



FASTFACTS



Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Mb • 309-323 Portage Ave. • Winnipeg, MB • Canada R3B 2C1
 ph: (204) 927-3200 • fax: (204) 927-3201 • ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca • www.policyalternatives.ca/mb

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Full Citizenship?

In 2001 the government of Manitoba produced a policy paper entitled, *Full Citizenship-A Manitoba Strategy on Disability*. The letter from the Minister that accompanied the document stated:

“...this White Paper proposes a strong disability strategy based upon a philosophy and a vision that includes persons with disabilities as citizens...governments are responsible to citizens. When some citizens are not able to claim and exercise the full rights and responsibilities of citizenship, that government has in some measure failed. Government must also show leadership in questions of social justice...this White Paper will serve as a map to guide and cheer us”.

The *Full Citizenship* policy paper claims to be shaped by other public policy initiatives like: The 1981 *Obstacles Report* to the Canadian Government, *The United Nations World Program of Action (1982)*, the *Mainstream 92 Report*, *In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disabilities Vision Paper*, and *A National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities* produced by a national disability coalition. The Full Citizenship paper proposes 16 principles to guide policy and program decisions relating to person's with a disability. The report states:

“All-in-all, these principles will be very helpful in evaluating current policies and programs,

as well as new policy and program proposals. As such, they will play an important role in developing the Disability Lens”.

Where is the Disability Lens?

On December 10, 2004 the Minister of Family Services and Housing announced that the government of Manitoba had allocated 40 million dollars for the “redevelopment” of the institution (Manitoba Developmental Centre) at Portage la Prairie. This was a decision that did not subject itself to the so-called “disability lens”. This was a decision that did not subject itself to be “evaluated” against the principles stated in the *Full Citizenship* paper. This was a decision to support segregation over integration, exclusion over inclusion and the status of “clienthood” over the status of citizen. In short, it was a decision that contradicted the spirit and letter of the *Full Citizenship* policy paper.

As early as 1978 the Centre on Human Policy at Syracuse University developed a statement on institutionalization titled *The Community Imperative*. It states:

In the domain of Human Rights:

1. All people have fundamental human rights.
2. These rights must not be abrogated merely because a person has a mental disability.
3. Among these rights is the right to community living.



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In the domain of human services:

1. All people, as human beings, are inherently valuable.
2. All people can grow and develop.
3. All people are entitled to conditions that foster their development.
4. Such conditions are optimally provided in the community.

Therefore:

In fulfillment of fundamental human rights and securing optimum developmental opportunities, all people, regardless of the severity of their disabilities, are entitled to community living.

The position of the Minister is that some people "need" an institutional setting. This is not a valid position. The last 20 years of delivering community-based services have proven that what people need is "supports" and that the place to deliver these supports is the community; close to family, friends, and other citizens.

Why Not Institutionalize?

Institutionalizing people in large congregate and segregated settings is a thing of the past. The service model of the institution was born in a spirit of misguided charity and nurtured by the prejudice of the eugenics movement. It was and remains a place to put people "away". It is inconsistent with gains in the arena of human rights and appropriate models of service design and delivery. Experience has taught us painful lessons about the futility of "total institutions". There is no longer support for ideas like the "redevelopment" of residential schools for First Nations Peoples or orphanages for children.

This practice of removing people from their home community, congregating people by so-called "type", segregating people in large facilities, is part of a dark chapter in Canadian history. This is not a history to restore or redevelop. This is a history best resigned to the past. It is a practice that became part of the human service landscape prior to the time when all citizens had human rights regardless of disability or degree of disability.

It is time for Manitoba to take its place with other jurisdictions in Canada, the United States, and Europe that are committed to closing institutions and supporting people to live as citizens in the community. The Minister of Family Services and Housing must:

1. Announce a moratorium on the spending of any tax dollars on redevelopment of the institution at Portage la Prairie.
2. Begin a process that produces a clear policy and time-line to close the institution at Portage, and directs the 40 million dollars into community services.

Since the Minister's announcement an alternative plan based on the principles of *Full Citizenship* has been developed. Community agencies have confirmed that they are willing and able to support individuals with an intellectual disability in the community. The 40 million dollars can be spent in a manner consistent with the principles of the *Full Citizenship* paper.

Bob Jones is an Instructor in the Disability and Community Support Program at Red River College in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

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