



SARC, a provincial association of nonprofit organizations that provide services and support to over 6,300 adults experiencing intellectual disabilities in Saskatchewan, reached out to all registered political parties in advance of the 2024 Provincial Election to learn their perspectives on the Disability Service sector. SARC wants our elected officials and those running for office in the upcoming election to firmly prioritize the safety, quality, and sustainability of services provided in this province.

We received the following responses. We hope this document assists you in making informed decisions in the upcoming election.

1. On behalf of what political party are the following responses being submitted? (Listed in the order they were submitted to SARC)  
Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan  
Saskatchewan New Democrats  
Saskatchewan Green Party  
Saskatchewan Party  
Saskatchewan Progress Party  
Buffalo Party of Saskatchewan - NO RESPONSE PROVIDED  
Saskatchewan United Party - NO RESPONSE PROVIDED

2. What do inclusive communities look like to your party?

**Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan** - Inclusive communities do their best to respect all of their members and provide them full access to resources while promoting equal treatment and opportunity. These inclusive communities value diversity and will assist individuals who face racist and discriminating incidents. In fact, they work to eliminate all forms of discrimination and includes all of its members in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

**Saskatchewan New Democrats** – The Saskatchewan NDP strongly believes that inclusive communities begin with equitable access to services for everyone, regardless of their background or circumstances. Everyone, regardless of their age, their economic status, their level of ability, or anything else, has a right to quality healthcare, education, housing, and public services. Under a Carla Beck government, that means getting Saskatchewan out of last place in healthcare and education, stopping the Sask. Party's plans for privatization, and empowering communities to participate actively in their local governments and community initiatives.

**Saskatchewan Green Party**– An inclusive community:

- Does everything that it can to respect all its citizens, gives them full access to resources, and promotes equal treatment and opportunity.
- Works to eliminate all forms of discrimination.
- Engages all its citizens in decision-making processes that affect their lives.
- Values diversity.
- Responds quickly to racist and other discriminating incidents.
- Acts of exclusion and injustice based on group identity and other factors should not be allowed to occur and/or continue.
- All people have the right to be part of decisions that affect their lives and the groups they belong to.
- Diversity enriches our lives, so it is worth our while to value our community's diversity.

**Saskatchewan Party**– The Saskatchewan Party is committed to making Saskatchewan the best province to live in for people with disabilities. The Saskatchewan Party government is focused on providing quality services and person-centered supports within welcoming and barrier-free environments.

**Saskatchewan Progress Party** – To us, inclusive communities are those which work together in co-operation and are open to all people no matter what their personal characteristics are. In some cases there may need to be active initiatives to welcome people into the wider community, and to include people in a/the local community where possible. In some cases this requires leaders to make space for new people. It is not a preferred approach to force people to leave their comfort zone, though, so initiatives should remain voluntary.

We also believe that nobody should be left behind - everyone should be taken care of, regardless of whether they have physical or mental health concerns. Nobody should go without food, water, shelter, and modern comforts just because they are unable to work. We believe an inclusive community is one that values everyone, not just people who "show up." On a related note, we are against the current government's Minimum Wage Exemptions list, as it dehumanizes and infringes on the human rights of people with mental/developmental disabilities. To work toward inclusive communities in Saskatchewan, this sort of regulatory discrimination must be ended.

3. How does your party view the role of community-based organizations (CBOs) toward healthy and strong communities, and how does your party view the relationship and responsibilities between CBOs and the provincial government to that end?

**Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan** - Community based organizations are effective in relaying concerns to government through established communication processes developed over years of experience. They are informed, aware and considerate to their members and stand up for their rights when required. It is important that the provincial government in Saskatchewan learn of issues that affect their members and recognize that the legitimate concerns they bring forward merit consideration.

**Saskatchewan New Democrats** – There's no question that community-based organizations play a critical role in our province. From disabilities to mental health and addictions, CBOs offer important care and support to many of our most province's vulnerable people. These frontline workers have invaluable, first-hand knowledge of the needs and circumstances of the communities they serve. What's more, CBOs, particularly in this sector, are some of the biggest employers in rural Saskatchewan and add to the vibrancy and sustainability of those communities. When the relationship between the province and CBOs is working well, it should be a collaborative partnership built on mutual respect and shared responsibility. The provincial government should support CBOs' capacity building and develop policy that will have a meaningful impact in the community. The CBOs, when they have the support they need, can then be able to plan effectively and coordinate the roll-out of services to the people they serve. Unfortunately, the Sask. Party government has failed to deliver that level of support and partnership. A Carla Beck government would look to rebuild that relationship of trust and coordinated effort.

**Saskatchewan Green Party** – Community-based organizations play an important role in addressing social issues that affect marginalized and vulnerable communities. These organizations are often led by members of these communities themselves, which allows them to better understand the needs and challenges faced by their peers. It's very important that the government meet with and listen to the needs of CBO's regularly.

The Saskatchewan Green Party values the very important work that CBO's do. Community-based organizations find innovative solutions aligned to the unique needs of their community, they also serve as trusted voices in their areas and build cross-sector partnerships for the good of public health.

The relationship between the provincial government and CBO's would ideally be one of cooperative partnership. The Saskatchewan Greens welcome the opportunity to build those relationships further.

**Sask Party** – Community-based organizations are fundamental to creating healthy and strong communities in Saskatchewan. CBOs are critical in helping create positive outcomes and a better quality of life for Saskatchewan's people who need support and assistance. CBOs have demonstrated the ability to ensure that the physical, emotional, and social needs of people with intellectual disabilities are met, empowering them to live as independently as possible. Our party believes that continuing to work in partnership with CBOs will yield positive outcomes and improve quality of life for people with disabilities.

The most recent provincial budget provides a \$18.1 million lift to CBOs across Saskatchewan. This is on top of the \$17.6 million increase for CBOs provided in the previous year.

**Saskatchewan Progress Party** – The Provincial government is focused on balancing resources and policy across the province.

CBOs are necessary! CBOs work within their unique communities, and provide valuable local, frontline feedback to the provincial government regarding what resources are needed, where they are needed, and when. CBOs serve as both advocates and leaders in their communities, focused on people first outcomes. There are a wide range of CBOs so it is difficult to be more specific on responsibilities.

The Provincial government needs to be responsive to the needs of communities as advocated by CBOs, and ought to establish baseline funding agreements to ensure operations are secured year-over-year, regardless of partisan issues of the day. Communities thrive when their support systems, including CBOs, are secure. In other words, CBO baseline funding must be guaranteed for multi-year periods, not just annually.

We also strongly believe that criticism is necessary to a healthy democracy. For decades, Saskatchewan governments have punished critics, and this environment has only become worse over time. We have a culture of fear in Saskatchewan today, where online comments result in firings, punishment, and coordinated opposition by one or more media companies. CBOs must have the right to speak out and publicly advocate for their communities without fear of reprisal. We would also strengthen whistleblower and labour legislation to protect critics.

4. What does your party think is necessary to ensure that CBOs have the capacity to provide the safest and highest quality support for people experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities?

**Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan** – Access to government decision makers via appropriate communication is key to succeeding in making changes when they are required. To this extent it is important to establish a reliable process by which the CBO's can feel confident the government is well informed and up to date on issues facing that CBO.

**Saskatchewan New Democrats** – The Saskatchewan NDP has worked with many CBOs to understand the biggest barriers they're facing. We engaged in solid outreach and advocacy with CBOs during this past term, including through the difficulties of COVID. We learned that CBOs often do work squarely within the mandate of the Government of Saskatchewan, yet often lack the support from the government they need to provide the highest quality of care. Funding has not kept up with the cost of living, and many CBOs lack what they need to cover even basics as the cost of food and transportation has increased. Wages are not able to keep pace either and many within the sector are forced to work multiple jobs, which impacts the care they can provide. We saw that low wages, uncompetitive benefits, and difficult work conditions were driving a poor retention rate in this sector. The Saskatchewan NDP believes that the work undertaken by CBOs should be able to sustain a lifelong and rewarding career, but because of the challenges within the sector, it is too often treated as a stepping stone to other things. This makes it difficult for agencies that invest in their workforce. The Saskatchewan NDP can see there is only a growing need for residential and day support because families face challenges and the need to address these growing issues has never been greater. In the fall of 2023, we invited representatives from many CBOs to the Legislature to call on the government to take action. Over the course of our work with CBOs, we came to understand that the organizations themselves lack sustainable and sufficient government funding. We also hosted families and individuals directly impacted at many junctures over the course of this past term to advocate

for changes in this area, and attempt to show the public the importance of this work. Chronic underfunding by the provincial government makes these jobs more difficult at all levels, from roll-out of services to paying employees a living wage. We want to invest in CBOs, to make sure they have the funding they need to do right by their employees and their clients.

**Saskatchewan Green Party** – The Saskatchewan Greens believe that more funding is necessary to ensure the highest quality support for people living with disabilities. The current level of funding in Saskatchewan is poverty level.

We also believe that more specialized support staff and resources are needed in our province for people experiencing disability . We would put in place initiatives to encourage people to specialize in this area of work.

Section 55 of The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code gives the Commission authority to approve special programs designed to prevent, eliminate or reduce disadvantages experienced by groups of individuals because of a prohibited ground of discrimination. With employment equity plans, the Commission sets numerical goals for the employment of members of each designated group. In setting the numerical goal for the employment of persons with disabilities, the Commission has considered both the definition of “persons with disabilities” and statistics showing the representation of this group in Saskatchewan’s working age population. The Saskatchewan Green Party would bring Saskatchewan in line with this section on our Human Rights Code.

**Sask Party** – The Saskatchewan Party recognizes the critical role CBOs play in creating strong communities across the province. That is why the Saskatchewan Party is committed to ongoing and open dialogue with SARC and all our community-based service providers so we can hear directly what is needed for CBOs to continue to provide safe and high quality support for people experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The Saskatchewan Party is also committed to providing sustainable operating funding for community-based service providers as it is essential to ensuring quality services and person-centered supports. That is why this year’s Budget provides a \$18.1 million lift to CBOs across Saskatchewan on top of the \$17.6 million increase for CBOs provided in the previous year.

**Saskatchewan Progress Party** – Naturally, CBOs need to be funded so they can be staffed in proportion to their needs. Government must recognize that not all communities have the same demographic proportions - some communities need more funding than others.

As well, as per SARC’s Paper (in #6), turnover rates are high in the CBO sector in part due to higher salaries in other sectors for similar work. Turnover is a major loss of knowledge in all sectors, but especially in the CBO sector as it disrupts meaningful relationships formed within the community and for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities. CBOs need to have higher funding to minimize turnover, simple as that.

Also, we know that some workplaces have potentially dangerous equipment like the [REDACTED] wood manufacturing center. The Provincial government ought to provide funding to provide regular inspections, and replace energized equipment as needed to ensure that everyone has a safe work environment.

5. SARC’s [Disability Service Sector All Candidates Paper](#), which was recently sent to all candidates from all registered political parties, outlines the important issues facing the Disability Service sector. The sector requires funding reform in order to stabilize workforce stability (employee recruitment and retention) and operational stability (core operating costs). What would your party’s approach be to reviewing and reforming government funding to the Disability Service sector?

**Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan** – It would be appropriate to first establish the level of government funding currently in place and assess the effectiveness of the funding in meeting the needs of the disabled in this province. Does the current funding ensure that disabled individuals have access to the physical and mental health services they need? Does it provide opportunities to gain meaningful employment and obtain a measure of financial

security through work they are both capable of and that contributes to those around them? It is important the government proceeds to alter current funding as required while being provided with as much information as possible. In this regard, it will call on CBO's and inclusive communities to assist them in gaining a complete picture of the issues and how best to address them.

**Saskatchewan New Democrats** – Underfunding from the provincial government has created serious challenges for CBOs with regards to recruiting and retaining support workers. Saskatchewan New Democrats understand that changes are needed to the way that CBOs in the disability service sector are funded. We are committed to multi-year funding so that CBOs can sustainably and effectively plan for the future. We are also committed to working with CBOs to reform and increase funding to CBOs in order to ensure fair wages for workers and high-quality services for clients.

**Green Party** – The Saskatchewan Greens believe that much more funding is necessary for the Disability Sector in Saskatchewan. We believe Funding Reforms are needed for this sector without delay.

**Sask Party** – The Saskatchewan Party values its strong working relationships with CBOs and would continue to foster that relationship through ongoing dialogue that is backed up with significant and sustainable funding for services and support to people with disabilities. In 2024-25, the Ministry of Social Services is providing nearly \$500 million in funding to community-based service providers across the province. This funding represents over 30 per cent of the ministry's budget and is a significant contribution to supporting the growing needs of Saskatchewan families and local communities. Total funding to community-based organizations in the social services sector has increased by more than \$116 million since 2007-08.

A Saskatchewan Party government will continue to work directly with CBOs to build on our strong funding record to ensure supports are adequately provided for worker and operational stability.

**Saskatchewan Progress Party** - CBOs and the Disability Service Sector need to have higher funding and supports to minimize turnover, and to improve quality of life for all employees, that's the simple starting point. The Ministry of Finance has access to salary information throughout the government - they already know that they are underpaying and underfunding CBO Disability Service Sector for similar work. We would match equal pay for the same work (see page 4's graphic comparing different hourly rates), and trust management to do what is necessary to retain workers.

As mentioned before, we would provide multi-year funding agreements, and ensure they meet or exceed inflation. The funding would also need to account for capital investments for safe work environments, as well as more funding for Public Relations campaigns to boost the profile of CBOs. While we see the latest push for healthcare/education funding as LONG overdue in SK, we recognize that this can crowd out other sectors - PR funding is needed to help attract workers to build up the Disability Service Sector.

We, as a province, can already afford to raise salaries and capital funding for CBOs like SARC - the money is there. It always has been. CBOs need more funding, and it can come from raising corporate taxes and eliminating corrupt practices in provincial government. Far too much funding has been redirected into the pockets of a few people instead of provided to communities. Millions of funding dollars are wasted on partisan-connected companies' projects every year. Our government would not interfere with public projects in the same way the Saskparty has done multiple times, for example spending 7x more money on a few acres of land for the Global Transportation Hub, and expensive P3s that siphon money out of Saskatchewan for out-of-province companies. We would not get in the way of Ministries' procurement processes the way the Saskparty constantly has, and does.