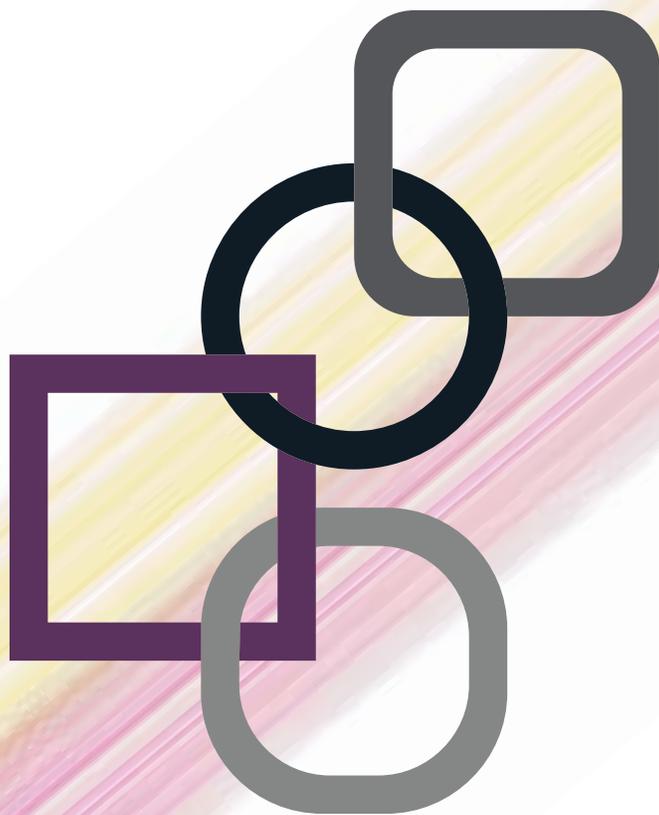




Election Toolkit

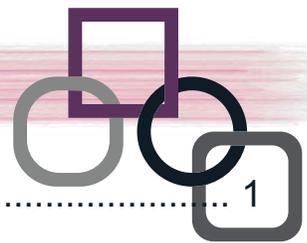




Big thanks to **Inclusion BC** for sharing their election resource materials with us. Much of this booklet is based on tools prepared for the 2013 BC provincial election and are used with permission.



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On Election Day, eligible voters exercise their right to vote for one of the candidates in their constituency to represent them in the provincial legislature.

This guide provides tips on how to help you and members of your community to get involved in the election, raise issues of concern regarding people with disabilities and make an informed voting decision.

Some candidates may never have met a person who has a disability and some will not be familiar with our issues. They may also be unfamiliar with the abilities of people with disabilities and the many contributions that they make to their communities.

One of the most powerful ways to educate future Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA's) is for them to meet with advocates and self-advocates and their families who can raise questions and issues important to the lives of people with disabilities.

Disability Matters: Vote 2016 (DMV2016)

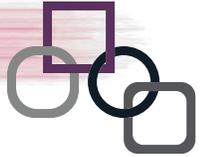
The next general Manitoba provincial election will take place on Tuesday, April 19, 2016. The voting choices made by the estimated 168,000 Manitoban adults with disabilities (and the hundreds of thousands of their families and friends) will make a **huge difference** – between real progress on disability issues through to 2020 and beyond on the one hand, or more years of inadequate resources and attention on the other.

DMV2016 is a non-partisan cross-disability public awareness campaign. This campaign is a joint initiative of Abilities Manitoba and Barrier-Free Manitoba that aims to engage people who have a disability, their family, friends and support networks.

DMV2016 has three key goals:

1. To ensure that all Manitobans with disabilities can participate fully in election activities and that those who are eligible to vote are able to do so.
2. To promote attention of five priority disability issues in the election.
3. To support Manitobans with disabilities in making informed voting decisions.

What DMV2016 is doing:



Disability Matters core team of volunteers is:

- Organizing a Great Debate on March 31 at the Norwood Hotel. We encourage everyone to attend. The more people who show up the more the political parties will see how large and strong our community is and the impact we can have on the election outcome. Please check our website for the latest update.
- Sharing information on the Right to Vote and accessible voting.
- Organizing volunteer constituency teams to work in 16 key swing ridings. Volunteers will work to educate candidates on disability issues, share information with people who live in the community and gather support by calling, door knocking and distributing signs.
- Organizing communication to the political parties about the key issues and asking for response and commitment to meet the needs identified in the five key priorities.
- Organizing information sharing on the Disability Matters campaign through e-newsletter, social media, volunteers and community to rally support and gain interest in the campaign.

What you can do:

Individuals, community groups and organizations play a crucial role in putting disability issues on the election agenda. During election time, we strongly encourage you to:

- Share DMV2016's toolkit and materials.
- Make contact with local candidates and seek support for our five priority issues.
- Assist others with disabilities to learn about the election process and exercise their right to vote.
- Involve families, self-advocates, supporters and networks in the election process.



- Provide feedback to DMV2016 on meetings with candidates and any local coverage about people with disabilities.
- Build working relationships with other community organizations through information exchange and joint activities.
- Promote Disability Matters on your Social Media Account - See Section 1

The media momentum that builds during an election period offers an excellent opportunity to bring our issues forward and to seek both public and political party support. The following activities provide some ideas about how to bring our issues forward and ensure that the broader community becomes more aware of people with developmental disabilities and their families.

1. Use social media

- There are many things you can do at your computer, while you're using online social media tools like Facebook, or reading and writing on blogs. Party leaders and most candidates have Facebook pages or Twitter accounts where you can send messages publicly or privately and most online newspapers have blogs where you can voice your opinions and concerns about an election story in the news.
- Sample social media posts:
 - I have a disability and I matter. #mbpoli #mb16 #DisabilityMatters
 - Vote #DisabilityMatters for #manitoba! #mbpoli #mb16
 - Please support #DisabilityMatters this election. #mbpoli #mb16
 - Most people experience some kind of disability in their life. #DisabilityMatters #mbpoli #mb16
 - You can also take a photo holding a [#DisabilityMatters sign](#) and share. Or take a short video and tell everyone why Disability Matters to you and share it on your social media! Photos and videos get shared the most.



- Or you can ask one of the Party Leaders a question directly on social media using the handles below.

Twitter: @DMV2016MB

Facebook: DisabilityMattersMB

Use the hashtag (#): #mbpoli #mb16 #DisabilityMatters

Liberal: @MBLiberalParty

Liberal Leader Rana Bokhari: @Rana4manitoba

PC: @PC_Manitoba

PC Leader Brian Pallister: @Brian_Pallister

NDP: @ndpcaucus

NDP Leader Greg Selinger: @GregSelinger

Green Party: @Green_Party_MB

Green Party Leader James Beddome: @JamesBeddome

2. Volunteer

- You can support the DMV2016 campaign by volunteering in your constituency to make phone calls, knock on doors, deliver signs and share information with others. To volunteer visit www.disabilitymatters2016.ca

3. Involve your friends, networks, members or supporters

- Send this election package and any other material to your friends, the families of people you support, self-advocates and volunteers in your community or in your organization. If you work for an organization, please link to this information from your website and/or social media and share it in newsletters or where you can.
- Get together with others in the community and host a meeting to prepare people to speak to their candidates on their door-steps, in individual meetings, and at all-candidates meetings. The Priority Issue pages in this package provide a description of the key issues and questions to ask candidates.



4. Support people who may need assistance

- Some individuals will need assistance in getting registered to vote as well as getting to the polls. Help make sure everyone who wants to vote is supported to do so.
- If you are part of an organization that provides support to people with developmental disabilities, ensure self-advocates supported by your organization are given assistance to increase their knowledge of the democratic process and to vote on Election day.

5. Contact local media

- Contact your local radio and/or television stations to find out how they will be covering the election and whether there will be opportunities for public involvement.
- Monitor the media and use letters to the editor, feedback phone lines, etc. to raise and respond to issues important to you.
- Make yourself available to the local media and assist spokespersons to raise key issues.

6. Meet with individual candidates

- Meeting with individual candidates is an opportunity to let the candidates know who you are and how they can best support people with disabilities if elected.
- Call the candidate's campaign office.
- Introduce yourself, your group or organization and ask for a brief meeting to outline your issues and hear their positions.
- Have a pre-meeting with your team to decide the issues you want to bring forward, what questions to ask, etc. Include self-advocates and family members and assist their participation.



- Offer background information on yourself, the work of your group or organization and the other community resources needed to support people with disabilities and their families.
- Keep notes, leave information and be non-partisan in your approach.
- Try not to leave without some form of commitment to our issues. As we prepare to work with a new government and new MLAs, it will be very helpful to have some foundation of support upon which to build a post- election strategy.
- Send a brief thank you letter to the candidate with your appreciation for any agreements reached during the meeting. Please send DMV2016 a copy of this letter.

7. Attend all-candidates meetings

- Attending all-candidates meetings in your community is a powerful way to promote the citizenship of people with disabilities. Asking questions in this public forum increases the visibility of people with disabilities and families, and invites the community to understand and support our issues. Tweet and post on social media from all-candidate meetings.
- All-candidate forums may also be held on-air by local television and radio stations. If they welcome callers, take the time to phone in with questions. If the forum will not have an open question period, contact the station ahead of time and request for the host to ask a question on an issue that's important to people with disabilities in your community. You can also tweet at them through Twitter or post on their Facebook page to ask a question during the debate.

Tips on preparing for all-candidates meetings:

- Organize a meeting of your group, network or organization to brief them and discuss questions that can be raised at all-candidates meetings (see Priority Issue pages). Secure volunteer commitments to attend all-candidates meetings and ask questions.



- As local media may attend all-candidates meetings, approach them and offer to provide introductory information, comments on your issues, etc.
- Be prepared to talk to local media about issues raised during the meeting or issues you believe should have been raised.

8. Organize an all-candidates meeting

- If you wish to hold an all-candidates meeting it's a good idea to work with other disability and/or organizations in your community. All-candidates meetings are a lot of work, and candidates will be more attracted to forums that guarantee a large audience.
- If you commit to organizing an event please ensure that the event is physically accessible and offers communication accommodations. Publicity of the event should offer that arranging accommodation (ASL or note-taking) is available on request. If you need information or assistance to make an event accessible, please contact vote@disabilitymatters2016.ca.
- Given the election period, secure a time and place as early as possible.
- Contact the candidates' campaign offices and secure a commitment.
- Strike a small organizing committee to deal with site preparation, publicity, meeting format, securing a moderator for the event, etc.
- Establish a candidate liaison person to assist candidates' arrival and departure and ensure each candidate receives information from your organization.
- After the meeting, send a brief thank you letter to each candidate and any additional information you wish to provide.
- Ensure all candidates running in the constituency are invited to participate.



PRIORITY ISSUE

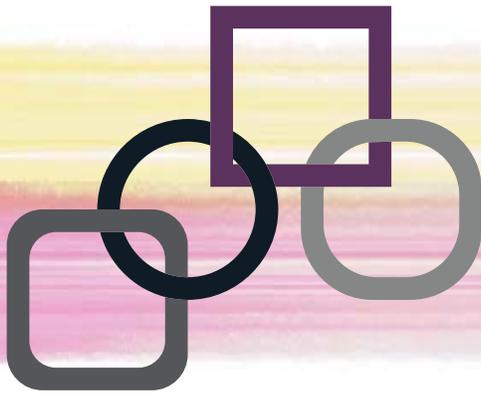
A Fully Accessible Manitoba

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.

Questions for the Parties:

- 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

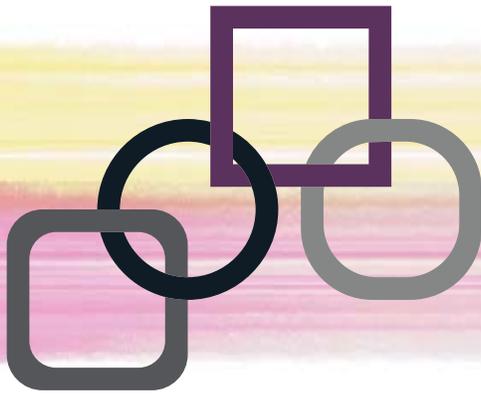
Fair Wages

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.

Questions for the Parties:

- 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.

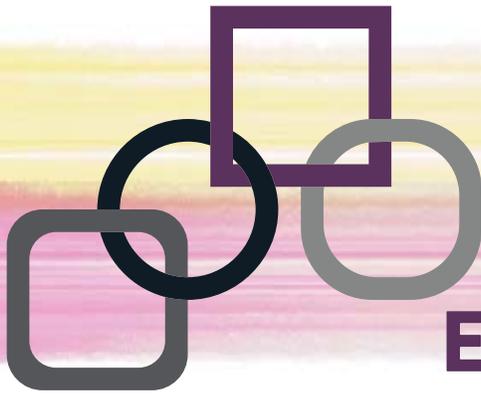
- Wait lists for services for children with autism now exceed two years, so many never receive necessary support because they are no longer eligible once the services become available
- It can take up to two years for people with serious mental health issues to access a psychologist in the public health 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).

Questions for the Parties:

- 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.

Questions for the Parties

- 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.

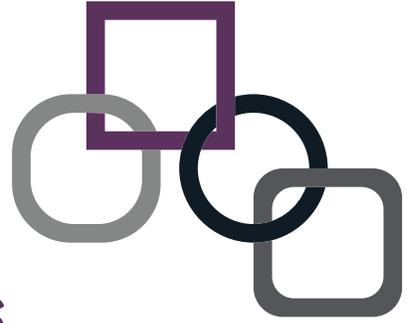
The EIA program does not fit with the reality and needs of Manitobans with severe and prolonged disabilities. The EIA program was designed as a “last resort” program to provide short-term assistance during transitional periods of unemployment. Basic needs benefits are intentionally kept below both current 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.

Questions for the Parties:

- 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?

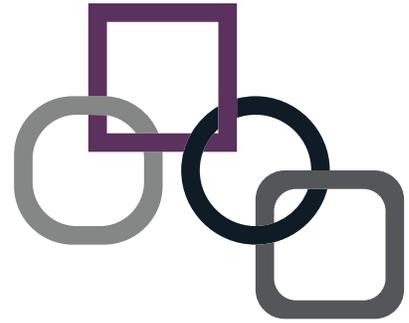


Questions for Candidates

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,



DISABILITY
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