based organizations (CBOs), municipalities, school divisions, and health authorities.
- Stakeholder engagement and collaboration throughout its development has helped build ownership of the Strategy. The collaborative development process has also forged partnerships and created champions of the Strategy. These relationships will be very helpful as we move forward with the implementation.
- Progress is also being made on actions by others, such as the Cities of Saskatoon and Regina increasing access to transportation services with audible bus stop signals; libraries expanding their inventory of braille books; and the Chamber of Commerce promoting inclusive employment.

### What is Government's role in the implementation of the Strategy?

- While there is widespread recognition that Government cannot fulfill the Strategy on its own, there is a need for Government to champion the Strategy by:
  - co-ordinating, leading, and supporting its implementation;
  - acting as a catalyst for change; and,
  - collaborating with communities on how they might also direct and implement change.

### Why is a Disability Strategy needed?

- Saskatchewan people experiencing disability continue to face significant barriers to being included in society and realizing full citizenship.
- Current attitudes, practices, systems, policies and environments often prevent people experiencing disabilities from full social inclusion, economic participation, and equal opportunities.
- People experiencing disability continue to have lower levels of participation in education, training and employment. They also have limited access to goods, services and facilities; experience the highest rates of discrimination; have poorer health; and experience higher rates of poverty and abuse. They are also over-represented in the child welfare, social assistance and justice systems.

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### **What will the Disability Strategy accomplish?**

- The Disability Strategy will provide the framework to transform our disability programs and services and support the greater inclusion of people with disabilities.

### **How is the Disability Strategy aligned with other provincial strategies and initiatives?**

- Many of the issues covered in the Disability Strategy intersect with other existing or developing Government strategies and initiatives, including the Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan (MHAAP), and the Poverty Reduction Strategy (in development).
- Opportunities exist to align work at the policy, program and service delivery levels to create efficiencies.
  - For example, collaborative work on supported housing addresses recommendations in both the Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan and the Disability Strategy.
  - There are similar opportunities for supporting caregivers through better co-ordination across Government services.
  - By choosing investments and changes wisely, Government can make progress on the MHAAP, Poverty Reduction and Disability Strategies simultaneously. This effectively creates a co-ordinated social policy agenda that supports the *Plan for Growth*.