



Inclusion for All

Developing a Plan to Remove Barriers for People with Disabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Discussion Paper and Guide for Stakeholder Feedback



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Message from the Minister



It is my pleasure to invite you to take part in a public discussion on solutions to barriers that exist for persons with disabilities.

The Provincial Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to enhancing the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society. This will be achieved in part through the development of a Provincial Strategy on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities.

The community has identified many of the barriers that people with disabilities face. Moving forward with consultations, we will build on this information and look at how to remove these barriers.

Consultations will focus on solutions and identifying ways to remove and prevent barriers and gaps in programs and services across the Provincial Government. Your experiences and knowledge are important to this process and the information we gather from the consultations will be used to develop a strategy on inclusion. I encourage you to review this discussion paper and share your ideas at the consultations or by contacting the Disability Policy Office directly.

I look forward to productive discussions and to receiving your ideas and input. Working together, we can remove the barriers and make inclusion a reality for this province.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Sullivan". The script is fluid and cursive.

SUSAN SULLIVAN, MHA
Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Starting the Process

Do you want to be included in your community? Participate in activities? Explore opportunities?

The Provincial Government wants to improve inclusion for people with disabilities and would like to hear your ideas about the best ways to do this.

This paper is meant to support discussion by giving you information about:

- the government's commitment to inclusion
- barriers to inclusion identified by community-based research, and
- some projects currently underway.

Questions are at the end of this paper. These questions are to get the discussion going.

We hope you share your views and ideas. Look on page 16 for how to do this.

Disability Policy Office
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador



Introduction

People with disabilities contribute a lot to the province. However, many people still face major barriers to full inclusion and participation. The Provincial Government recognizes that people with disabilities face barriers and has agreed to take action by working with the community to remove barriers.

Barriers can make doing things in the community difficult. Things like going to school or work, getting to a doctor's appointment, picking up groceries, going to a movie, or participating in public elections and events. We need to work together to remove barriers.

There is no definition of disability that applies to everyone and every situation. Many groups and agencies of and for people with disabilities, as well as the Disability Policy Office, use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) language for "disability." This document does not say what "disability" is and it does not say who people with disabilities are. Instead, it says that people with disabilities include people who have long-lasting physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, and when these types of disabilities interact with other barriers, people with disabilities may not get a chance to participate in their community like they want to (UN Convention, 2006).

Disability is defined differently for different programs. This helps to make sure people can access programs that are meant for them.

“We acknowledge the barriers encountered by people with disabilities.”

Giving people with disabilities the chance to fully take part in their communities is important to the Provincial Government. In 2007, the Provincial Government made a promise to people with disabilities to:

1. Create a division of disabilities in government – which is now called the Disability Policy Office (DPO)*;
2. Acknowledge the barriers encountered by people with disabilities; and
3. Develop recommendations and strategies to deal with these barriers by talking with people with disabilities.

* The DPO is a central point within the Provincial Government that helps to make sure people with disabilities are included in all parts of society. It works with people with disabilities and their supporters to develop ways to address barriers, it helps government departments make inclusive policies and programs and it raises awareness of disability issues.

Community groups have had discussions with people with disabilities on what the barriers are and how to remove barriers. Many reports have been made by these groups. This consultation builds on that work. Consultations are being organized by the provincial Disability Policy Office.



“People with disabilities are the experts and [know] how things need to change.”

1. What are these consultations?

Consultations are asking people how we can work together to make things better. These consultations are done by public meetings, telephone, TTY, interviews, focus groups and online questions.

2. Who are these consultations for?

These consultations are for people with disabilities and their networks, their families, friends and advocates; groups that represent people with disabilities or provide services; employers; trade unions; researchers; professionals; businesses; community-based groups (ex. youth, recreation, theatre and church groups); and anyone with an interest in making our province more inclusive.

3. Why is the Provincial Government doing consultations?

People with disabilities are the experts and have important information on how things need to change. The Provincial Government is working with people with disabilities to develop solutions to remove barriers and promote inclusion in the province.

4. What is the vision for the Province?

The vision (what the Provincial Government would like to see happen) is an inclusive province where people with disabilities have the same opportunities and respect that all individuals in the province have; and where barriers have been removed and prevented.



5. How are these consultations being done

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to the following principles when working with the community to remove barriers and improve inclusion:

- **Involve the community** – The experiences, ideas and information the community has are very important to making good action plans and strategies. Making sure the community is involved from the start is the best way.
- **Build from community-based research that has already been done** – Individuals with disabilities and community groups have already told government about barriers they face and about how to remove them.
- **Be clear and tell the community what is going on** – Regular reporting to the community builds trusting partnerships.
- **Have a cross disability process** – This means that people with any type of disability can participate in consultations.
- **Consider rural/urban** – Unique situations and issues of people who live in rural (outport) communities are part of the process.
- **Consider Aboriginal people and people from different cultures** – This means that Aboriginal peoples and people from different (diverse) cultures are actively included.
- **Consider gender** – Any action plan to remove barriers needs to look at the particular barriers that women face.

- **Make sure all government departments and agencies work together** – Policies are rules about how the government works. When government departments work together, they can make sure the same policies about inclusion are in place and more positive changes can happen.
- **Produce practical outcomes** – To make a real difference in people's lives.
- **Keep privacy and confidentiality** – It is important that when people want to give private and confidential information, confidentiality will be respected.

6. **What is the Provincial Government working toward?**

Having a disability should not mean a person is left out of what happens in his/her communities. The goal is that people with disabilities have the same opportunities on an equal basis with others.

“The goal is [to ensure] that people with disabilities have the same opportunities on an equal basis with others.”

7. What are the core values of the consultations?

- Equal access – When everyone has a chance to participate in or get help with education, health care, and other services and benefits that are available for people in Newfoundland and Labrador
- Respect – Accepting that everyone is different and being understanding when working with others
- Equity – Justice and fairness
- Choice – Freedom and the right to choose
- Self-determination – Right of people with or without disabilities to take full control of their own lives
- Autonomy – Right of all people to make their own choices, and do things on their own without someone else telling them what to do
- Privacy – Respect for the confidentiality of important and sensitive personal information

“Having a disability should not mean a person is left out of what happens in their communities.”

Provincial Commitments and Initiatives

What is the Provincial Government doing to help include people with disabilities?

The Provincial Government knows there are many barriers and that these barriers can get in the way of people with disabilities. Government is already working to remove some of these barriers. Here are some examples:

- **Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI):** Government announced the renewal and expansion of the VPI with the release of an action plan entitled “Taking Action Against Violence 2006-2012” in April of 2005. The VPI is a multi-departmental, government - community partnership to find long-term solutions to violence against people at risk in our society including persons with disabilities. Approximately \$12 million has been allocated.
- **Poverty Reduction Strategy:** Budget 2010 included an investment of approximately \$134 million to support over 80 ongoing poverty reduction initiative by many Provincial Government departments and agencies. Some examples of initiatives by the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment that would be of specific interest to persons with disabilities include:
 - Wage Subsidy for Persons with Disabilities
 - Supports to Employment for Persons with Disabilities
 - School to work transition supports for People with Developmental Disabilities

75,000 people in Newfoundland and Labrador have at least one disability.

- Community Partnerships
 - Investment incentives and promotional funding to encourage participation in the Federal Registered Disability Savings Plan; and
 - The increase to earning exemptions for persons with disabilities who receive Income Support.
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- **The Provincial Policy Framework for Mental Health and Addictions:** Working Together for Mental Health: This Framework was released in October 2005 and has guided policy for mental health and addictions in Newfoundland and Labrador. Since 2004-2005, \$19.6 million has been invested to improve access to mental health addiction services.
 - **Long-Term Care and Community Support Services Strategy:** The Department of Health and Community Services is developing a strategy to strengthen the long-term care and community supports services system. The DPO consultations, with respect to support services for persons with disabilities, will inform the development of this strategy.
 - **Social Housing Plan:** This plan supports independent living and the opportunity to participate in community life. It emphasizes coordination among government departments and with community partners in developing supportive living options and increasing the supply of accessible housing. In Budget 2010, the Provincial Government invested \$28.2 million to improve housing.

- **Office of Employment Equity for Persons with Disabilities, Public Service Secretariat:**

The mandate of the Office of Employment Equity for Persons with Disabilities is to increase the number of persons with disabilities employed in the Public Service. To achieve this, the Office has a number of programs and services designed to help persons with disabilities obtain employment in Provincial Government departments. Between April 2009 and March 2010, more than 100 persons with disabilities were hired through the Office's employment programs in permanent, temporary, contractual, and summer employment positions.



“[there are] a number of programs and services designed to help persons with disabilities obtain employment...”

Barriers to Inclusion

A barrier is anything that gets in the way of people with disabilities participating in day-to-day activities, or taking part in opportunities that are available to the public. There are many kinds of barriers:

1. Physical barriers found in buildings and spaces that stop people from using a service or going to an event.
For example:
 - a. Stairs, rough pavement or narrow pathways
 - b. Poor lighting
2. Information and Communication barriers stop people from getting information. For example:
 - a. Small print
 - b. Complicated websites
3. Attitudinal barriers are when people think and make decisions about disability based on incorrect information.
For example:
 - a. Thinking that people with disabilities can't work
 - b. Thinking that it is too expensive to make places accessible
4. Systemic barriers are policies, practices, or procedures that discriminate against people with disabilities. For example:
 - a. A hiring process that does not provide accommodations for people with disabilities

“...[many people] have done important research on barriers that people with disabilities face in this province.”

Only one-third of people with disabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador who are old enough to work have a job.

People with disabilities, community groups and agencies have done important research on barriers that people with disabilities face in this province.

Research and reports by community groups as well as government found barriers in the areas of education, transportation, health care, housing and home support. The following section tells you how community groups have described some of these barriers.

Education

Sometimes, teachers need more information and resources in order to provide opportunities for students with disabilities to learn as much as students without disabilities. Often, students with disabilities face barriers going to college or university (ex. getting around buildings, finding places to live that are accessible).

Employment

Sometimes, adults with disabilities who want to work feel discouraged from looking for paid work because they may lose support services. Removing barriers to employment can help people with disabilities have the same opportunities as others.

The average income for people with disabilities is less in Newfoundland and Labrador than other provinces.

People with disabilities make less money than people without disabilities. In 2006, more than half of people with disabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador made less than \$15,000 a year.

Public Transportation

Not having wheelchair lifts available in all transportation systems within Newfoundland and Labrador is a big problem. When policy decisions are made about public transportation and costs, people with disabilities must be included in conversations about what their transportation needs are.

Health Care

Having a medical doctor to talk to about health concerns is very important. It is also good to have someone else who helps people understand their medical information. This person is described as a “patient advocate.” It is important for people with disabilities to have a say in the type of health care they receive.

Housing

People need to be able to choose where they live and who they live with. When places to live are being built, universal design needs to be thought about. Universal design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, as much as possible, without the need for adaptation or special design. Also, there needs to be a system that helps government agencies work together so that issues about housing are dealt with quickly and efficiently.

Home Support

Home support and personal care services can help people with disabilities live where they want to live. In rural areas, home support helps people get the support they need without having to move to cities or larger towns. It is important that people who receive home support have control over how it is delivered and who comes into their homes.

Information

Information has to be given to people in government and in the public to stop the attitudes that cause barriers for people with disabilities. Professionals and people who provide services have said they want to learn more about disability, how it affects people and what they can do to make things better. Not having the right information can lead to harmful labels and attitudes towards people with disabilities. Not having the right information can also stop people with disabilities from knowing about programs and services that help remove the barriers.

Gender Lens


Women are alike in many ways but also have important differences which must be thought about when public policies are being made. Women with disabilities have some different life experiences than women who do not have disabilities. Women with disabilities can face more barriers than women without disabilities or than men who have disabilities. Women with disabilities are more at risk of violence and abuse than women without disabilities. Aboriginal women with disabilities face even greater risks. Developing inclusive policies for people means there needs to be a good understanding of what women experience.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, older women (over 75 years) have higher rates of disability.

Discussion Questions

These questions will help guide discussion about how to remove barriers and make sure that people with disabilities are included in communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. These questions are just examples to help you think about what you might want to say. This page can be pulled out and mailed using the enclosed envelope.

- 1. What good experiences have you had with accessing an opportunity in your community (ex. working, volunteering, attending a public or social/event, voting)?

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2. If you or someone you know faced a barrier, what could have removed that barrier (ex. accessing a service, community event or work opportunity)?

3. What needs to be done to make sure people with disabilities have the same opportunities as people without disabilities?

How to Contact Us

Inclusion involves everyone. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador invites individuals and groups to share ideas about how to achieve inclusion for people with disabilities.

There are public consultations taking place across the province about how to remove barriers that people with disabilities face. There are different types of consultations, including town hall meetings, meetings over the phone and small focus groups. Everyone is welcome to get involved.

Contact the Disability Policy Office:

Telephone: (709) 729-6275
Toll-free: (888) 729-6279
TTY: (888) 729-5440
Fax: (709) 729-5560
Email: disability.policy.office@gov.nl.ca

Mail: Disability Policy Office
Department of Human Resources,
Labour and Employment
3rd Floor, West Block
Confederation Building
St. John's, NL A1B 4J6

If you need this information in another format, or you want to go to one of the public sessions and have certain needs to be able to join, please contact the Disability Policy Office as soon as possible. You can also visit www.gov.nl.ca/DisabilityPolicy to access this paper online, get more information or find out where and when public sessions are being held.

Comments

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