



Disability Income Support Coalition (DISC)

DISC Members

Autism Resource Centre

Autism Treatment Services

Canadian Association for
Williams Syndrome

Canadian Deaf Blind and
Rubella Association (CDBRA)

Canadian Mental Health
Association (Saskatchewan
Division) Inc.

Canadian Parapelegic
Association (Saskatchewan) Inc.

DAWNing Saskatoon

Epilepsy Saskatoon

FASD Support Network of
Saskatchewan Inc.

IDEA Regina

Metis Family and Community
Justice Services of Saskatchewan

North Saskatchewan
Independent Living Centre
(NSILC)

People First of Saskatchewan

Phoenix Residential Society

Regina Anti-Poverty
Ministry(RAPM)

Saskatchewan Association for
Community Living (SACL)

Saskatchewan Association of
Rehabilitation Centres (SARC)

Saskatchewan Brain Injury
Association (SBIA)

Saskatchewan Down Syndrome
Society

Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of
Hearing Services

Saskatchewan First Nations
Network on Disabilities, Inc.
(FSIN)

Saskatchewan Voice of People
with Disabilities

Schizophrenia Society of
Saskatchewan

South Saskatchewan
Independent Living Centres
(SSILC)

Media Release

June 28, 2007—For Immediate Release

Disability Income Support Coalition responds to Government Announcement on Disability Inclusion Policy Framework

The Saskatchewan Disability Income Support Coalition (DISC) member organizations have joined together to speak as one voice and to find a solution to the desperate, life-long poverty that people with disabilities face on welfare. 70% of the long-term "static" welfare caseload are people with disabilities, a statistic which underscores the concerns of DISC members and points to the need for immediate reform.

DISC is interested in the Government of Saskatchewan's announcement today that they intend to implement a "Disability Inclusion Policy Framework." In light of this announcement, DISC wishes to publicly call for a clear and immediate plan to take people with disabilities off of welfare and create a new, distinct and adequate income program that will meet their needs. DISC is asking the Government to involve us in a full, collaborative partnership to develop a new system, so that the expertise and rich experience of consumers and advocates will inform the process, design and outcome.

The need for reform has reached a critical point, a crisis which is best explained by people with disabilities themselves. Karin Grieman, DISC member, describes her own situation, "My husband and I are at risk of being homeless soon, and we both have disabilities that prevent us from having jobs. The cost of food keeps rising and it is impossible to feed ourselves without using the food bank. We feel trapped, angry and isolated. It's wrong that we have to live like this. We hope the government will change things soon; that's why I joined DISC."

"Welfare was never meant to be a long-term income program for anyone, but it has become the default program where people with disabilities are left in hopeless, abject poverty," says Bonnie Morton, Advocate at the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry and DISC member. "It is inexcusable that people with disabilities spend their whole adult lives on welfare without enough food, clothing or decent shelter, not being able to buy a birthday card for a relative, stripped on their dignity and human rights. We have accepted that our seniors deserve a dignified life and backed that belief up with adequate funding; people with disabilities should have the same respect and an entitlement to an adequate income. Canada is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. Saskatchewan is obliged to do better than we have in ensuring that people with disabilities have a good life and that they are treated as full citizens."

Bev Duncan, Executive Director of the Voice of People with Disabilities and DISC member agrees, "Right now people with disabilities are forced to the margins, socially and economically. The changes that the government has made over the years to disability supports are minimal when you consider that the largest impact of disability is life-long poverty. Despite our desire to be part of building this framework, DISC was not consulted. Clearly we are uncertain about the government's expected outcomes from this framework, but the position of DISC is clear. It is no longer acceptable for people with disabilities to be left behind on welfare and we demand a respectful, adequate income program be developed. We are asking the government to partner with DISC on income policy change; we do not want to be just consulted. DISC is looking for substantive change, not rhetoric."

Dave Nelson, Executive Director of Canadian Mental Health, Saskatchewan Division and DISC member believes this can be a window of opportunity. "Now that the government is ready to consider changes, we need to be at the table to ensure that the any new income policies work for people with disabilities and that they follow the principles that we have identified as a coalition, which are inherent in the Government's Disability Action Plan of 2001. We are ready and eager to partner with the government, and we are awaiting their invitation."

For More Information Contact: Bev Duncan at (306) 949-4188 or Bonnie Morton at (306) 352-6386. DISC is a coalition of over 25 disability organizations and people with disabilities who are advocating for a distinct, adequate income program for people with disabilities in Saskatchewan.