

Disabilities Issues Office

**Annual Report
2007 – 2008**

September 2008

His Honour the Honourable John Harvard
Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba
Room 235 Legislative Building
Winnipeg MB R3C 0V8

May It Please Your Honour:

For your review, I am pleased to submit the Annual Report of the Disabilities
Issues Office of Manitoba for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,

“Original Signed By”

Gord Mackintosh
Minister

September 2008

Honourable Gord Mackintosh
Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities
357 Legislative Building
Winnipeg MB R3C 0V8

Dear Minister:

It is my sincere pleasure to provide you with the 2007/08 Annual Report for the Disabilities Issues Office (DIO).

During the past year, the DIO had the privilege of working with you and all Manitoba departments on a variety of issues concerning the community of people with disabilities. Many of these are described in this Annual Report with a few of the most significant being:

- The construction of a new access ramp to the front door of the Manitoba Legislative Building.
- The announcement of the market *Abilities* program which will provide support to Manitobans with disabilities seeking employment.
- The renewed commitment by the Civil Service Commission to increase the number of people with disabilities working for the provincial government.
- The provision of financial support to the Rick Hansen Foundation and the Canadian Paraplegic Association (Manitoba) in recognition of the 20th anniversary of the *Man in Motion World Tour*.

The DIO looks forward to working on similar projects in the upcoming year which will also be the first one since the coming into force of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Respectfully submitted,

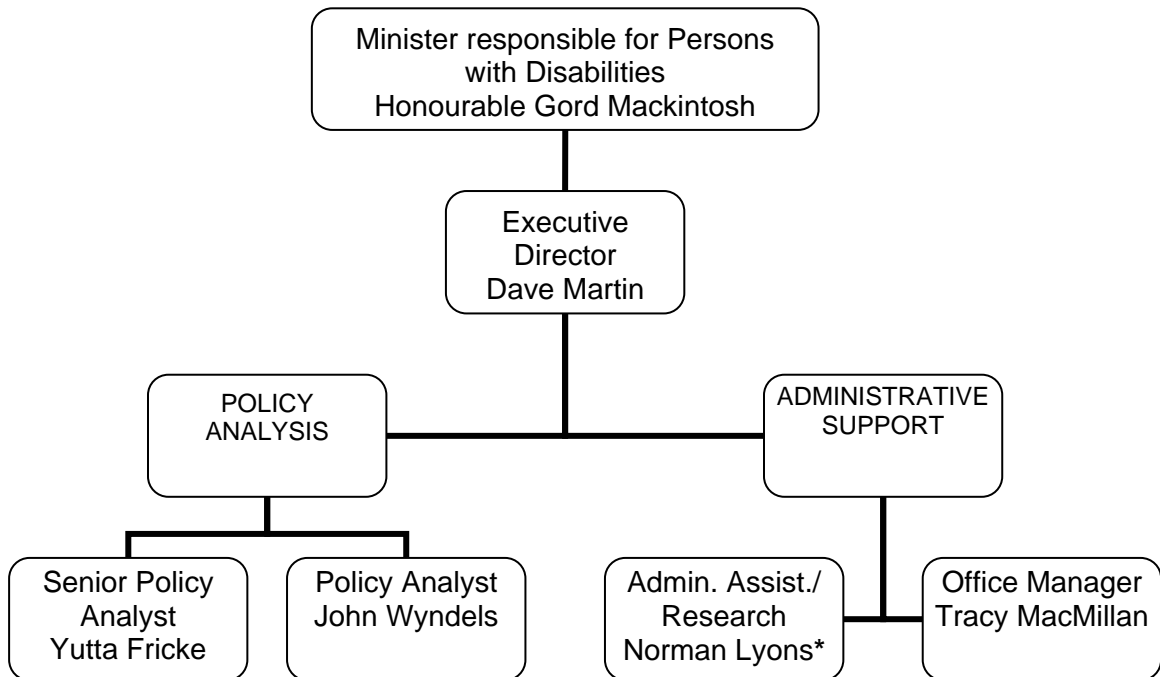
“Original Signed By”

Dave Martin
Executive Director

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Disabilities Issues Office
Organization Chart
(as at March 31, 2008)



* Seconded from the Manitoba Housing Authority

Introduction

The Annual Report of the Disabilities Issues Office (DIO) is organized to present developments under our primary mission. It includes information about community consultations, improvements to government services, community networking, and significant issues that affect people with disabilities. The report also contains information about the DIO's organization and expenditures. This report is available in multiple formats on request.

Mission and Role

In 2000, the Premier appointed a Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities to:

- identify issues affecting persons with disabilities
- co-ordinate policy development to improve access to public services
- promote positive attitudes and raise awareness about disability
- represent the needs of Manitobans with disabilities to other levels of government

In 2002, the provincial government established the DIO to serve and report to the Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities. The DIO supports the Minister by:

- communicating directly with members of the community
- organizing community consultations with organizations and citizens concerned about new policy directions
- co-ordinating work among government departments, disability groups, corporate, and community organizations
- making Manitoba a more inclusive society for persons with disabilities

Manitoba's Policy Progress on Issues Concerning People with Disabilities

Full Citizenship: A Manitoba Provincial Strategy on Disability

Since its release in 2001, the policy document *Full Citizenship: A Manitoba Provincial Strategy on Disability* has guided much of the work of the DIO and the government as a whole. An Assistant Deputy Minister's Committee on Disability Issues has worked with the DIO to help implement the 35 individual commitments made in *Full Citizenship*. In large part, this work is complete and the strategies outlined in *Full Citizenship* have been put into affect.

The table below summarizes the actions which have taken place since *Full Citizenship* was released.

Full Citizenship Priorities	Actions
Income Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Services and Housing has determined people with disabilities do not have to be defined as unemployable in order to receive benefits under the Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) Program. • A new functional assessment process has been implemented by the EIA Program, replacing the medical panel previously in place. • Information bulletins are available to EIA participants with disabilities to ensure they have an increased awareness about programs available to them. • Family Services and Housing will adjust EIA benefit levels to cover some disability related costs such as special diets, transportation, child care, and clothing. • Family Services and Housing will allow EIA participants with disabilities to have a \$100,000 trust without reducing benefits as long as it is used to cover costs related to disability. • Liquid assets exemptions for income assistance recipients with disabilities have been doubled from \$2,000 to \$4,000. • The Income Assistance for Persons with Disabilities benefit was increased by \$25 to \$105 per month.

<p>Income Security (con't.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Manitoba Shelter Benefit has been introduced to provide increased financial support to individuals with disabilities who live in the private rental market.
<p>Employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A multi-sectoral forum on disability and employment was held which included private and public sector employers, disability service organizations, advocacy groups, and individuals with disabilities. • A Rapid Re-enrollment Policy has been established for individuals who attempt employment and need to return to the EIA Program because of disability. • EIA participants can maintain health benefits such as prescription drug coverage for 12 months after they become employed. In December, 2008, this will be extended to 24 months. • The <i>Get Ready</i> component of the <i>Rewarding WORK</i> initiative will support people with disabilities to attend approved education and training programs, including university and other post-secondary programs, for up to two years. • The <i>Manitoba Works</i> component of the <i>Rewarding WORK</i> initiative will provide employers with wage subsidies for up to a year so they can hire and train people with disabilities who are currently receiving income assistance. • Family Services and Housing's marketAbilities fund will support innovative employment partnerships in rural and northern areas to help people with disabilities find long-term employment. • A marketAbilities Team has been established to help people with disabilities receiving EIA to find jobs. • Financial support has been provided to Sara Riel Inc. in Winnipeg to help people experiencing mental health concerns to find work. • EIA participants with disabilities are allowed to keep 30% of any employment earnings before benefits are affected. • In February 2009, people with disabilities currently receiving EIA who leave income assistance for work will receive a one time payment of \$325 to assist with job-related expenses.

<p>Employment (con't.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In response to a funding proposal from the Rick Hansen Foundation, additional resources are being provided to the Canadian Paraplegic Association (Manitoba) to strengthen their vocational rehabilitation services. • The Civil Service Commission has created an internship program for people with disabilities to provide them with experience working with government. Seven positions are available each year. • The Civil Service Commission has committed to increasing the number of people with disabilities working for the provincial government to 5% of the workforce by 2012. • Various programs are offered through the Department of Competitiveness, Training and Trade designed to support entrepreneurs with disabilities.
<p>Services for Aboriginal People with Disabilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues concerning First Nations people with disabilities are being addressed by the Intergovernmental Committee on First Nations Health. This committee involves senior representatives from the Federal and Provincial levels as well as Aboriginal organizations. • Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth and many First Nation communities in Manitoba have increased cooperation to support students with disabilities living on reserves.
<p>Access to Government</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The DIO was opened in 2002 and currently employs 4 staff and has one employee working on secondment from the Manitoba Housing Authority. • Round Tables on Disability Issues have been held in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006 and 2007. • Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation has developed a tool for reviewing government owned and leased facilities with respect to accessibility for people with disabilities. • The main entrance of the Manitoba Legislative Building has been made accessible to people with mobility disabilities by constructing an access ramp. • The DIO has developed an updated policy document called the Manitoba Policy on Access to Government to improve customer service to people with disabilities. It is currently in draft form and is being considered by the Minister

<p>Access to Government (con't.)</p>	<p>responsible for Persons with Disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A draft Access and Inclusion Lens has been prepared in partnership with Treasury Board Secretariat and is currently being reviewed by the Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities. • A policy has been established by ManWeb that all government internet sites must meet established accessibility standards.
<p>Disability Supports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Caledon Institute was hired by Manitoba Family Services and Housing to produce a research report on disability supports. • The DIO has focused on disability supports in Round Tables. • Manitoba Health and regional health authorities have expanded funding for Home Care and Mental Health programs.

Manitoba’s Policy on Access to Government

Although the majority of commitments in *Full Citizenship* have been fulfilled, one of the areas remaining to be implemented is an updating of *Manitoba’s Policy on Access to Government (MPAG)*. Building on policies adopted in 1989, the purpose of MPAG will be to ensure that people with disabilities benefit from equal access to:

- Government information: in print and on-line
- Government events: meetings, hearings, and public consultations
- Customer service

While the goal of universal access to government continues to be a priority, the 1989 policies have become outdated in light of two recent developments; new forms of electronic communication and the changing face of disability in Canada. Information previously available only in print format is now accessible to persons with disabilities in a multitude of formats through the emergence of a wide range of technologies. The need to amend the policies is also borne out of statistics recognizing the growing number of people with disabilities in society. Statistics Canada’s 2006 post census data indicates that 15.7% of Manitoba’s population has a disability. This number is expected to rise with an aging population.

Access and Inclusion Lens and the Gender and Diversity Analysis Project

Full Citizenship commits the government to the introduction of an Access and Inclusion Lens. Its purpose is “to assess and address the impact of all initiatives (policies, programs or decisions) on persons with disabilities.”

In 2007, the DIO approached the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) for assistance in the development of a draft Lens, as TBS plays a central role in reviewing all policies and budget submissions made by provincial departments. Coincidentally, TBS was in the process of launching a Gender and Diversity Analysis Project with goals that were very similar to those of the DIO. The result was that TBS invited the DIO to become actively involved in its government-wide project, including membership on the steering committee.

The DIO will continue its collaboration with TBS on its Gender and Diversity Analysis Project in 2008/09 and will continue working on ways to ensure disability issues are considered in all provincial policies.

Access to the Legislative Building

On November 19, 2007, the Manitoba Legislative Building became the first legislative building in Canada to provide full access at its main entrance with the completion of a universal access ramp. The design of the ramp reflects the 87 year-old building's neoclassical architectural style and incorporates many of the original building materials such as Tyndall limestone from Manitoba.

The structure is wide enough to allow two wheelchairs to pass each other safely and includes a circular landing that allows users the opportunity to stop and view the outside of the building and the nearby grounds. There are also designated accessible parking stalls near the entrance of the ramp.

Since the completion of the ramp, new main entrance doors have been installed which meet universal standards to better accommodate wheelchairs, strollers, and groups of visitors. The ramp serves as a testament to the province's commitment to the *Full Citizenship* and participation of all its citizens.

Continuing Progress on Employment for Manitobans with Disabilities

The International Day of Disabled Persons in 2007 had the theme “Decent Work for Persons with Disabilities.” In recognition of this day, Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities Gord Mackintosh, and Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission Greg Selinger, announced a number of new initiatives to address employment issues affecting Manitobans with disabilities.

During a December 3, 2007 media conference held at Winnipeg's Independent Living Resource Centre, Ministers Mackintosh and Selinger unveiled the \$7-million market *Abilities* program as Manitoba's response to the International Day of Disabled Persons. The new program consists of strategic investments as follows:

- A new \$300,000 market *Abilities* fund to help get more Manitobans with disabilities living in rural and northern communities into jobs.
- A personal attendant community education program to provide more supports to people with disabilities so they can more fully participate in employment and the community.
- A specialized market *Abilities* team to help interested people with disabilities receiving income assistance in Winnipeg find jobs.
- An additional \$191,000 to Sara Riel's Work Placement Force Program so that more pre-employment support for people with mental-health concerns can be provided.
- The Income Assistance for Persons with Disabilities benefit was increased by \$25 to \$105 per month.
- A provincial civil service diversity strategy with a commitment to achieve an increase in the number of persons with disabilities in the Civil Service to 5% from 2.8% by 2012.

In announcing the civil service diversity strategy, Minister Selinger stated the longer-term goal is to have 7% of Manitoba's provincial employees be people with disabilities.

As a result of the December 3rd announcement, both Manitoba Family Services and Housing and the Civil Service Commission have increased their efforts to support people with disabilities to become employed.

Manitoba Celebrates 20th Anniversary of Man in Motion World Tour

On February 29, 2008, Premier Gary Doer announced \$3 million in funding for the Rick Hansen Foundation and Manitoba's Canadian Paraplegic Association (CPA Manitoba) to support their five-year *Going Forward Together* proposal. Rick Hansen and members of CPA Manitoba joined the Premier at the Manitoba Legislative Building for the announcement which was described as Manitoba's contribution to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Rick Hansen's historic *Man in Motion World Tour*.

Manitoba's funding will support quality of life initiatives for people with spinal cord injuries as well as research projects aiming to improve medical outcomes for individuals who are affected. Over the project's five-year timeline, CPA Manitoba will receive all of the funding and will work with the Vancouver-based Rick

Hansen Foundation to achieve the proposal's goals. Approximately 1,000 Manitobans live with spinal cord injuries.

Partners in Manitoba's funding contribution are the departments of Family Services and Housing, Intergovernmental Affairs, Science, Technology, Energy and Mines, the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation and the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba.

Manitoba Floodway Authority

Constructed between 1962 and 1968, the Red River Floodway has helped protect residents of the Red River Valley and City of Winnipeg from countless floods and an estimated \$8 billion in flood losses and damages. Following the "Flood of the Century" in 1997, when the floodway came within inches of its limit, the federal and provincial governments committed to expanding its capacity. As a result, in 2004, the Manitoba Floodway Authority (MFA) was established to manage the expansion and maintenance. The floodway expansion, expected to be completed in 2010, will be capable of handling a 1 in 700 year flood, approximately twice the size of the 1997 flood.

In addition to improving flood protection and preparedness, the floodway expansion will result in opportunities to Manitobans in the areas of recreation and outdoor activities. The DIO has met with officials from MFA on a number of occasions to offer input and ensure that persons with disabilities are active participants in the development process. An Operational Working Group (OWG) consisting of representatives of government departments, including the DIO, and interested stakeholders has been established. A Request for Proposals (RFP) from engineering firms to oversee the development of the floodway as a place for recreational activities has been initiated. The winning firm will work with the OWG to ensure the floodway fulfills its recreational potential as a place for both summer and winter outdoor activities.

Visitable Housing

Visitable housing is exactly what the term implies: housing that provides a basic level of access making the house visitable, and/or livable to all people, regardless of their disabilities. The main features of a visitable house are a level entry into the home, wider doors and hallways throughout, and an accessible washroom on the main floor. The provincial government continues to promote visitable housing and has begun implementing strategies to advance the concept in Manitoba.

The provincial government has solicited a RFP for the development of one or more show homes in the Waverley West subdivision. The Province will provide additional funds to the winning bidders to include the visitable features. Studies have shown that the incorporation of visitable features from the outset of

construction accounts for less than 5% of the total cost of the house. These show homes will offer most of the public their first opportunity to view a visitable house. Not only will the public gain a better understanding of visitability features, but the winning builders will recognize the ease with which these changes can be incorporated into the basic design of a house. The RFP in the Waverley West subdivision represents the first time the Province is providing financial assistance towards the construction of a visitable home.

Data indicates our population is aging. Evidence also suggests that families want to stay in their homes, or “age in place”. Visitable homes recognize these facts and offer a unique opportunity for builders and people thinking of buying a new home. Several countries and municipalities in the United States have already passed laws stating all new homes must be visitable. Although the provincial government has not legislated visitability in Manitoba, it is moving forward with visitable design and appreciates the long-term benefits it can provide to all Manitobans.

Community Engagement

Manitoba Forum on Aging and Disability

The DIO collaborated with the Seniors & Healthy Aging Secretariat to organize a Manitoba Forum on Aging and Disability on March 12, 2008. The purpose was to offer seniors and people with disabilities in Manitoba an opportunity to dialogue about the issues they face and the services they use to assist them in their daily living.

The one-day event added a local perspective to a parallel inter-provincial conference organized by the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies (CCDS), which contributed a report on its research findings. The Manitoban participants were especially pleased to exchange stories with their CCDS counterparts from British Columbia, Ontario and Nova Scotia.

One thing that quickly became clear: Seniors groups and disability groups have much to talk about. Participants at the conference realized that, although they may identify with different social sectors, their needs and challenges are often similar or the same. Group discussions focused on five major areas identified in the CCDS report:

1. Language, Identity and Attitude
2. Home Supports and Care Giving
3. Transportation
4. Housing
5. Income and Poverty

The forum highlighted the increasing numbers of aging people with disabilities who share the seniors' ambition for continued active community living. The representatives of disability organizations were eager to share their experience in developing programs for peer support, community supports, and self-management of personal supports. The seniors' organizations reflected on how to build increased disability access into their programs and services, including to reach "more senior" seniors.

Participants agreed that by combining the wisdom and experience of seniors and people with disabilities, both groups would benefit from shared resources and a stronger voice in shaping Manitoba's future.

Disability in Emergency Management Network

In the spring of 2007, the DIO hosted a day-long workshop to create an exchange of information and expertise between Manitoba's emergency managers and organizations of persons with disabilities. One of the outcomes of this and subsequent meetings was the creation of the Disability in Emergency

Management Network, DEM-Net. The purpose of DEM-Net is to promote the involvement of Manitobans with disabilities in the systems and supports that impact their lives as a result of a disaster or emergency. The mission is:

To minimize the risk to Manitobans with disabilities as a result of an emergency or disaster through networking, training and educational opportunities for organizations of and for persons with disabilities and emergency managers.

With the help of a five-person steering committee, this mission was translated into an action plan. Most activities in DEM-Net's first year focused on training, including participation of DEM-Net members in provincial and city emergency management training sessions. One of the highlights was a one-hour DEM-Net presentation to the 400 participants of the Manitoba Disaster Management Conference. The six DEM-Net presenters spoke of their own experience with physical, sensory and hidden disabilities in times of disaster, and offered the emergency managers tips for disability inclusion in their disaster plans and responses.

French-Speaking Manitobans with Disabilities

In 2007-08, the DIO joined the members of French Language Social Services Advisory Committee to address concerns about disability services and supports for French-speaking Manitobans with disabilities and their families.

Working with a consulting firm, the research began with a review of disability data and services offered in French here and across the country. This information offered the context for the interviews and group discussions with the Franco-Manitobans.

The community interest in the research in Winnipeg and Southern Manitoba was significant, with a total of 51 individuals participating. The predominant message was that French-speaking Manitobans with disabilities have the same goal as their English-speaking counterparts, full citizenship for all ... with equivalent access to disability supports and services in French.

The study also showed that Franco-Manitobans confront a set of obstacles to inclusion. Franco-Manitobans with disabilities risk not being understood or misunderstanding anything from directions, a diagnosis, or how to "navigate the system" often with differing eligibility criteria. As a result, many respondents felt they learned of programs in a haphazard way. They admitted to reverting to broken English in order to access the services they required. Because they assumed that French was not an option, they were just as likely not to complain about this "additional need" ... even when disability services in French may have been an option.

Information and Referral Service

Each year, the DIO fields hundreds of calls from people around the province with questions pertaining to disability issues. The majority of the calls relate to provincial government programs for persons with disabilities, such as the Employment and Income Assistance Program or disability supports. However, we also receive numerous inquiries about Handi-Transit, the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), or programs administered by municipal or federal bodies. Often we can provide the information required, but other times we will direct the caller to the agency or department responsible for administering the program. The DIO compiles a record of who called, what information they required, and the action taken. Although each query is different, and the numbers vary slightly from year to year, the calls primarily fall into the following ten categories;

- Disability Supports
- Health Care
- Financial Assistance
- Education
- Children's Services
- Housing
- Transportation
- Employment
- The role of the Disabilities Issues Office
- General Enquiries

In 2007/08, the most common queries were financial assistance (EIA) and disability supports. These calls are an indicator of the broad range of concerns of Manitobans with disabilities and are an affirmation of the important role the provincial government plays in the lives of persons with disabilities.

Intergovernmental Networking

City of Winnipeg Access Advisory Committee

One of the primary responsibilities of the DIO is to consult and collaborate with both government departments and disability organizations. One of the groups it continues to be directly involved with, and has a permanent representation on, is the City of Winnipeg's Access Advisory Committee. Formed in 1989 with the priority of "enhancing accessibility for persons with disabilities to the benefit of all citizens", the AAC is a 12-person committee consisting mostly of persons with disabilities.

Although the AAC and the DIO did not combine their efforts on any sole initiative this past year, their continued collaboration provides a solid foundation for building on their common interests in the future. Universal design, visitable housing, and helping to create a more accessible urban environment for all Manitobans are established priorities of the AAC. These objectives partner well with the DIO and the Province of Manitoba's goal of achieving full participation for all its citizens.

Inter-provincial Networking

Manitoba's DIO benefits from communicating with similar offices at the federal level and in other provinces. Through telephone conference calls, or in-person meetings, the DIO has the opportunity to share information about Manitoba initiatives and to learn about best practices in other parts of Canada. During 2007/08, a result of this networking has been the development of a project concept to undertake a national communication program on issues concerning Canadians with disabilities. Under the leadership of the national Office of Disability Issues, this initiative will unfold in the 2008/09 year.

Emerging Issues

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Government of Canada participated in the signing of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the Convention) on March 30, 2007, at the United Nations in New York City. Since then, the DIO has been working with the Department of Justice to begin a review of existing provincial laws, policies, programs and practices to compare these with the obligations set out by the Convention. Once this review has taken place, in Manitoba and throughout the country, it is anticipated that Canada will “ratify” the Convention, with a commitment to meet or exceed the Convention’s standards.

The new Convention is based on existing human rights Treaties and their application to people with disabilities. The Convention provides direction in such areas as accessibility, personal mobility, health, education, employment, rehabilitation, and participation in political life. The aim of the Convention is to stop discrimination against 650 million people with disabilities across the world, and to ensure that they can enjoy the full range of human rights: civil, political, economic, social and cultural.

Statistics Canada 2006 Census Data on Disability in Canada

On December 3, 2007, Statistics Canada released the first findings from the 2006 Participation and Activity Limitations Survey (PALS). This survey is designed to present data on Canadians with disabilities including information on population trends, the support services needed by people with disabilities, children with disabilities, and employment barriers affecting Canadians with disabilities. During 2008, Statistics Canada will be releasing periodic reports on findings from the 2006 PALS.

The first report indicated that disability rates have increased from the previous PALS done in 2001. In Canada, the percentage of people who identified themselves as having a disability rose from 12.4% in 2001 to 14.3% in 2006. The increase has been explained partly due to the aging of the Canadian population and partly due to a greater willingness of people to identify themselves as having a disability.

In Manitoba, the rate changed from 14.2% to 15.7%. A total of 169,170 Manitobans identified themselves as having a disability. Manitoba’s rate of disability was the sixth highest among the provinces and territories.

The growing number of people with disabilities in Manitoba and the rest of Canada will be an important issue for consideration by policy makers at all levels of government.

Financial Report Summary Information

**Disabilities Issues Office
(Manitoba Family Services and Housing)**

Actual vs. Planned Expenditures
for fiscal year ended March 31, 2008

Disabilities Issues Office

Expenditures by Sub-Appropriation	Actual 2007/08 \$000	FTE	Estimate 2007/08* \$000	Variance Over/(Under)	Expl. No.
Total Salaries and Employee Benefits	285.6	4.00	308.5	(22.9)	
Total Other Expenditures	107.2		109.1	(1.9)	

**Disabilities Issues Office
(Manitoba Family Services and Housing)**

Actual vs. Actual Expenditures
for years ended March 31, 2007 & March 31, 2008

Estimate 2007/08	Appropriation	Actual 2007/08	Actual 2006/07	Increase/ (Decrease)	Expl. No.
308.5	Salaries and Employee Benefits	285.6	273.8	11.8	
109.1	Other Expenditures	107.2	85.8	21.4	

**Disabilities Issues Office
Five-Year Expenditure and Staffing Summary by
Appropriation
(\$000's)**
For the years ended March 31, 2004 - March 31, 2008

		Actual/Adjusted Expenditures*									
		2003/04		2004/05		2005/06		2006/07		2007/08	
Appropriation		FTE	\$	FTE	\$	FTE	\$	FTE	\$	FTE	\$
09-1H-1	Salaries and Employee Benefits	4.00	180.7	4.00	214.6	4.00	258.1	4.00	273.8	4.00	285.6
09-1H-2	Other Expenditures		80.6		86.2		86.9		85.8		107.2
Total Disabilities Issues Office		4.00	261.3	4.00	300.8	4.00	345.0	4.00	359.6	4.00	392.8

* Adjusted figures reflect historical data on a comparable basis in those appropriations affected by a reorganization, during the years under review.