

# PRIORITY ISSUE

## Dignified Income



Many Manitobans with severe, profound or permanent disabilities are unable to work to enjoy economic independence. The barriers they face in the labour market require reliance on Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) to meet their basic needs.

EIA was designed as a last resort to provide short-term assistance during transitional periods of employment. It was not created to provide a dignified income for people with disabilities.

- Basic need benefits are intentionally kept below both current wage levels and generally accepted measures of poverty to encourage transition to employment and reliance on EIA carries with it a considerable social stigma.
- EIA reporting requirements are deliberately onerous to discourage dependency and to protect public funds. As a result, many people with severe and prolonged disabilities are condemned to living below the poverty line, some for their entire adult lives, until they are eligible for Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement.

Alternative income programs in Saskatchewan and Alberta 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 everyone should have access to a dignified income.



### Questions for the Parties

- What level of income do you see as dignified for adult Manitobans with severe and prolonged disabilities?
- Will you commit to providing a dignified income within current programs. How will you do so?