



Communication Disabilities Access Canada

July 17, 2015

Mr. Daryl Stubel
Executive Director
Office for Disability Issues
1920 Broad St.,
Regina
SK S4P 3V6

Dear Daryl,

We commend you on the launch of The Saskatchewan Disability Strategy: People Before Systems. The document is well-organized, easy to read, and provides a person-centered pathway to improving community inclusion for people with disabilities.

While we applaud these efforts, we would like to draw your attention to the omission of a significant population group in the document. There is extensive references and stories about people who have mobility, intellectual, mental health and sensory disabilities, yet there is little mention of people who have speech and language disabilities, not caused by hearing loss. On page 28, there is a story about Bill who has a communication disability, however his communication needs are not addressed in the section on future directions. A better future for Bill might include communication services and access to augmentative communication methods, as well as training for potential employers on ways to accommodate Bill's communication needs within a work environment.

Approximately 14,482 people in Saskatchewan have speech and language disabilities that significantly impact on their ability to live in their community and to meaningfully access goods, services and opportunities. There is ample research that attests to the communication barriers experienced by this population when accessing services. Many of these barriers can be addressed through stronger, more inclusive legislation, clearer guidelines and educational resources that support businesses and organizations to communicate effectively with people who have speech and language disabilities.

We would like to suggest the following ways that The Saskatchewan Disability Strategy could include the needs of this population either in its implementation or future planning:

1. Include a story of a person who has a significant speech and language disability to illustrate the need for communication services, technology and communication accessibility education for businesses and community services.
2. Ensure you have representation for this population on your citizen consultation team or working groups.
3. When listing types of disabilities, include communication or speech and language disabilities.
4. Clarify that while universal design may eliminate some physical barriers, there will always be the need for individual accommodations for people who have speech and language disabilities, not caused by hearing loss. Most of these accommodations are simple and do not cost anything.
5. In situations where communication is critical (e.g. healthcare, police, legal and justice services), people with speech and language disabilities may require communication

- intermediaries to assist with communication in the same way as people who are Deaf may need sign language interpreting services. There is a Saskatchewan roster on our website.
6. In your definitions of disability, you could include a definition of speech and language disabilities and communication access as these are not well known and often misinterpreted.
 7. In the section on creating accessible communities, we suggest including all businesses and organizations in the community and especially key services such as healthcare, education, emergency services, government, police, legal and justice services.
 8. Most of the communication barriers occur within customer service because people don't know how to interact with individuals who have speech and language disabilities. It would be good to illustrate a few examples.
 9. If you include a reference list for resources, you could link to our website.

We can provide input on all of these suggestions in terms of connecting with people and resources. As discussed at our last meeting, our federal projects end in 2015. After that, we will not have funding to provide input. Therefore, please let us know if we can assist you with any of these recommendations by Oct. 2015.

Meanwhile, we hope you will connect with Randa Tomczak, our regional coordinator at 4randa.tomczak@gmail.com to arrange an information session on communication access that we can provide in the fall.

Yours sincerely,

Barbara Collier, Reg. CASLPO F. ISAAC
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cc. Mr. Bob Whilidal, Assistant Deputy Minister Disability Programs ,1920 Broad St., Regina, SK. S4P 3V6

Ms Amy Alsop, Citizen Co-chair, Citizen Consultation Team at amy.alsop@sasktel.com

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