



# Round Table Reports 2002 and 2003

SEPTEMBER 14, 2005

Disabilities  
ISSUES  
OFFICE

Manitoba 



## Letter from the Minister

In my role as Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities, I have been delighted to be involved in our government's work to develop a stronger relationship with Manitobans with disabilities. During the past six years, we have created the position of Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities, established the Disabilities Issues Office, and have greatly improved the provincial government's understanding of disability issues.

Among the most significant accomplishments of the past six years has been the 2001 release of a policy document *Full Citizenship: A Manitoba Provincial Strategy on Disability*. This policy paper outlines a number of initiatives concerning Manitobans with disabilities. Topics include employment, income assistance, disability supports and access to government. The policy also commits the government to strengthen its communication with people with disabilities.

To support community consultation, the province has held two round table forums, where people with disabilities, their families and friends, service providers and members of the general public came together to discuss priority issues and new policies on disability.

It is my great pleasure to release this report which is a summary of the round tables held in 2002 and 2003. The report contains a list of the important topics and recommendations identified by participants at these events.

I would like to express my appreciation to everyone who contributed to the success of the 2002 and 2003 Round Tables on Disability Issues. Their recommendations have already been used by government to develop policies and programs. They will continue to provide guidance to us as we work to make Manitoba a society which fully includes all of its citizens.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "C. Melnick". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Christine Melnick  
Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities

## Introduction

In 2002 and 2003, people with disabilities, their representatives and service providers came together at the first two Manitoba Round Tables on Disability Issues. The goal was to provide Manitobans with an opportunity to share their ideas on how to improve the living conditions of citizens with disabilities.

The first round table occurred June 19 to 21, 2002, in Winnipeg. Over 70 organizations/ individuals took part in the event. It was planned by an ad-hoc community based committee along with Manitoba's Disabilities Issues Office (DIO). The topics included such concerns as employment, housing, income security and human rights.

The second round table took place on December 8, 2003, and was similar to the first, with one notable exception. To increase the attendance of Manitobans outside of Winnipeg, video conferencing was used to link participants in Winnipeg with those in Brandon and Thompson. Approximately 125 people attended the second event.

The following report combines the themes and recommendations of the two round tables. A list of the recommendations from each of the round tables can be obtained from the Disabilities Issues Office by calling 945-7613 in Winnipeg or toll-free at 1-800-282-8069, ext. 7613.

Many of the recommendations from the two round tables have already influenced government actions on policy development. This report and the complete list of recommendations will continue to inform the provincial government as it develops policies and programs on disability. We encourage you to share the information within your community and with the general public.



## Governmental Disability Policies and Programs

The disability community believes that government must lead by example in addressing the needs of citizens with disabilities. As the democratic representative entity of our province's civil society, government is compelled to implement creative measures for policy development and program delivery to people with disabilities.

### **On the topic of governmental disability policies and programs, round table participants sent the following messages to government:**

- Have cabinet approve a disability lens<sup>1</sup> to review all legislation, policies and programs to ensure they uphold the rights of persons with disabilities, and that services, programs and benefits are co-ordinated.
- Ensure policies, legislation and regulations are clearly defined, holistic in nature, and consistently applied across the province. Introduce enforcement mechanisms to promote compliance with legislation.
- Provide stronger enforcement of *The Manitoba Human Rights Code*<sup>2</sup> in cases of discrimination of persons with disabilities.
- Broaden the definition of disabilities to encompass all forms of mental and physical impairments, including hearing, chronic disease disorders, mental illness and fetal alcohol spectrum related impairments.
- Review and consider expanding the eligibility criteria of programs for youth with disabilities within Manitoba Health and Manitoba Family Services and Housing.
- Increase the number of recreational, social and educational programs available to persons with disabilities.
- Ensure an appropriate level of respect for all persons with disabilities seeking support and services, including increased staff training and cultural sensitivity.
- Educate the public about what services are available through government and in the community, and how to access them.
- Design government websites to be universally accessible.

1. A disability lens is a tool, like a questionnaire, used by policy and program developers to identify and address the impact of policies, programs or decisions on persons with disabilities.

2. *The Manitoba Human Rights Code* defines discrimination as "... failure to make reasonable accommodation for the special needs of any individual or group, if those special needs are based upon... physical or mental disability, or related characteristics or circumstances, including reliance on a dog guide or other animal assistant, a wheelchair, or any other remedial appliance or device.

## Disability Supports

Disability supports generally refer to a wide range of human services, financial assistance and technical aids that help people with disabilities reduce the affects of their particular impairments. These supports can be delivered by government, by a third party agency, or can be self-managed by the individual with a disability. Disability supports can be used to help people with disabilities in their homes, work places, educational institutions or during leisure pursuits.

*Full Citizenship: A Manitoba Provincial Strategy on Disability* identified disability supports as a major issue requiring government attention. The 2002 and 2003 round tables generated further discussion on this topic.

### **Round table participants sent the following messages to government about disability supports:**

- Support community living for persons with disabilities, rather than institutionalization.
- Consult with the community about definitions, eligibility and models for disability supports.
- Ensure that disability supports are controlled by the consumers, which includes self-management of services.
- Create a seamless lifelong continuum of support services for persons with disabilities.
- Create a comprehensive program for the purchase, maintenance and upgrade of assistive devices for persons with disabilities.
- Ensure that those caring for persons with disabilities are provided respite through well-trained caregivers.
- Improve home care services through staff continuity and training in technical supports and by providing 24-hour emergency service.
- Provide stable equitable funding for disability supports throughout the province.
- Have providers of income programs for persons with disabilities consider all the unique costs of having a disability, prescription drugs, nutritional needs and equipment.
- Ensure service providers are well trained and have a good understanding of disability issues.

## Education

Education is the province's most important public investment in the future prosperity and well-being of the population. Education is also the foundation for personal development. Manitoba is committed to equal access to education for all its citizens.

Round table participants agreed that equal access to education means a policy of inclusion of students with disabilities into their neighbourhood schools and the colleges or other training of their choice. Participants stressed that full access must include physical access, as well as other supports and staff training to ensure a welcoming effective learning environment.

### **Round table participants sent the following messages to government about education:**

- Ensure consultation with the community takes place on a regular basis.
- Provide training to teachers, support staff and other service providers about disability issues, particularly those related to people with developmental disabilities.
- Develop a strategy to support persons with disabilities in gaining the education and training of their choice, including post-secondary.
- Provide support to persons with disabilities and their families for the move from education to adult life, including life skills training.
- Review policies and programs to ensure funding for students with special needs is adequate and the delivery of therapy services in the school setting is effective.
- Ensure services and training standards are consistent throughout the province.



## Employment

As is noted in *Full Citizenship*, “Historically, people with disabilities have been largely excluded from the labor market.” Inaccessible workplaces, discriminatory stereotyping and a lack of education and marketable skills among people with disabilities have all contributed to their under-representation in the workforce. Although participants acknowledged that some of these barriers have been reduced, they agreed that it continues to be a struggle for people with disabilities to find secure, full-time employment. Participants called on the government to work with the private sector to find solutions to this pressing challenge.

### **Round table participants sent the following messages to the government about employment:**

- Introduce legislation to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the private sector and include mechanisms for enforcement.
- Ensure the provincial government meets its employment target (seven per cent) for people with disabilities.
- Require all companies, with more than 50 employees, with which the province has service contracts to have an effective employment equity policy.
- Report on employment equity achievements by government and the private sector on a regular basis as an accountability mechanism.
- Promote self-employment and co-operative employment initiatives among persons with disabilities.
- Deliver a high profile public relations campaign promoting the abilities of persons with disabilities and their positive contributions to the workplace.
- Provide accommodation costs so employers do not see the added cost of hiring people with disabilities as a hiring barrier.
- Focus the efforts of employment training agencies on holistic success measurements that are not only based on the number of jobs found.

## Housing

Accessible, affordable, safe housing was a priority issue for the participants of the round table discussions. In response to the recommendations made, the Disabilities Issues Office organized a follow-up community consultation specifically on housing. For further information, please contact the DIO for the *Report on the 2004 Housing and Disabilities Forum*.

### **Round table participants sent the following messages to the government about housing:**

- Host a daylong meeting devoted to housing issues for persons with disabilities within the province.
- Increase the availability of accessible housing throughout Manitoba.
- Work co-operatively with the various stakeholders to develop more flexible housing models, such as multi-tenant public housing.
- Adopt accessibility and universal design practices in all new and renovated public housing developments and create incentives for private developers to adopt similar practices.
- Support individual rent subsidies that reflect accommodation costs to allow for more independent choices in living situations.
- Raise Employment and Income Assistance shelter allowances for persons with disabilities to increase their housing options.
- Identify housing options for youth currently living in nursing homes.
- Improve communication and co-ordination among the various agencies delivering housing program services to improve public knowledge and access to resources.
- Educate landlords, builders and service providers about disability issues.
- Support home ownership for persons with disabilities.



## Aboriginal Manitobans with Disabilities

The per capita incidence of disability among Aboriginal Canadians is almost double that of the population as a whole. Given the significant representation of Aboriginal peoples in the population of Manitoba, *Full Citizenship: A Manitoba Provincial Strategy on Disability* offers an action plan to address some overall concerns.

Participants at the 2002 and 2003 round tables pointed out that the rights of on-reserve First Nations persons with disabilities to culturally appropriate government services continue to be ignored as a result of ongoing jurisdictional disputes<sup>3</sup> between the federal and provincial governments.

The province acknowledges the problems and is committed to addressing some of the gaps in service through multi-lateral government and First Nations discussions and strategy development.

### **Round table participants sent the following messages to government about First Nations people with disabilities:**

- Initiate discussions on service delivery and jurisdictional issues with the federal government, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and the Manitoba Métis Federation and Aboriginal and First Nations service delivery agents, such as the First Nations Disability Association of Manitoba.
- Hold an Aboriginal disability issues round table with Métis, First Nations and Inuit representatives, as recommended in *Full Citizenship: A Manitoba Provincial Strategy on Disability*.
- Develop service models that address the needs of First Nations persons with disabilities.
- Ensure there is First Nations representation in any future community consultations on disability supports.
- Allow First Nations people to benefit from the Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities.

3. The jurisdictional disputes between the federal and provincial government concern which level of government is responsible for a variety of disability-related services on and off reserve.

## Health Care

Like all Canadians, Manitobans with disabilities are interested in, and concerned about, health care policies and services. People with disabilities who attended the round tables spoke about their experiences with the medical system and proposed ideas on making it better.

### **Round table participants sent the following messages to government about health care:**

- Increase efficiencies in health care delivery throughout the province by reducing waiting periods and increasing access to services related to disabilities.
- Direct the Minister of Health to appoint members of the self representative disability organizations to the boards of the regional health authorities.
- Ensure doctors and service providers have mandatory sensitivity training to improve how people are treated, particularly those with mental disabilities and/or requiring palliative care.
- Form an interdisciplinary committee (hospital personnel, community members, etc.) to develop consistent policies and programs for withholding/ withdrawing life sustaining treatments. Support this initiative with an education plan.
- Differentiate between mental illness and mental disability in rehabilitation and treatment programs, avoiding reference to the consumer as a “patient.”
- Conduct a critical review of electroconvulsive therapy to evaluate effectiveness and ensure its appropriate administration.

## Transportation

Round table participants agreed that transportation is essential to achieving independence and must be available, reliable and affordable. Many of the issues raised came from round table participants in Brandon and Thompson.

## **Round table participants sent the following messages to the government on transportation:**

- Review and improve transportation services, like Handi-Transit, across the province.
- Develop a standard disability training and safety program, which is mandatory for all modes of transportation providers.
- Review the City of Winnipeg’s Handi-Transit system to ensure it receives the provincial funding necessary to serve the growing number of people who depend on it.
- Extend Handi-Transit in Brandon to seven days a week, with 24-hour telephone booking or cancellation of appointments.
- Consider additional public transit options like school buses, lower-cost passenger vans and city cabs for people with disabilities in Brandon and Thompson.

## **Other Issues**

While the round table discussions focused largely on the topics addressed in the previous sections, participants brought additional concerns to the table. They included recommendations such as:

- Provide non-governmental service providers with adequate, long-term funding to pay for core operational costs, and continue the staffing stabilization initiative, expanding it beyond service providers of persons with developmental disabilities.
- Establish a competitive wage base for support workers throughout Manitoba.
- Review existing tax laws to ensure lower income individuals with disabilities and their caregivers benefit.
- Develop and implement a universal “disability insurance” program available to all citizens regardless of their employment situation or pre-existing other disability.
- Provide more disability training for foster parents and review policies and increase funding for foster care programs.
- Create a liaison between the Disabilities Issues Office and Brandon and Thompson.

## **The Way Forward**

The Manitoba Round Tables on Disability Issues in 2002 and 2003 highlighted the progress we've made and the objectives yet to be achieved in our goal of becoming a fully accessible inclusive society. The community's recommendations have served as an important guide in directing government policy and programs. They have also helped focus efforts on issues requiring further attention, such as education, employment and disability supports. Although a considerable amount of work remains to be accomplished, these forums provided the feedback and insight to effectively develop strategies designed to improve the lives of all Manitobans.

This booklet was produced to ensure the broad themes of the forums are shared as broadly as possible. This includes the organizations that participated, as well as all government departments, health authorities, service delivery agencies, the private sector and the general public.

Additional information about policies and programs for persons with disabilities and other details about the 2002 and 2003 Manitoba Round Tables on Disability Issues are available through the Disabilities Issues Office (945-7613 in Winnipeg or toll-free at 1-800-282-8069, ext. 7613). We can also be reached at [dio@gov.mb.ca](mailto:dio@gov.mb.ca)

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