

Record

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Abstract

The author is the M.P. for Elk Island, Canada. This article, calling for the inclusion of people with disability, was published in a local paper. He identifies aspects of the life of the community in which integration is needed and notes steps which have already been put in motion to achieve these ends. **Keywords: Inclusion, Community Development**

IN THE NEWS

The following article appeared in the Sherwood Park News on November 17, 1991, by the M.P. for Elk Island, Brian O'Kurley. It is a pleasure to hear a politician making such a positive statement about integration in general. What are your local, provincial and federal politician's positions on this issue. If you don't know you should. We encourage you to find out. Be sure to let them know your ideas on this topic as well.

Include People with Disabilities

Canadians take pride in the fact that their country is a world leader in recognizing and addressing the needs people with disabilities. We know that people with disabilities have individual needs, abilities and aspirations, and that they make valuable contributions to our society.

Unfortunately, this group is not always given an equal opportunity to contribute. Statistics show that people with disabilities are among the poorest in the nation. Only 40 per cent of disabled people work, compared with 70 per cent of the whole population. Fifty-six per cent of disabled Canadians have eight or more years of schooling, compared to 83 per cent of the general population.

Constituents and a number of associations in Elk Island have told me, as your M.P., that the Canadian Government must do more to integrate this important section of the population into society. You have informed me that we must take real action, and I am pleased to inform you that your federal government has responded.

We are directing \$158 million over five years to the goals of equal access, economic integration, and effective participation by Canadians with disabilities.

* Equal access? This means encouraging the transportation industry to improve access;

* Economic integration? This means more jobs and training for disabled Canadians. It also means management and labour promoting participation in the workforce, and equal job opportunities in the federal public service;

* Effective participation? This means supporting projects that will help disabled persons become more a part of their communities.

Specific steps include: a review of services that affect Canadians with disabilities; a pilot project to help people receiving disability pensions re-enter the workforce; the development of models which will foster the integration of children, youths, and adults into all aspects of daily living; and the development of more comprehensive home care programs for aboriginal people with disabilities.

Yes, Canadians and Elk Island constituents do care about the integration of disabled persons, and your MP and federal government have listened. Our nation must allow people with disabilities every opportunity to contribute to society, and lead fulfilling lives without artificial barriers to achievement.