



March 18, 2016

Judy Hannah  
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Mrs. Hannah,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your letter which highlights issues that are important to families and individuals who experience an intellectual disability.

During this election campaign, the Saskatchewan Party announced that it will introduce individualized funding for children under the age of six who have been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Starting in 2017, a Saskatchewan Party government will introduce and then increase funding for children under the age of six with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The funding will start at \$4,000 annually, increasing to \$8,000 by 2019-2020. The eventual goal is to provide individualized annual funding of \$15,000 to \$18,000 for children under six and \$4,800 annually for school aged children under 18.

Over the last eight years, the Saskatchewan Party has proven that it shares your commitment to these families and individuals. Our record shows that we have worked in collaboration with SACL, DISC, SARC and other organizations and families to allocate an unprecedented \$2.7 billion toward programs and services to assist people experiencing a disability to live with more dignity and independence.

We want to thank all of the organizations involved in working with us as true partners in helping to guide this journey towards empowerment and independence.

Our valued partnerships include:

- The Community Task Team – the team who initially designed the SAID program
- The Program Implementation Advisory Team (PIAT) – the team that will continue to oversee and evaluate the SAID program
- The Self Directed Funding Advisory Table
- The Valley View Centre Transition Steering Committee and;
- The Citizen Consultation Team who created our government's disability strategy.

With the advice and guidance from our community partners over the past eight years, the Saskatchewan Party Government has taken the following actions:

- Introduced a Disability Strategy in 2015 - *People Before Systems: Transforming the Experience of Disability in Saskatchewan*
- In 2008 we launched an initiative to provide residential and day program services for 440 individuals who stuck on waitlists under the previous NDP government. This initiative was the largest single cash commitment for individuals with intellectual disabilities in the history of our province. We are now serving over 4,500 people with residential services and/or day programs
- Introduced the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disabilities (SAID) program in 2009 and enhanced that program four times since its creation. Some of the enhancements include:
  - Increased SAID benefits each year for the past four years,
  - Doubled the earned income exemption and;
  - Increased the inheritance exemption from \$1,500 to \$100,000.SAID benefits are now the second highest level of support for individuals with disabilities in our country
- Increased funding to municipalities for transit assistance by 35 per cent

- Launched a pilot project for Self Directed Funding (SDF) in 2014
- Committed to transition clients out of the Valley View Centre into community settings
- Increased the Disability Tax Credit by 35 per cent
- Increased the Disability Supplement, the Caregiver Tax Credit and the Infirm Dependent Tax Credit by 129% to assist families caring for a family member with a disability

Although an unprecedented amount of work has been done in a relatively short period of time to enhance the quality of life for individuals experiencing an intellectual disability, the Saskatchewan Party acknowledges that there is more work to do. If re-elected we will move forward with implementing the Disability Strategy in the context of all of government's responsibilities and priorities, the fiscal capacity of the province and the assurance of sustainability.

*People Before Systems: Transforming the Experience of Disability in Saskatchewan* is a 10-year plan that calls for a coordinated action by the Ministries of Social Services, Advanced Education, Economy, Education, Government Relations, Health and Justice and Corrections. It also recognizes that the Provincial Government cannot do everything alone. To ensure total inclusion and dignity it will also require action by our Federal Government, Municipal Governments and communities as a whole.

The priority areas identified in the Strategy are:

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

Should we return to government our most immediate actions will focus on six key priority areas:

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

In addition, as one of the largest employers in Saskatchewan, the Public Service Commission has launched a Disability Employment Action Plan to improve access to, and improve the employment experience for, persons experiencing disability within Executive Government. If re-elected the Saskatchewan Party will continue to support this Action Plan.

We appreciate the work of everyone who has contributed to making Saskatchewan a more inclusive and empowering place for those experiencing a disability. However, we realize more work needs to be done. That is why a re-elected Saskatchewan Party government will continue to build on its record investments to date in promoting and supporting dignity and inclusion for those experiencing a disability within our society.

Sincerely,



Donna Harpauer  
Saskatchewan Party candidate for Humboldt-Watrous