



Report on The Pas Round Table on Disability Issues

OCTOBER 13, 2006

Disabilities
ISSUES
OFFICE

Manitoba 



Minister's Message

Round tables on disability issues are regular consultations organized by Manitoba's Disabilities Issues Office (DIO). The goal is to provide Manitobans with an opportunity to share ideas on how to make government policies and programs more effective in serving persons with disabilities. These meetings with persons with disabilities, their representatives and service providers are an important part of government's strategy to improve communication with people with disabilities.

An ongoing issue is the challenge faced by people with disabilities who live outside major urban centres. Where a person lives greatly affects the service they receive. These challenges may not always be apparent to those living in urban centres. The DIO organized

a round table in The Pas, on October 13, 2006, to give people with disabilities who live there and their supporters an opportunity to present their ideas to government.

There were 31 round table participants at the event from The Pas, Flin Flon, and the Opaskwayak Cree Nation. Participants included people with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, staff of local community agencies and several government staff. The round table was facilitated by Janice Greene, a counsellor from the First Nations disABILITY Association in Winnipeg, and Rhonda Wiebe, a researcher from the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Manitoba.

The Round Table on Disability Issues held in The Pas has enhanced government's understanding about the concerns and priorities of people with disabilities who live in more remote communities. The issues raised will help create better policies and programs. I am pleased to present this report on the findings of this important consultation.

Gord Mackintosh
Minister responsible for
Persons with Disabilities

The Pas Round Table on Disability Issues Results

Prior to the round table, participants were told that three issues were of particular interest to the Disabilities Issues Office. These issues had been raised by rural and northern citizens at previous events. They were:

- access to services
- transportation
- special issues facing Aboriginal people with disabilities

Participants were encouraged to discuss any other issues they wanted to raise. By the end of the round table, the following recommendations were put forward by participants:

- Ensure that senior government representatives take part in all round table discussions to reassure participants that their voices are being heard.
- Develop a provincial advisory committee with relevant stakeholders to advise government and other agencies on disability issues.
- Eliminate all provincial/federal barriers that unfairly limit First Nation's people with disabilities who live on reserves from receiving the services and programs other Manitobans with disabilities receive.
- Improve access to medical specialists and disability support programs in the north so more people with disabilities can remain in their home communities.
- Increase financial support for disability transportation programs in rural and northern communities.
- Ensure all public and residential buildings developed with government support are accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Develop a program to help maintain public and residential buildings and introduce a program to make non-accessible buildings accessible.
- Make employment programs more accessible to people with disabilities through greater flexibility of existing policies.
- Develop incentives for public and private employers to create more flexible employment options for persons with disabilities through job shadowing, job sharing and mentoring.



Conclusion

The round table concluded with a call from participants asking government to respond to their proposals as soon as possible to indicate that their concerns are a government priority.

This was the first round table held outside of Winnipeg. Participants appreciated the effort that was made to meet in their community. This event provided valuable insight into the issues and concerns of persons with disabilities living in remote communities.

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