

AIDS Saskatoon

ALS Society of Saskatchewan

Arthritis Society –
Saskatchewan Division

Autism Resource Centre

Autism Services

Canadian Association for
Williams Syndrome

Canadian Deafblind
Association – Saskatchewan
Chapter Inc. (CDBA)

Canadian Mental Health
Association (Saskatchewan
Division) Inc.

CNIB

DAWN Saskatoon – RAFH
Saskatchewan

Epilepsy Saskatoon

Equal Justice for All-
Saskatoon

FASD Support Network of
Saskatchewan Inc.

Federation of Saskatchewan
Indian Nations (FSIN)
Disability Working Group

Gary Tinker Federation for
the Disabled Inc.

IDEA Regina

Metis Family and
Community Justice Services
of Saskatchewan

Metis Nation-
Saskatchewan

MS Society of Canada
Saskatchewan Division

Muscular Dystrophy Canada
(SK)

Neil Squire Society

North Saskatchewan
Independent Living Centre
(NSILC)

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Disability Income Support Coalition (DISC)
3031 Louise Street
Saskatoon, SK
S7J 3L1

August 11, 2016

Honourable Donna Harpauer
Minister of Social Services
Room 303, Legislative Building
2405 Legislative Drive
Regina, SK S4S 0B3

Dear Minister Harpauer:

I am writing on behalf of DISC (Disability Income Support Coalition) to express our deep concern regarding changes that have been announced for some recipients of the SAID (Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability) Program. We have previously shared these concerns with Ministry officials.

First, we recognize that the Government of Saskatchewan is dealing with a challenging financial situation at this time. We also recognize that the SAID Program should be run as efficiently and effectively as possible. We recognize that perceived equity in the program is important. At the same time we feel it is important to reinforce the idea that treating all individuals with very complex needs and multiple barriers the same is, by definition, not treating persons fairly. While we understand the need for equity in the program we feel that the process that has been implemented is unacceptable.

SAID was clearly and unequivocally designed as a long-term, secure income replacement program as outlined in the Principles in Recommendation 1 of the Final Recommendations document (May 13, 2009). As such, removing any benefit from persons already in the program should be done only in the rarest of circumstances and subject to an individual assessment of the impact that reduction of benefits will have on each individual involved. With this in mind, the reduction in the housing subsidy in our opinion should only be reduced down to, but not below, the level of the actual rent of the individual involved. If this is not feasible, then a notice period of one year whether there is a lease signed or not, should be given to allow the individual involved time to adjust their life style and residence. This should be done if, and only if, a thorough assessment by the worker, client and an advocate if available, determines that the impact of the change will not be detrimental to the person involved.

Disability Income Support Coalition (DISC)

PAATS

People First of
Saskatchewan

People with disabilities

Phoenix Residential Society

Prince Albert Community
Service Centre

Regina Anti-Poverty
Ministry (RAPM)

Saskatchewan Association
for Community Living
(SACL)

SARC

Saskatchewan Brain Injury
Association (SBIA)

Saskatchewan Cerebral Palsy
Association

Saskatchewan Down
Syndrome Society

Saskatchewan Deaf and
Hard of Hearing Services

Saskatchewan Families for
Effective Autism Treatment
(SASKFEAT)

Saskatchewan Seniors
Mechanism

Saskatchewan Voice of
People with Disabilities

Saskatoon Anti-Poverty
Coalition

Saskatoon Council on Aging
(SCOA)

Saskatoon Housing
Coalition

Schizophrenia Society of
Saskatchewan

South Saskatchewan
Independent Living Centres
(SSILC)

Spina Bifida &
Hydrocephalus Assoc of
Saskatchewan North
(SBHASN)

Spinal Cord Injury
Saskatchewan Inc.
over.....

We are particularly concerned that the current letters being sent out advise that the reduction in income will come into effect for October 1, 2016. This means that SAID beneficiaries will need to give notice on August 31st if they need to move out on September 30th because they can no longer afford their rent. This does not provide an adequate notice period. We are concerned that these changes might leave people who are already vulnerable without adequate housing as winter approaches. We are talking about individuals losing their homes.

We note that people are being encouraged to talk to their Assured Income Specialist (SAID worker). The logistics of 2,700 people being able to have a meaningful conversation with their worker before they would have to give notice will be challenging and, again, reinforces our concerns that the proposed notice period is too short.

In summary, DISC is asking that the Ministry slow down the process of implementing this change in order to allow time for a thorough assessment of the necessity for and the impact of any change on each individual situation. A slowdown of the process would also allow individuals to truly understand and adjust to the implications of the changes to their personal situation. Furthermore, we are asking that if a reduction in any housing subsidy is needed that it be at most lowered to the level of the actual rent, but not below the actual rent.

It is critically important to the success of SAID that persons involved in the program have a sense of security and stability to allow the sense of citizenship the program was designed to encourage and support as outlined in both the Principles and Recommendation 3 of the Final Recommendations (May 13, 2009). We feel it is important that SAID truly be an **assured** source of income for those who rely on it for security in their lives.

In the final analysis, it is easy to provide support for a program such as SAID in good economic times. The real test of the program, and with respect to the government standing behind the program, is to provide that sense of support and care to thousands of persons with severe and enduring disabilities even when, as inevitably happens, times get rough economically for our province.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns regarding this critically important matter. Considering the imminent impact of the changes currently under way, DISC requests that our concerns be addressed no later than August 25th and that we receive a response by that date.

Sincerely,



Judy Hannah
Chair, DISC

cc. Premier Brad Wall
Greg Miller, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Social Services
Constance Hourie, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Social Services
Elissa Aitken, Executive Director, Ministry of Social Services