

Executive Summary

In the *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth*, as well as the 2012, 2013 and 2014 Speech from the Throne, Government committed to developing the disability strategy in consultation with the disability community. The Disability Strategy will provide the vision to improve disability programs and services to meet Government's goal of making Saskatchewan the best place in Canada to live for persons with disabilities.

Saskatchewan people experiencing disability face significant difficulties in being included in society and treated as equal citizens. People experiencing disability have lower levels of participation in education, training and employment. They also have limited access to goods, services and facilities; greater experiences of discrimination; poorer health; and higher rates of poverty and abuse.

Disability Strategy Recommendations

The Disability Strategy recommendations are informed by the results of the public consultations held in the spring of 2014, but also reflect research into best practices and disability strategies in other jurisdictions. The results of the consultations are summarized in a report prepared by the Citizen Consultation Team (CCT): *Our Experience, Our Voice: The Reality of Today, the Opportunity to Shape Tomorrow*, released on December 3, 2014.

The 12 Strategy recommendations were developed jointly by the CCT and the ministries of Social Services, Advanced Education, Economy, Education, Government Relations, Health and Justice and Corrections. The key areas Saskatchewan needs to focus on to improve the lives of people experiencing disability are arranged into six broad Priority Outcome Areas:

- Putting People Before Systems,
- Safeguarding Rights and Safety,
- Increasing Economic and Social Inclusion,
- Building Personal and Community Capacity,
- Creating Accessible Communities, and
- Becoming an Inclusive Province.

Four drivers of transformation support the Strategy:

1. **Person-Centred Services:** Disability programs and services are often designed with system needs as the priority. People are required to adapt to program rules and processes in order to receive support. Changing to person-centred thinking will create a more flexible system that responds to individual needs and is accountable for helping people achieve their goals. The person-centred view puts people before systems.

2. **Impact of Disability:** This approach shifts away from the medical model (diagnosis) of disability to an understanding of disability based on its impact on the individual. While most disabling health conditions are permanent, the “experience” of disability can be reduced by the way society responds to it. Changes can be made to reduce the impact that environment and circumstance play in the experience of disability. These changes will support the inclusion of people in all aspects of life.
3. **Promoting and Protecting Human Rights:** People experiencing disability who attended the consultations told us they are exhausted over their fight for fair treatment. First Nations people experiencing disability face an additional struggle in seeing their rights recognized due to jurisdictional and funding issues. The Strategy will help our province address the obligations contained in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.
4. **Accessibility and Inclusion Benefit Us All:** Our typical approach to designing buildings, communities, programs and services uses a standard or “normal” range of human functioning. We tend to address an individual’s disability by focusing on the “exceptional” or “special needs” that fall outside this normal range. The Strategy aims to change systems and environments to reduce and, where possible, eliminate the need to adapt to individual circumstance. Investing in accessibility to meet a broader range of functioning will create a more convenient and better citizen experience for all.

Our Disability Strategy is a shared Strategy. Its success depends on the further and collective efforts of many, including people experiencing disability, caregivers, community-based organizations, the private sector, governments, First Nations, school

divisions, health regions, post-secondary education institutions and the public. This effort to build consensus on the Strategy has helped develop partnerships that will be needed for its implementation. Shared ownership of the Disability Strategy is vital to its success.

Putting People Before Systems

1. **SHIFTING ACCOUNTABILITY:** Make disability programs and services, within and outside Government, accountable to the people they support.
 - 1.1 Adopt consistent person-centred policy and practice standards for all disability programs and services.
 - 1.2 Develop and launch a method to evaluate person-centred approaches that includes performance measures and provides ongoing support so that performance targets are met.
2. **MAKING ELIGIBILITY FAIR:** Adopt fair eligibility rules that focus on the impact of disability rather than simply medical diagnosis.
 - 2.1 Develop a common approach to assessing impact of disability for use across Government-funded programs.
 - 2.2 Take impact of disability into account with other eligibility considerations such as income, age and residence.
 - 2.3 Transition from medical- to impact-of-disability-based eligibility criteria for disability programs and services.
 - 2.4 Make eligibility for provincial disability programs and services more transferrable (e.g., between health regions and school divisions) so that individuals can access services as they move across the province and through life transitions.

3. **CO-ORDINATING AND NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM:** Improve access to information, intake and service delivery so that people are able to easily navigate and experience a seamless and co-ordinated system of disability programs and services.
 - 3.1 Establish information sharing procedures to improve communication across Government programs and services, as well as with third-party partners.
 - 3.2 Develop rules and procedures to deliver integrated services to support case management and crisis prevention.
 - 3.3 Streamline entry points for accessing disability programs and services.
 - 3.4 Establish clear roles and responsibilities to support smooth and timely transitions across Government and between third-party partners as people move in and out of disability programs and services.
 - 3.5 Expand navigation and planning services for people experiencing disability to help connect them to appropriate supports in their community.

Safeguarding Rights and Safety

4. **UPHOLDING RIGHTS AND SAFETY:** Promote and protect the rights of people experiencing disability and improve responses to violence, abuse and neglect so they can live safely in their communities.
 - 4.1 Support people experiencing disability to understand and advocate for their rights.
 - 4.2 Increase Saskatchewan citizens' understanding of the rights of people experiencing disability.
 - 4.3 Increase services to prevent and address violence, neglect and abuse of people experiencing disability.
 - 4.4 Improve prevention and diversion services for people experiencing disability who are at risk of being involved in the justice system.

- 4.5 Improve specialized supports for people experiencing disability as they interact with the justice system, whether as victim, accused, perpetrator, witness or offender.
5. **INCLUSION OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE:** First Nations, Métis and Inuit people experiencing disability are well-supported regardless of their home community.
 - 5.1 Work together to improve access to provincial disability programs and services for First Nations people experiencing disability.
 - 5.2 Engage the Federal Government on developing and improving capacity and infrastructure to support the delivery of disability services and programs to First Nations people experiencing disability on-reserve.
 - 5.3 Support culturally respectful disability programs and services for Aboriginal people experiencing disability.

Economic and Social Inclusion

6. **INCLUSION IN THE ECONOMY:** Expand opportunities for people experiencing disability to contribute to the economy and address the extra costs of disability.
 - 6.1 Remove disability-related barriers to post-secondary education, employment training and skills development programs to improve labour market participation for people experiencing disability.
 - 6.2 Champion the inclusion of people experiencing disabilities in the workforce, including working with business and industry groups to improve access to tools and supports for more inclusive and welcoming workplaces.

- 6.3 Develop education and awareness tools to help employers and co-workers understand opportunities to include and accommodate people experiencing disability in the workforce.
- 6.4 Increase the availability of employment supports to help people experiencing disability enter and remain in the workforce.
- 6.5 Establish and maintain a socially acceptable income for people experiencing significant and enduring disabilities who are unable to attain long-term financial self-sufficiency.
- 6.6 Offset the extra costs of daily living for people experiencing disability.
- 6.7 Improve transition planning and processes so that students experiencing disability can effectively move from high school and post-secondary education training and skills programs into employment.

Building Personal and Community Capacity

- 7. **ACCESSING PERSONAL SUPPORTS:** Improve access to the supports that people experiencing disability need to live in their community.
 - 7.1 Increase access to, and availability of, assistive technology, technical aids and modifications that promote participation and independence.
 - 7.2 Increase access to and availability of human services to facilitate living in one's home and community.
 - 7.3 Increase availability of supportive housing options so people experiencing disability have services that meet their needs.

- 8. **FOCUS ON DEVELOPMENT AND LIFELONG LEARNING:** Remove barriers to inclusive quality education, early development programming and lifelong learning so that people experiencing disability have the opportunity to realize their potential.
 - 8.1 Expand early learning programming that helps young children experiencing disability to receive a good start on their learning and development.
 - 8.2 Improve access to educational services, supports and technology that assist students experiencing disability to maximize the benefit of educational programming.
 - 8.3 Improve specialized educational programming to address gaps for students experiencing disability, including students with impacts of disability related to communication, sensory functions and socialization.
 - 8.4 Improve transition planning and processes so that students experiencing disability can effectively and smoothly transition from the early years into school and from school to post-secondary education.
 - 8.5 Develop province-wide policies and standards to ensure that students experiencing disability have equitable access to post-secondary education programs and services throughout the province.
- 9. **VALUING FAMILIES:** Promote the value of family caregivers and help families provide quality care and support to family members experiencing disability.
 - 9.1 Value the role of family caregivers by providing emotional, social and financial resources to better equip them to support their family member(s) experiencing disability.

- 9.2 Help families get time away from their caregiving role by developing and expanding respite options.
- 9.3 Provide opportunities for families to build on the skills they use in providing quality care to their family member(s) experiencing disability.

10. BUILDING CAPACITY OF SERVICE PROVIDERS:

Support disability service providers in developing the skills and resources needed to provide effective and respectful care and services.

- 10.1 Build the understanding, skills and competencies needed by disability service providers through sector-specific training.
- 10.2 Recognize the value of disability service providers and direct-support workers who provide services for people experiencing disability.
- 10.3 Support and improve the health and safety of the disability service provider workforce.

Creating Accessible Communities

11. CREATING ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITIES FOR ALL:

Create communities to meet the needs of all citizens.

- 11.1 Improve access to the physical and built environment by adopting a consistent approach to accessibility standards so that everyone can be included.
- 11.2 Improve access to community spaces.
- 11.3 Increase the availability of accessible homes in Saskatchewan communities.
- 11.4 Improve access to accessible and safe transportation in communities.
- 11.5 Make public information and communication more accessible.

- 11.6 Give people experiencing disability more meaningful opportunities to participate in recreation, cultural, sport and leisure activities.

Becoming an Inclusive Province

12. BECOMING AN INCLUSIVE PROVINCE:

Champion and commit the resources needed to advance a vision of Saskatchewan as an inclusive province that is welcoming, responsive, innovative and accessible so that people who experience disability can live the life they choose.

- 12.1 Create annual implementation plans that will guide the Strategy over the next 10 years.
- 12.2 Provide oversight to the implementation of the Strategy.
- 12.3 Collaborate with the disability community on the implementation of the Strategy.
- 12.4 Establish an accountability framework on the implementation of the Strategy.
- 12.5 Build awareness in the community regarding the experience of disability and acceptance of disability as a normal part of the human condition.