

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY **Celebrating Our Accomplishments**

Since 1999, the Government of Manitoba has made good progress in response to the needs of Manitobans with disabilities. This includes:

Government Policy Making and Coordination on Disability Issues

- Appointing Manitoba's first Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities
- Releasing *Full Citizenship: A Manitoba Provincial Strategy on Disability* which outlined government's philosophy and policy direction on issues concerning people with disabilities
- Establishing the Disabilities Issues Office
- Forming an Assistant Deputy Ministers' Committee on Disability Issues which helps to coordinate disability policies and programs across government
- Sponsoring Round Tables on Disability Issues in 2002, 2003, and again in 2006 as well as a special Housing and Disabilities Forum in 2004
- Consulting with disability organizations about new voting legislation and training of election officers

Housing

- Establishing the Working Group on Housing for Individuals with Disabilities which generated many policy recommendations for consideration by government – some of which have already been accepted
- Co-sponsoring a luncheon event with the City of Winnipeg's Access Advisory Committee on the issue of visitable housing
- Announcing the creation of a Visitable Housing Consultation Service to help promote the concept to the development community and to assist developers to implement visitable housing in new projects
- Ensuring that visitable housing is considered as an important criteria during the review of proposals under the Canada/Manitoba Affordable Housing Initiative
- Announcing the introduction of the new Manitoba Shelter Benefit which will provide financial assistance to lower income individuals with disabilities, seniors, and families who are renting housing in the private market
- Supporting the development of innovative housing models in Brandon to meet the needs of mental health consumers, another in Winnipeg to respond to the needs of younger people with complex disabilities, and a third in Morden for lower income people with disabilities

Supported Living

- Supporting residents with disabilities at the Pelican Lake Centre to move to community homes when the centre was closed in 2000
- Establishing a steering committee to plan for the accelerated movement of residents with disabilities from the Manitoba Developmental Centre in Portage la Prairie
- Improving funding to agencies which deliver Supported Living Programs so they can increase staff wages
- Increasing the total budget for the Supported Living Program by 155%
- Increasing the Children's Special Services budget by 85%

Employment

- Establishing the Career Assistance Program for People with Disabilities to facilitate employment within the provincial Civil Service
- Announcing a new Employment Strategy and the creation of an Employability Support Unit within Family Services and Housing to help individuals with disabilities become employed
- Organizing a multi-sectoral forum on disability and employment which included private and public sector employers, disability service organizations and advocacy groups, and individuals with disabilities
- Creating an Inter-departmental Committee of Assistant Deputy Ministers working on employment issues of people with disabilities. Currently, their priorities are employment within government and the private sector, employment concerns of aboriginal Manitobans with disabilities and disability supports as they relate to employment
- Delivering various initiatives through the Department of Industry, Economic Development and Mines which are designed to support entrepreneurs with disabilities
- Negotiating improvements to the new Labour Market Agreement with the Federal Government which will allow people not attached to the Employment Insurance Program (including people with disabilities) to access training programs

Income Assistance

- Increasing the basic monthly Income Assistance rate by \$20
- Improving the Employment and Income Assistance Program for people with disabilities by:
 - Establishing a Rapid Re-Enrollment Policy for individuals who attempt employment and need to return to the program because of disability
 - Increasing the amount of income people can keep before their EIA benefits are reduced
 - Allowing EIA participants to maintain health benefits such as prescription drug coverage for 12 months after they become employed
 - Distributing information bulletins to EIA participants with disabilities to ensure they have an increased awareness about different programs available to them

- Establishing the Disability Trust Fund Program so that up to \$100,000 can be set aside without affecting a person's EIA benefits, in order to meet the disability related needs of EIA participants

Health

- Ongoing initiatives as part of Mental Health Renewal, include:
 - A Co-occurring Disorders Initiative – planning and resource development for individuals with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders;
 - Eating Disorders planning and resources;
 - Increased support for Community Mental Health and Addiction services;
 - Improved access to residential addiction resources.
- Enhanced funding for Community Resource Councils throughout Manitoba that co-ordinate and provide a range of support services to seniors to help them maintain their health, safety and independence in the community
- Ongoing increases to Home Care funding to respond to growing demand
- Expanding Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) programming for Children with Autism
- Providing an additional \$6.7 million to enhance mental health and addiction programs in Manitoba, including prevention, intervention, outreach and facility-based care
- Developing a Provincial Long-Term Care Strategy, based on an aging-in-place philosophy. Models of care focus on seniors and also include adults with disabilities living in the community who require specialized supports

Aboriginal Manitobans with Disabilities

- Working with the Federal Government, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and a First Nations with disabilities service organization to begin addressing the needs of on and off reserve First Nations people with disabilities
- Sponsoring a Sharing Circle for Aboriginal people with disabilities in January 2006 to provide a culturally appropriate opportunity for them to express their concerns to government

Education

- Providing funding to the University of Manitoba for a new master's program in disability studies
- Strengthening the *Public Schools Act* to ensure appropriate educational programming for students with disabilities

Agriculture

- Working with the Farmers with Disabilities organization on projects to prevent farm injuries

Government Web Site Accessibility

- Establishing a policy to ensure that all updates to government Internet sites meet high levels of accessibility to people with disabilities

Accessibility to Government Facilities and Services

- Adopting a universal design access policy to improve accessibility to government owned and leased facilities
- Continuing policies to provide information to people with disabilities in alternative media and communication styles

Provincial Parks and Campgrounds

- Addressing accessibility concerns within provincial parks and campgrounds. For example, Bird's Hill, Grand Beach and the White Shell Parks are all benefiting from renovations of infrastructure to make public facilities more accessible

Provincial Taxation

- Expanding the list of eligible expenses for purposes of the disability supports deduction to parallel federal income tax changes announced in the 2005 federal budget

Transportation

- Increasing the number of rural and northern communities which receive financial support through the Mobility Disadvantaged Transportation Program in order to provide transportation service to people with disabilities

Community Places Program Funding

- Favouring applications which request funding to address accessibility issues for people with disabilities

Children's Programs

- Increasing the budget of the Children with Disabilities Program of Manitoba Child Care by 131.6%
- An estimated increase of 530 children with disabilities will be served, or a 55% increase
- Providing staffing grants, start-up grants, and specialized training grants to support the inclusion of children with disabilities in licensed not-for-profit child care centres
- Securing federal funding to improve the quality of early learning and child care for all children, including those with disabilities
- Improving Manitoba's Child Care System based on four principles: quality, universally inclusive, accessibility and developmental, where universally inclusive means early learning and child care is open and responsive, without discrimination, to young children, including children with special needs, Aboriginal children, and children with various cultural or linguistic circumstances, and where diversity is respected and valued
- Increasing the Children's Special Services budget by 84.8%
- Providing funding of \$3.3 million in 2006/07 for occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech and language therapy services under the Provincial Outreach Therapy for Children (POTC) program and regionally through the Children's Therapy Initiative, in order to assist children reach their full potential

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