

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

Executive Summary

Poverty negatively impacts the lives of many of 22,000 Islanders living with disabilities. This number is projected to reach 38,000 by 2024. Statistics Canada has been providing reliable data on the number, severity and needs of persons living with disabilities for twenty years.

Children represent 1,000 of those with disabilities, working age adults 12,000 and seniors 9,000 with seniors growing at the fastest rate. Disability is primarily a function of the aging process.

Statscan classifies disabilities as mild, moderate, severe and very severe. On PEI, 8,000 people have severe to very severe disabilities requiring assistive devices like a wheelchair or are bed-ridden. Seniors are more likely to have very severe disabilities.

Recommendations on Employment and Income

60% of Islanders with disabilities are not working due to social factors and their disability. Unless they have large savings to rely on they become poor within a few years of disability. Low income Islanders with disabilities relying on CP Disability Pension or social assistance are living at 60% of the poverty line or low income cut off (LICO).

Employment Equity programs have been used in other jurisdictions to assist more of them to re-enter the work force at their skill level. For those who remain unemployed, the Guaranteed Annual Income model is recommended.

We recommend the Province or Prince Edward Island remove discriminatory barriers to employment for persons with disabilities with new Employment Equity legislation; implement an affirmative action program for the employment of persons with disabilities to be phased in over five years; begin a process of education of the private sector on the benefit of hiring workers with disabilities and use its persuasive power with those private sector employers who deal with the Province; remove the restriction to provincially assisted drug plans

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

for persons on CP Disability pension; and implement Guaranteed Annual Income that would see supports for persons of low income up to the statistical poverty line.

Recommendations on Housing

Housing is the foundation of our living, the safe hearth from which we dispel our dangers. For those with a disability affordable barrier free housing is a necessity but one that is not readily available. A recent study showed the demand for barrier free rental accommodations in Queens County was two and one half times greater than the supply. Those units available cost 60% or more of a disability pension or support.

For homeowners with a disability on PEI, the cost of home adaptations can be as great as \$90,000 but even modest assistance is only available one third of the time.

We recommend the Province provide a housing income supplement to maintain housing costs below 35% of income for persons with disabilities; adopt barrier free building codes to increase the supply of barrier free accommodations; adopt programs that encourage home sharing among for persons with disabilities and seniors living alone; negotiate with the Federal Government for program increases in CMHC RRAP Disability; and encourage alternative community based models or home ownership.

Recommendations on Disability Supports

Islanders with disabilities need a variety of supports to maintain inclusion with society and function on a day-to-day basis, namely technical or assistive devices, daily activity supports, academic and work supports.

The PEI Disability Support Program while providing these types of supports is inadequate to the task. It is materially under funded by government and excludes 9,000 Islanders with disabilities simply because they are seniors. It also excludes those with a mental and learning disability. The unmet needs of

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

Islanders with disabilities have been determined by studies that the Province has agreed with. The program has several policies that are not appropriate in dealing with persons with disabilities and has consistently lost Human Rights and Privacy Commissioner complaints.

The Province should return the \$1 million dollars taken from the Disability Support Program budget in April 2006 (a pre-election promise); remove the age restriction and provide assistance for our seniors with disabilities (a pre-election promises); provide support for those with learning and mental disabilities; align its support programs to meet the needs identified in legitimate government studies; fund the DSP to a reasonable level required by Islanders with disabilities; design processes that look at the individual; provide an appeals process that is equitable and independent; perform a full and independent review of the department considering its past history of mismanagement.

Funding

Many of the recommendations are cost neutral or positive to the Province. Others such as seniors' coverage will require new budget allocation that can be met through internal government savings.

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

Who are the Islanders living with disabilities

We will present on three areas that negatively impact on Islanders living with disabilities: employment and income, housing, and disability supports. We will discuss the problems at a high level, along with some practical solutions.

Social policy is the role of government. In practical terms, we know the Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments share this role.

Social policy should not be confused with social assistance. Social policy is a comprehensive collection of government programs that seek to provide citizens with a social framework which complement economic policies.

Islanders living with disabilities fall under the social policy framework: they need health care, disability supports, housing, employment, home and personal care and other needs that are not accessible to them. In many cases their disability has left them at the bottom of the economic ladder with few resources to lift themselves up to the standard of living that is enjoyed by the majority of the population.

Statistical Foundation

We know the population of every city and town in PEI because Statistics Canada (Statscan) carries out a comprehensive national census every five years.

The Statscan census forms the basis for business and government planning including the transfer and other payments between the Federal Government and the Provinces / Territories. Statscan is the trusted source for statistical information on populations and socio economic data.

Since 1986, Statscan has conducted a post-census survey of Canadians living with disabilities. Canadians who indicate a disability on the census are part of the population that is re-surveyed to determine the nature and severity of the disability and if they have unmet needs. The survey is evaluated for scientific accuracy and adjustments in methodology made as required.

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

The most recent surveys are Participation and Activity Limitation Survey 2001 and 2006 (PALS 2001 and PALS 2006). Of this, Statscan says (PALS 2001),

“...PALS provide detailed information about the demographic and socio-economic situation of persons with disabilities as well as the type and severity of their disabilities.”

We bring up this point since we have been repeatedly told by officials of the Department of Social Services and Seniors that Statscan reports on disabilities are unreliable.

Considering that PEI is providing disability supports to only 1,100 of its 22,000 persons with disabilities, those comments can be seen as self-serving and disingenuous.

PEI, along with the other Provinces and Territories, excepting Quebec, signed agreements with the Federal Government that go back decades based on Statscan and PALS. Only Statscan has the legislated authority and resources to survey Islanders about their disability related issues. Their accuracy and reputation are secure. We trust Statscan.

PALS 2006

The PALS 2001 survey told us there were 18,970 Islanders with disabilities. More recently PALS 2006 has pegged the number at 21,750, an increase of 2,780 Islanders with disabilities. In 2004, the Canadian Council on Social Development Statscan predicted the number of persons with a disability would double by 2024. (Table attached PALS 2006 2.3-1).

By age group, they were:

Less than 15 years old	980
15 and over to age 64	11,790
65 years and older	8,980

Table 1 – Islanders with Disabilities by age PALS 2006

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

Disability can be a continuum from mild to very severe, as defined by Statscan:

“The level of severity depends on the frequency and intensity of the limitations associated with the disability. Thus, the severity of a disability can be driven by two factors, the cumulative effect of multiple disabilities or the overall effect of one significant disability. For example, a person who has no difficulty walking and climbing stairs but cannot stand in line for more than twenty minutes would have a mild mobility-related disability. A person who can only move around in a wheelchair would have their mobility more severely limited, and one who is bedridden for a long term period would have a very severe mobility-related disability.”

Using those categories, the following table classifies PEI’s disability population:

Table 2: Islanders with Disabilities By Severity

Age	Total	Mild to Moderate	Severe to Very Severe
15 and under	980	620	360
16 to 64	11,800	7,530	4,270
65 and older	8,970	5,730	3,240
	21,750	13,880	7,870

PALS 2006, Table 4.3-1

It is the 8,000 Severe to Very Severe Islanders with Disabilities who are more in need of disability supports whereas all Islanders with disabilities may need assistance with employment or housing needs.

Effect of Aging on Disability

The consensus is that disability is a factor of aging. For instance, 48% of Islanders 65 years of age and older have a one or more disabilities. This is the

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

fastest growing segment of the disability population with a 19% growth in numbers over the past 5 years.

By comparison, only 4% of children 15 years old and under have a disability of any level. For working age adults that number rises to 13%. Most of the increase is post age 40 from the effects of neuromuscular diseases or from strokes, heart disease and other age related factors.

Age	2001			2006			2001 2006 Increase	%
	# with Disability	Pop. by age group	% of Age Group	# with Disability	Pop. by age group	% of Age Group		
15 and under	940	26,560	4%	980	23,870	4%	40	4%
16 to 64	10,510	89,340	12%	11,790	91,050	13%	1,280	12%
65 and older	7,520	16,950	44%	8,980	18,830	48%	1,460	19%
	<u>18,970</u>	<u>132,850</u>		<u>21,750</u>	<u>133,750</u>		<u>2,780</u>	

Table 3. 2006 Disability population by age, with increase since 2001 (PALS 2006)

Seniors, age 65 and up, are the fastest growing segment of the disability population. This trend will accelerate as the 'baby boomer' demographic reaches their senior years. It is also the segment that gets the least attention from government at this point and time.

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

Employment and Income

The link between employment and income is simple to understand: people with jobs earn money or income. People without jobs rely on savings or social income supplements.

A single person earning \$17,000 per year on PEI is on the poverty line or LICO (Low Income Cut Off). An unemployed person with a disability has an income from social income supplements of less than \$10,000. This could be Provincial social assistance or the Federal CP Disability Pension¹. It's easy to see they are living unbearably below the poverty line. For many their housing costs can exceed 65% of their income, leaving very little for food, clothing or medical care.

In 2001, the labour force participation rate among Islanders with a disability was 40%, whereas the total workforce participation rate was 70%. On a national basis, both rates inched up 3% over the next five years.

Islanders with disabilities may want to work, may be trained to work but they remain out of the workforce. It is acknowledged that very severe disabilities preclude employment of the person. However, workforce adaptation and employer flexibility can make employability a reality for persons with even a severe disability that requires a wheelchair for instance.

Employment Initiatives

Federal Provincial and Territorial conferences and reports have suggested various means of re-introducing persons with disabilities back into the workforce. These meetings produced reports including: *In Unison: A Canadian Approach to*

¹ The struggle to survive is so desperate for an unemployed person with a disability that they will chose social assistance with its intrusive processes over CP Disability. Social assistance provides drugs which they would lose if they took the CPP. It would save the Province money if it provided drug coverage for CP Disability recipients otherwise qualified for social assistance.

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

Disability Issues, and the *Social Union Framework*. Provinces receive EAPD (Employment of Persons with Disabilities) grants annually to assist with the issue. However for the most part, the programs have created low-pay, sheltered workshop employment and not a variety of employment across the spectrum.

The reasons for remaining high unemployment rates are diverse and include cost to accommodate, lack of education on the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities, and regrettably workplace discrimination. Although society finds children with disabilities “cute” and give them prominence, once they grow we tend to give them a wide birth. They are not accepted in the workforce or other parts of society.

For a psycho social discussion of the phenomena see Park, Faulkner and Schaller (University of British Columbia 2003) which postulates that “... *links evolved mechanisms of disease-avoidance to contemporary prejudices against individuals with physical disabilities.*”²

The phenomena can be observed on PEI at counter-intuitive sites such as the PEI Council of the Disabled which, although charged with finding employment for persons with disabilities, has an entrenched discriminatory practice of not hiring Islanders with obvious physical disabilities.

Employment Story

I want to introduce Kevin Walsh who was for twenty five years a valued employee of the Department of Social Services and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital despite being vision impaired or blind. Mr. Walsh was an exemplary employee of the Province. His service to the Province resulted in a prominent newspaper story that is proudly displayed at the hospital.

Mr. Walsh can relate the story of another blind person, a young man who through hard work earned a bachelor degree and then a master’s degree in

² Evolved Disease-Avoidance Processes and Contemporary Anti-Social Behavior: Prejudicial Attitudes and Avoidance of People with Physical Disabilities, *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior* 27(2), Summer 2003, 2003 Human Sciences Press, Inc.

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

social work. When the young man returned to PEI, he was ineligible for employment with the Province on account of his disability.

Employment Equity

In contrast, the Federal government has legislation, guidelines and a program of affirmative action in the employment of persons with disabilities in the Federal Civil Service. Based on the Employment Equity Act, these policies and programs apply to all Canadians and positively counteract the effects of gender and other discrimination from the past.

According to the 2006 report³, the Federal Government currently employs 10,169 persons with disabilities or 5.8% of their workforce. On PEI they employ 150 persons with a disability or 8.5% of their workforce.

When employment equity was implemented, many said it would be the downfall of the country. Bell Enterprises fought all the way to the Supreme Court and lost their right to discriminate. Conservative think tanks called for the end of free enterprise as we know it. BCE is still in business, the country is enjoying record prosperity and budget surpluses. Employment Equity is not only right it's good for the economy.

The Province of PEI can meet or exceed the Federal goal. It only takes will, legislation and positive action. In 2006, 14,000 Islanders worked in the public sector.⁴ If 8.5% of those employees were persons with disabilities, it would mean 1,200 people lifted from the level of poverty existence. This would create additional tax base for the Province versus a negative social assistance cost.

It should be noted that employment numbers alone do not create employment equity. The employment has to be proportionately spread across all

³ Parliament of Canada, 2005-06 Annual Report on Employment Equity in the Public Service of Canada

⁴ PEI 33rd Annual Statistical Review, Table 19, Estimates of Employment by Industry

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

job categories and pay scales. Carl Raskin in “Employment Equity for the Disabled in Canada (1994) wrote,

“Less emphasis should be placed on numbers of disabled people employed and more on their equitable distribution within organizations. An affirmative action model categorizing jobs as non able-body dominated and able-body dominated would distinguish types of disability and reduce structural barriers to employment.”⁵

Employment Equity implies quotas and incentives to hiring. Although relatively new, quotas or goals are common place in medical schools, law schools, and other institutions to ensure for instance that women are allowed to achieve their potential in society. The principal of gender equality from the Charter of Rights and Freedoms applies equally to persons with disabilities under Section 15.

“15. (1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.”

Guaranteed Annual Income

There are some persons with disabilities who cannot work, for whom their severe to very severe disabled state precludes employment. The current social safety net for those people is inadequate.

The subject of how to fix this problem, which exists for other persons living below the poverty line, has been debated for decades. We simply want to echo the sentiments of Senator Hugh Segal, who said in a September 2006 article in the Toronto Star,

⁵ Raskin, Carl, Employment Equity for the Disabled in Canada, International Labour Review, v133 n1 p75-88 1994

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

“Canada’s on-again, off-again relationship with a guaranteed annual income (GAI) has made the rounds for many years. The most renowned recommendation for the GAI came out of the 1985 report of the Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada, chaired by Donald Macdonald, known as the Macdonald Commission. The report stated unequivocally that a universal income security program is “the essential building block” for social security programs in the 21st century.”

As reported by the Kingston Whig Standard, Segal filed a motion in the Senate “...asking the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology to study the feasibility of using the tax system to provide a guaranteed annual income for individuals living below the poverty line.”

Experts who have studied GAI predict the cost to the state for GAI is lower than the current patchwork quilt of social programs at the federal, provincial and municipal levels. Furthermore, they believe and we support them that GAI will allow Islanders with disabilities to live a reasonable life with dignity.

Recommendations on Employment and Income

- We recommend the Province or Prince Edward Island remove all discriminatory barriers to employment for persons with disabilities, and other minorities, through an awareness program of employee education.
- We recommend the Province of Prince Edward Island pass legislation similar to the federal Employment Equity Act and regulations.
- We recommend the Province of Prince Edward Island set up a task force to design and implement an affirmative action program that meets or exceeds the Federal program and that such program be phased in over five years with the goal that the Provincial employment of persons with disabilities meets or exceeds Federal accomplishments.
- We recommend that the Province begin a process of education of the private sector on the benefit of hiring workers with disabilities. We also

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

recommend that the Province institute affirmative action guidelines for private sector employers who do business with the Province or receive funding, loans or grants from the Province.

- We recommend the Province remove the restriction to provincially assisted drug plans for persons on CP Disability pension.
- We recommend the Province implement the Guaranteed Annual Income that would see supports for persons of low income up to the statistical poverty line.

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

Housing for Persons with Disabilities

Barrier Free Housing

Barrier free housing means housing that is fully accessible for persons with disabilities. Barrier free includes features that allow persons with disabilities to live safely and comfortably. This might include: entrance ramps or elevators, wide doors to allow wheelchair access, Braille lettering on switches and other devices, modified counter height, lowered light switches and raised receptacles. CMHC has published standards for barrier free accommodations.

Rental Accommodations

A 2007 housing survey conducted by Trisha Clarkin, a disability advocate, found that in Queens County there was a lack of barrier free housing. Of the 3,800 rental units in Queens County, 200 units are rated barrier free by their owners. The demand for barrier free accommodations in Queens County is in the range of 500 units making the current supply inadequate.

Single family owner occupied dwellings

PEI has the highest ratio of home ownership in the country. Many people who develop a disability during their working or retirement years are homeowners. Their options are home adaptation or moving to barrier free rental accommodations. As we have seen, the supply of barrier free rentals is inadequate to meet the demand.

Adapting an existing home for barrier free accessibility is expensive and can range from \$10,000 to \$90,000 depending on the severity of the disability and the amount of adaptation required.

CMHC has a program that provides up to \$32,000 of assistance for these projects. About 30 applications a year are processed on PEI while the demand is in excess of 100 homes.

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

The Province has a one time grant of \$2000 towards the home modification, which is inadequate for anything other than emergency construction. The one-time limitation restricts the person with a disability to never moving in their lifetime, hardly a reasonable restriction.

Affordable Housing

For the thousands of people living with disabilities inadequate housing is a constant and ongoing struggle. There is no proactive program that ensures public money goes towards the provision of barrier free social housing.

People living with disabilities face a crisis in finding adequate housing. This problem is further exacerbated by poverty. Clarkin's research found the cost per 2 bedroom barrier free unit ranged between \$650 - \$850 per month for a private sector rental. For people with disabilities relying on social assistance or CPP-Disability Pension this far exceeds the shelter component.

CMHC uses a scale for affordability where the cost of housing should not exceed 30% to 35 % of income. For people living below LICO with disabilities the cost of housing far exceeds this formula.

Social Inclusion of Islanders with Disabilities

For Islanders with disabilities to be included in society, they need to be able to meet their needs for affordable, barrier free housing. Public social policy calls for an agenda of full social inclusion. This requires change in a broad range of areas in order to promote the participation of all citizens in the social, cultural, economic realms.

An agenda of social inclusion fully recognizes the importance of access to basic needs like housing in order for the individual to be able to fully participate in society. But a social inclusion agenda goes beyond the provision of basic services. It calls for an examination of how housing programs are designed and administered. For example, the degree to which an individual can retain their autonomy and sense of self-worth by having some control over their housing

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

becomes more important (e.g. through shared ownership, mutual responsibility, participation in management).

Therefore it is necessary to review assumptions about program delivery within a social inclusion framework to ensure that the individual's rights are not diminished, but rather enhanced through program development and practices. Programs such as the Disability Support Program (DSP) which support adaptations to privately owned residences exclude social ownership such as cooperative housing. It fails to foster diversity and adaptation within the community.

Home ownership offers more personal control than rental. Community or resident-owned affordable housing can influence social inclusion by allowing resident involvement in decisions that affect their housing.

This would recognize and encourage non-profit and cooperative models as important in meeting the need for affordable barrier free housing for people living with disabilities.

Affordable, barrier free housing offers significant benefits that go beyond the provision of shelter. Housing policy should be conceived in a way that targets certain outcomes and seeks meaningful results. Housing outcomes go far beyond the mere provision of shelter and have a multitude of social and economic benefits.

Recommendations on Housing

- We recommend the Province provide a housing income supplement to ensure that housing costs for persons with disabilities do not exceed 35% of their income for housing.
- We recommend the Province encourage the building of barrier free accommodations by adopting barrier free building codes for PEI. All new government funded or controlled housing projects should meet the barrier free standard. Many jurisdictions across the US and Canada have already adopted accessible building codes. For example, the cities of

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

Peterborough, Windsor, Guelph and Winnipeg are working on or have implemented Barrier Free strategies. This is not a luxury: PEI's aging population is facing a crisis as the number of Islanders with disabilities doubles by 2024.

- Adopt programs from other jurisdictions that encourage home sharing among for persons with disabilities and seniors living alone. These programs provide the matching of people living in their homes with younger tenants who can provide rental revenue and or assistance with daily activities of living.
- We recommend the Province negotiate with the Federal Government for programs and strategies for increasing the affordability and availability of Barrier Free housing. For example, an increase in the CMHC funding of RRAP Disabled could alleviate the problem of homeowners faced with expensive adaptation they cannot afford.
- We recommend the Province modify its policies to encourage alternative community based models or home ownership including co-operatives and not-for-profit corporations.

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

Disability Supports

The Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) conducted a study based on PALS 2001 results.⁶ The needs of persons with disabilities were categorized by type of disability and age. Their conclusions relate to the gaps between needs met and unmet.

*“The report found that those most **likely to live with unmet needs** are: people with severe disabilities; those with low incomes; those of working age; those who require high cost items (e.g. electric wheelchairs, scooters and lifts.”*

In total, 33% of the disability population has some of their needs unmet for assistive devices. The greatest unmet is for mobility devices, wheelchairs, walkers, scooters which is not surprising since mobility is the most prevalent disability. The CCSD report contains tables that detail needs by specific device, See Table 1.3 attached.

By age group, 39% of working age adults have unmet needs compared with 26% of seniors. See table 1.14 attached. 50% of those with very severe disabilities have unmet needs, which would mean 1,110 Islanders with disabilities including 400 seniors.

The report covers other unmet needs including supports for education, work supports, daily activities, and housing. It also analyzes unmet needs in terms of poverty or the Low Income Cut Off – LICO. Table 1.24 details the obvious, those below LICO have the greatest unmet needs.

Disability Support Program

Islanders with disabilities frequently need assistive aids and other supports to give them access to the society. PEI has the Disability Support

⁶ Supports and Services for Adults and Children Aged 5-14 with Disabilities in Canada: An Analysis of Data on Needs and Gaps, Commissioned by Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Social Services.

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

Program (DSP) that serves 1,100 of the disability population of 22,000 persons with disabilities. No other social or health related service on PEI has a 5% participation rate.

Despite having a statistically accurate picture of the unmet needs, Islanders with disabilities continue to struggle without the necessary disability supports.

Baker Consulting in its 2003 report characterized this as the “corporate culture of cost containment and cost avoidance.”⁷

Islanders with Disabilities 65 years of age and older are excluded from the DSP despite having the greatest need for home care, personal care and assistive devices. According to the CCSD “...seniors with disabilities have a higher rate of requiring aids or devices than do non-seniors. 66% versus 53%.”⁸ Despite this the Province has used a variety of means to exclude seniors who are in need of assistance. There is no moral or ethical support for this position.

Also excluded from the program are a relatively small number of Islanders, those with mental or learning disabilities.

The DSP has come under repeated criticism by many organizations including this one. It appears to be poorly managed.

Government requirements for tendering were not implemented until we brought the matter up with the deputy minister last fall. The department engaged in a series of expensive and losing battles over Human Rights and Privacy issues that cost the previous administration in both dollars and political capital. The DSP has no equitable appeals process and has been known to use abusive practices with its clients, Islanders with disabilities. The program is severely under funded which is of course the responsibility of the government; however, mismanagement of its budget is the department’s responsibility.

⁷ FORMATIVE EVALUATION: PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM, Baker Consulting 2003

⁸ CCSD Ibid

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

Recommendations on Disability Supports

- The Province should return the \$1 million dollars taken from the Disability Support Program budget in April 2006. This was a promise made by the Government when in opposition last year. Funding for this program is bad enough as more and more Islanders develop disabilities.
- The Province should remove the age restriction in the Policy document at 4.1.1(a) and provide assistance for our seniors with disabilities, some of our most vulnerable citizens, no later than April 1, 2009 which is the promise made by the Government when in opposition last year.
- The Province should provide support for those with learning and mental disabilities.
- The Province should align its support programs to meet the needs identified in legitimate government studies.
- The Province should fund the DSP to a reasonable level required by Islanders with disabilities.
- The Province should design processes that look at the individual which is what the policy manual says.
- The Province should provide an appeals process that is equitable and independent.
- The Province should perform a full and independent review of the department considering its past history of mismanagement.

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

Funding

Where will the funding come from for these program improvements? To a great extent, the suggestions made will actually result in cost savings to the Province.

Employing persons with disabilities doesn't cost money: it creates wealth within the Province.

Helping Islanders with disabilities to remain in their homes with home modification and with home care / personal support will alleviate the growing pressure on nursing homes. Placing a large percentage of the severe and very severe Islanders with disabilities in government care would be an enormous burden on the public treasury. Study after study shows it costs less to keep people in their own homes.

It's hard to watch governments waste tens of millions on questionable investments like Polar Seafoods, Dundurave, etc. without realizing the dollars for social programs are being wasted elsewhere. This is not a comment on the previous administration. All governments seem to get into investments that are less than prudent. If it were a good investment there are many sources of private funding for these deals. The current government has only begun the process. There is money for important social programs: it's being wasted elsewhere.

Public Tenders

The Province needs to return to the policy of public tenders. In 2004, the government spent over \$500 million on goods and services yet only tendered \$25 million.⁹ If it tendered all goods and services it would likely save \$50 million to \$120 million that could be put towards social policy or the debt.

⁹ A Supplier's Guide to Goods Procurement in the Province of Prince Edward Island Revised 2004

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

The Provincial policy is “... *Procurement Services... to obtain written competitive tenders or quotations for all supplies over \$5,000.*” Obviously this process is not happening often enough.

Public tendering ensures that the government pays the lowest price possible for goods and services. It also spreads the work and business amongst many suppliers and not the chosen few. Tendering is democratic.

We wrote the Auditor General on this in 2007 and have not received a reply either denying or confirming what appears obvious.

The Impact of Poverty on Islanders with Disabilities

Tables