

Manitobans with disabilities have the basic human right to participate in all aspects of public life such as work, study, shopping and recreation. However, people with disabilities continue to face serious obstacles that prevent full participation in parts of life that most Manitobans take for granted.

- Despite the unanimous Legislative Assembly support of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act in 2013, that was intended to close the gap between these human and legal rights and the lived reality of Manitobans with disabilities, only 1/5 of promised increased standards have been developed. At this rate, it will take ten full years until this set of standards is implemented.
- The Manitoba Government has not developed a plan to monitor and enforce compliance with the Act that will affect over 36,000 organizations in Manitoba.
- The Government has not provided any resources to disability communities to support research and consultation to ensure Manitobans with disabilities have appropriate access to technical and legal resources.

- Is your party committed to the full and timely implementation of the Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) that was passed with all party support in December 2013?
- Will your party commit to establishing standards in the following areas during the next term in office: employment, transportation, information and communication, and built environment?
- What will your party do to ensure that organizations follow the standards that are developed?



PRIORITY ISSUE Fair Wages

Manitobans with intellectual disabilities deserve well-trained, qualified staff who are paid a fair living wage to provide consistent, high standards of care. Quality of life for all Manitobans depends on developing and maintaining close relationships with those around us.

- Agencies providing care report turnover rates for frontline staff ranging from 25-66%. A 40% turnover rate means that an adult may receive care from up to 164 different staff over 10 years, or 770 from ages 18-65.
- Disability support workers are among the lowest paid human service workers in Manitoba, receiving pay significantly lower than those in other caring professions such as childcare and homecare. Current wages start at \$12.06/hour, and many long-term, experienced and skilled staff remain on this wage after 20 years.
- Low wages result in high turnover, staff shortages, staff recruitment challenges, decreased knowledge, skill and experience, and ultimately reduced quality of care.

- What will your party do to ensure a stable, fairly paid and qualified work force providing service to Manitobans with intellectual disabilities?
- Will your party commit to eliminating the wage disparities currently in place for Disability Support Workers?
- Will your party commit to implementing standards and equitable wages for all Disability
 Support Workers comparable to other caring professions in Manitoba?



PRIORITY ISSUE Timely Access

Thousands of Manitobans with disabilities and their families spend months, even years, in crisis while they wait for services that can help significantly improve their quality of life. Timely access to service is good public policy.

Delayed care results in significantly higher costs to taxpayers, as increased use of government services is required, such as healthcare or the criminal justice system. An investment in providing timely service will save taxpayers millions of dollars to provide better services and lower risk of requiring additional services.

- Wait lists for services for children with autism now exceed two years, so many never receive necessary support because they are no longer eligible once the services become available
- It can take up to two years for people with serious mental health issues to access a psychologist in the public health system
- Families with adult children with intellectual disabilities are often forced to wait more than ten years for access to residential services
- The wait times for homecare services for seniors living in the community in Winnipeg is 37 days after first referral. Even then, Manitoba's Auditor General found that the services provided were not always reliable

Compounding these delays, the processes for accessing many of the services are not clear, reliable information on waiting lists are not publicly available, and no one seems accountable for system performance.

Timely access to disability services is good public policy. It's also Manitoba's obligation under the Article 26 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

- What will your party do to ensure the comprehensive reduction of wait times for disability services?
- Will your party commit to a transparent and accountable system of measuring and publicly reporting on progress towards reductions in wait times for disability services?



PRIORITY ISSUE Unleashing Employment Potential

Of the 87,120 Manitobans with disabilities between the ages of 15 and 64, there are 35,000 that are either unemployed or are not actively seeking paid employment. Thousands of others are underemployed. This is a tremendous waste of human and economic potential.

According to recent studies, people with disabilities rated average or better than their non-disabled colleagues for job performance, attendance, and work safety. Investing in employees with disabilities is a proven investment in retaining experienced staff, increasing productivity and improving organizational climate and culture.

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act can help remove employment barriers faced by persons with disabilities. However, these standards alone aren't enough because we know that:

- The design and delivery of some government programs actually discourage persons with disabilities from seeking employment.
- Current government systems and services struggle to support a successful transition from high school to work life.
- Many employers hold misconceptions and misunderstandings about the capabilities and potential of persons with disabilities.
- Educational systems perpetuate systemic low expectations of persons with disabilities, limiting access to opportunities and resources.

With a significant labour shortage forecast in Manitoba in the decades ahead, government needs to realize the employment potential of persons with disabilities.

- What will your government do to ensure equity in employment for Manitobans with disabilities within the Government of Manitoba?
- What will your party do to realize the employment potential of persons with disabilities within the broader provincial economy?
- What will your party do to ensure that Manitobans with disabilities are promoted to the business community as valuable and viable contributors to the workforce?



PRIORITY ISSUE Dignified Income

Many Manitobans who have severe and prolonged or permanent disabilities cannot work full-time or enjoy economic independence. They face profound barriers to success in the labour market and must rely on the government's Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) program to meet their basic needs.

The EIA program does not fit with the reality and needs of Manitobans with severe and prolonged disabilities. The EIA program was designed as a "last resort" program to provide short-term assistance during transitional periods of unemployment. Basic needs benefits are intentionally kept below both current wage levels and generally accepted measures of poverty to encourage transition to employment. Relying on EIA carries considerable stigma. Reporting requirements are made deliberately onerous to discourage dependency and protect public funds.

As a result, many persons with severe and prolonged disabilities are condemned to live on incomes well below the poverty lines, some from age 18 through to 65 when they become eligible for Old Age Security (OAS) and Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS).

Alternative income programs already operating in Saskatchewan (SAID) and Alberta (AISH) are making a significant difference in the quality of life and inclusion for people with severe and prolonged disabilities. Manitoba should have one too, because we should all have access to a dignified income.

- What income level does your party see as being socially acceptable for Manitobans with severe and prolonged disabilities who face profound barriers to labour market success?
- Will your party commit to introducing an alternative income program for Manitobans with severe and prolonged disabilities during the next term in office?



Questions for Candidates

Feel free to use these questions to guide conversations with your local candidates. You can also send them by email to their office and ask them to reply in writing. If you receive a reply, please share it with DMV2016 and we'll share the answers in our candidates section of the website.

- 1. How have disability issues affected you and your family?
- 2. What do you see as being the greatest accessibility challenges within your constituency and what will you do to address the challenge?
- 3. How do wait times for disability services affect your constituents and how can this best be addressed?
- 4. Why do you believe Disability Support Workers are among the lowest paid care providers in your constituency? What can be done about this?
- 5. How do the issues of disability and poverty affect your constituents and what can be done about them?
- 6. What do you see as the biggest employment barriers for people with disabilities in your constituency and how can they be eliminated?

SAMPLE LETTER TO CANDIDATE:



Name of candidate
Title
Address
City, Province, Postal Code

DATE

Dear CANDIDATE,

I live in your constituency and am volunteering with Disability Matters: Vote 2016 (DMV2016). DMV2016 is a non-partisan, cross-disability campaign to raise awareness around disability issues in Manitoba. We are also working so that people with disabilities have access to all of the information they need to make an informed vote on April 19, and ensuring that the polls are accessible.

We have identified five priority issues:

- A Fully Accessible Manitoba
- Fair Living Wages for Those Serving Manitobans with Intellectual Disabilities
- Timely Access to Disability-Related Services
- Unleashing Employment Potential
- Dignified Income for Those Facing the Most Profound Barriers to Workforce Participation

We would like to meet with you to discuss these issues and your commitment to addressing them if elected. I have attached a summary of these key issues for your information.

Please let me know when we can meet, I can be reached at: INSERT PHONE and INSERT EMAIL ADDRESS. I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,