



FOR DISCUSSION: A DISABILITY POLICY FRAMEWORK – WE CAN SUPPORT

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With the release of the Disability Inclusion Policy Framework in June of 2007 we were hopeful that the voice of the disability community had been heard and a new era was beginning in Saskatchewan.

What we hoped for was a vision of Saskatchewan as fully inclusive. We hoped for, even expected, a vision as inclusive as that stated in the 2001 Disability Action Plan

“...a society that recognizes the needs and aspirations of all citizens, respects the rights of individuals to self determination, and provides the resources and supports necessary for full citizenship.”

- *Saskatchewan Disability Action Plan*, 2001, p 17

What we received was something less.

“Saskatchewan people with disabilities participate fully in the economic and social life of their communities and the province.”

- *The Disability Inclusion Policy Framework*, 2007 p. 8

The *Policy Framework's* vision is a statement by the rest of the province, those who do not have a disability, of their vision for people who do have a disability. It is a reflection of the dualistic thinking with respect to people with disabilities that has dominated the history of Saskatchewan and Canada.

The *Policy Framework* includes some laudable goals with respect to disability services, employment and equality of outcomes for people with disabilities. It also contains a curious list of what “should” happen for Saskatchewan citizens who have a disability. While we are pleased to see that the policy makers recognized what should happen it seems that a *Policy Framework* ought to provide direction and leadership, not a wish list.

Many people will see these concerns and say they are semantics, that they are insignificant issues. To them we say that exclusion has always been based on the subtle issues of gender, colour, ethnic origin and disability.

To the Government and people of Saskatchewan we say:

“As people with disabilities, we continue to be socially, economically and culturally excluded. This exclusion continues despite our repeated and long-term efforts, as individuals and members of organizations, to obtain our equitable place in society through negotiation and promoting awareness.

It is now time for the disability community to demand nothing less than full citizenship. We will no longer wait “cap in hand” for the long promised

“response” to the comprehensive principles and approaches that have been proposed by our community in regard to disability issues.

Too many people are suffering and dying each day to make further inaction tolerable. We will not be implicit in facilitating the ongoing oppression of the world's most excluded group; people with disabilities. We will become the 'disability lens' to hold our fellow citizens and governments accountable for their promises, actions and inaction.”

-The Regina Disability Manifesto, 2006

Thus, we propose for discussion...

***A Saskatchewan's Disability Inclusion Policy Framework -
we can support.***

Vision:

Our vision is of a safer, better and more secure life for the people of Saskatchewan.

Values:

Within this vision we affirm ...

- *a commitment to the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of economic and social life of Saskatchewan.*

- *Saskatchewan people with disabilities:*
 - *have the same rights and responsibilities as all citizens*
 - *have the same inherent worth and dignity as all citizens*
 - *must be recognized and valued for their skills and talents*
 - *must have opportunities, and individualized supports and accommodations to make a good life for themselves in Saskatchewan*

- *disability is part of the human condition and must be accommodated and accepted by society.*

Principles:

- *People with disabilities must be supported and encouraged through public policy to develop to their potential and to contribute to communities and the economy according to their capacities and wishes.*
- *Services and programs provided to support people with disabilities must be based on the impact of the disability on the person's daily life and ability to participate in a workplace and will recognize the extra cost of disability and will be provided in a timely manner.*
- *People with disabilities, their families and their support networks must specifically be engaged in the development of policies and services that affect disability supports.*
- *People with disabilities are self-determining and they and their families and their support networks must have the right to take an active role in developing the support systems that serve them.*

Goals:

Saskatchewan people with disabilities will have....

- *timely, uncomplicated and equitable access to disability supports that eliminate barriers to participation in the economy and communities.*
- *equitable access to paid employment, learning opportunities, volunteer opportunities and other productive and life-enriching roles.*
- *public services that help achieve comparable life outcomes for Saskatchewan people with disabilities.*

In conclusion, IDEA Regina believe that the process for developing and implementing a Saskatchewan Disability Policy should be guided by the United Nations Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities and the “Standard Rules” for implementation derived from it. Canada is a signature to this Convention “that applies to all parts of a Federal state” – (General Obligations Article 4 (5)). Examples are available from other countries as to how disability policy can be addressed in an environment of full partnership envisioned in the Convention.