

Poverty Issues and Persons with Disabilities in New Brunswick

- The latest data from Statistics Canada¹ indicate the rate of disability in Canada has increased from 12.4% in 2001 to 14.3% in 2006. New Brunswick has the second highest self-reported disability rate at 17.2%. These numbers do not count persons with disabilities living on reserves or in different types of residential facilities in the community such as hospitals, nursing homes, special care homes, community residences etc.
- Many citizens with moderate or more severe levels of disabilities often rely on income supports from provincial social assistance programs; long term disability insurance benefits; Canada Pension Plan Disability Benefits; and workers' compensation benefits, etc. for survival. These monthly income levels are very low in comparison to average incomes which result in the person living in poverty. For example, a single adult who qualifies as "Certified as Disabled" under the provincial social assistance program receives \$618.00 per month plus the annual Disability Supplement of \$1000.00.
- Many persons with disabilities have significant additional out-of-pocket expenses that are directly related to their disability. Many required items are not fully covered by either government or private plans because the item is either new to the marketplace or not on the approved list. For example, coverage of new types of prescription drugs or new rehabilitation technology; expenses such as hiring someone to shovel snow or rake leaves if unable to do so; costs for home care workers; buying replacement batteries for your hearing aids or electric wheelchair; home accessibility renovations; accessible transportation; special diets; alterations to clothing; and chemical /environmental sensitivities requiring special household cleaning and filtration systems all present extra costs. Necessary over the counter personal products are often not covered at all. Costs for rehabilitation equipment or prescription drugs often also require co-payments from the consumer even if they do have private health insurance.
- Those on a limited income with extra disability costs, still need to pay for the necessities of life such as: food; shelter (utilities/taxes); clothing; and recreation.
- Accessible housing can be more expensive to find if you are unable to get into subsidized housing.

¹ Statistics Canada- Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS)-2001 & 2006

- While the situation has improved in recent years, the rate of full and long term employment of persons with disabilities, still falls behind the rate of employment for other citizens. This is especially true for those with more serious levels of disabilities or with certain types of disabilities. Adequate income from regular employment is the great equalizer for persons with disabilities to allow them the economic means to control their quality of life.
- There is a direct link between poverty and progressively poor health. For persons with disabilities living in poverty, chronic physical conditions can decline more rapidly and additional medical care and community support services are required. Financial pressures affect mental health as well.

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