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Overcome Barriers To Employment

Strong, self-renewing communities require that all citizens achieve their potential. Our goal is to provide programming and services to enable Albertans to overcome barriers that inhibit their full participation in learning and work.

H E L P I N G A L B E R T A N S

GOAL FOUR

Programs and workplaces will be responsive to people who face barriers to employment, ensuring that all Albertans have opportunities to develop and participate in the workforce.

Actions and Results

Strategies **Accomplishments**

Reform adult development programming.

Adult development programming is under reform. The new program model, Adult Skills Alberta, will concentrate on employability and occupational skills, work experience, work placement assistance, program content defined by outcomes-based standards, and the development of a prior learning/employability skills portfolio.

Advanced Education and Career Development

Develop human resource potential and improve socio-economic conditions in Aboriginal communities.

Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs and Alberta Education are leading the development of a government-wide Aboriginal Policy Framework to ensure a constructive and consistent approach to relationships with Aboriginal communities and people that will lead to improved socio-economic conditions. The preparation of the proposed Framework involves all 17 ministries.

Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs/Education

The Future Leaders Program, an inter-agency and community-based program in Aboriginal communities, was expanded to eleven communities during 1997/98. This program is offered in partnership with participating communities and corporate sponsors, and provides opportunities to Albertans to participate in community recreational activities.

Community Development

Alberta is working with Saskatchewan and Manitoba on various initiatives to promote a greater understanding of Aboriginal cultures and perspectives, including an Aboriginal Studies Program for senior high schools.

Education

Actions and Results

Strategies

Enhance learning and employment options for persons with disabilities and chronic illness.

Accomplishments

In 1998, Alberta released its interdepartmental policy framework “*Investing in Employment Supports for Persons with Disabilities in Alberta*” and signed a new bilateral agreement, “*Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities*” with the federal government. A provincial interdepartmental steering committee is responsible for co-ordinated planning, development, monitoring and evaluation of employment supports for persons with disabilities in Alberta. The steering committee is co-chaired by Family and Social Services and Advanced Education and Career Development. Other members include Health and the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission.

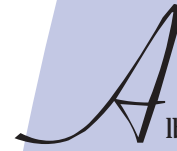
Family and Social Services/Advanced Education and Career Development

During 1997/98, government support increased by 30% for the education of children with severe disabilities. Enhanced Opportunity Funds, designated for projects to meet the needs of students who are economically disadvantaged, provided support to 114 schools.

In October 1997, Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) introduced policy changes to support and enhance employment options for clients. Rapid reinstatement makes it easier for clients to accept work, knowing benefits will be available if needed. Similarly, AISH clients can now participate in volunteer work, training or rehabilitation activities without jeopardizing their benefits.

Family and Social Services

Minimizing barriers for future generations...



Alberta is a partner in the National Child Benefit, which is a new series of initiatives designed to address child poverty and encourage parents to participate in the workforce. Through the provision of supplemental benefits, low income working families and families leaving welfare can begin achieving financial independence with the assurance that their children's basic needs will be met. In Alberta, the National Child Benefit is currently comprised of two components:

- the Alberta Child Health Benefit, a new health plan which provides coverage for children's dental, optical, drug prescription, and emergency ambulance services; and
- the Child Care Subsidy program, under which eligibility criteria have been broadened, which assists low income parents to pay their child care fees.



Actions and Results

Strategy

Accomplishments

Enhance learning and employment options for persons with disabilities and chronic illness.(cont.)

During 1997/98, Alberta participated in the development of *In Unison*, a new national vision on benefits and services for persons with disabilities, in cooperation with the provinces/territories and the Government of Canada.

Family and Social Services

A specialized cocaine addiction treatment program has been implemented as a pilot project as part of the Business and Industry program located at the Northern Addiction Centre in Grande Prairie.

Community Development

Support efforts of low-income families to remain in or prepare for the workforce.

Alberta worked with other provinces/territories and the federal government to develop the new National Child Benefit (NCB) introduced in July 1998. The NCB is a nation-wide initiative to promote attachment to the workforce, reduce the depth of child poverty and reduce overlap and duplication between governments. Funds made available through the NCB have been directed to an Alberta Child Health Benefit program which provides coverage for prescription drugs, dental, optical, emergency ambulance services and essential diabetic supplies for children of low-income families, as well as to enhancements to the Child Care Subsidy Program.

Family and Social Services

The first stage of a new Alberta Family Employment Tax Credit became effective January 1997, providing up to \$500 for families with annual family employment income greater than \$6,500 and less than \$37,500 total income. The second stage was implemented in January 1998 increasing the maximum tax credit to \$1,000 per family and extending the upper limit for eligibility of a lesser tax credit to \$50,000 total income. In 1998, the tax credit

helped 160,000 low and middle-income working families support their children and has empowered these parents to pursue work opportunities.

Treasury

In the spring of 1998, a memorandum of understanding was signed between Family and Social Services and Advanced Education and Career Development to develop a comprehensive mix of programs and services. The agreement will ensure that social allowance recipients who are expected to work can maximize their potential to achieve self-sufficiency through employment. Implementation of the memorandum will occur in stages to allow for a smooth transition for clients. The greater impact will be in the fiscal year 1999/2000 and beyond.

Family and Social Services/Advanced Education and Career Development

Actions and Results

Strategy

Accomplishments

Foster acceptance of diversity through the provision of human rights education and information.

The Rights Path - Alberta was published in spring 1998. This booklet informs Aboriginal people about their human rights, how to deal with discrimination and where to go for help. It outlines the rights of children, women, families, elders and others. Information regarding cultural, justice, educational, housing and health rights is included. Written by Aboriginal lawyers, the guide was a collaborative venture by the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women, the Aboriginal Human Rights Committee, the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission, and the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

Community Development

Promotion of human rights continues to be an important part of several compulsory school programs, especially social studies and health.

Education

Support successful youth transitions from custody environments to communities.

A Young Offender Pilot Project was introduced in 1998 to encourage young offenders in custody to participate in community-based recreational and arts activities, enabling them to develop skills, interests and interpersonal relationships that will assist them in future work and community participation. An evaluation has recommended the program be continued.

Community Development/Justice

Through a partnership between Alberta Community Development and the University of Calgary, the Cultural Diversity Institute has been established. The Institute, housed at the University of Calgary, exists to provide education, training, information and research services on cultural diversity to the corporate, not for profit, public service and education sectors.

Community Development

New diversity and human rights education materials that promote a discrimination free environment and provide information on how to resolve complaints of discrimination have been developed and distributed. These include the Understanding Gender Discrimination video and guide, Discrimination and the Law users' guide and the Human Rights Complaint Form and Guide.

Community Development

Performance measures for this goal include a survey of Albertans' views regarding learning and work opportunities for Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and recent

immigrants, and labour force participation trends for these three groups. The most recent findings are reported below.

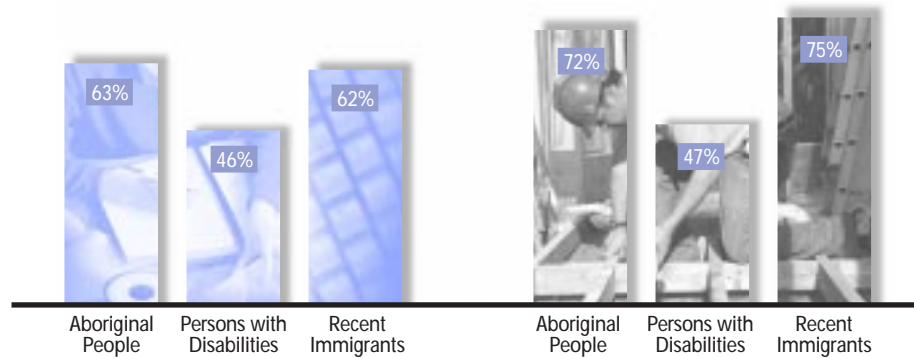
Surveys reveal that some Albertans are concerned that training and employment barriers experienced by Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and recent immigrants have not been adequately addressed.

Government of Alberta Omnibus Survey

Proportion of Albertans surveyed who agree that Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and recent immigrants are receiving sufficient opportunities to:

a) obtain training and prepare themselves for the workforce.

b) find employment in the workforce.



Like other Albertans, Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and recent immigrants have access to a wide array of training and employment opportunities. However, in some instances, additional assistance is required to address language, cultural, physical and social barriers. Community Development, through the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission, provides information and resources to enhance Albertans' understanding of the abilities and rights of individuals with different circumstances and backgrounds. Advanced Education and Career Development, along with Family and Social Services, Health, the federal government and community partners, are working to ensure that persons with

barriers receive more of the types of assistance they need to become as self-sufficient as possible.

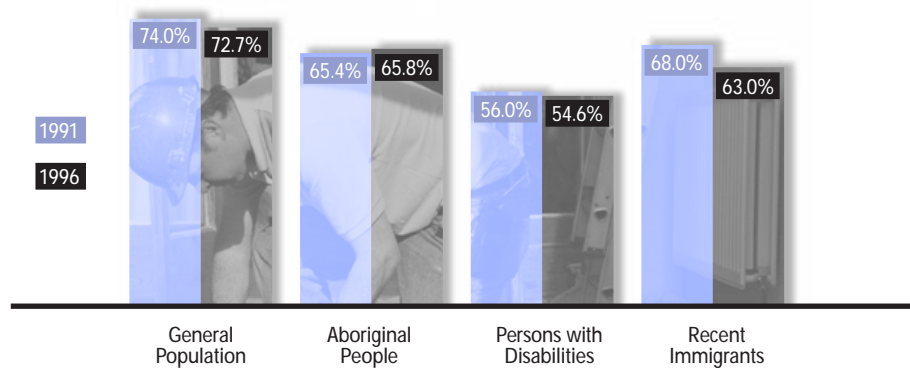
The survey gauges public perceptions regarding opportunities available to people with barriers to obtain training, find employment and become self-sufficient. Other approaches for measuring the effectiveness of strategies for the removal of training and employment barriers are being explored.

Source:
Government of
Alberta Omnibus
Survey, 1998.

Performance

Labour force participation by persons with disabilities and immigrants declined somewhat between 1991 and 1996.

Labour Force Participation Trends (Alberta)



Source:
Statistics Canada
Census Data
1991 & 1996.

Between 1991 and 1996, Alberta labour force participation declined somewhat for the general population, as well as for persons with disabilities and recent immigrants.

The decline in labour force participation in the general population may reflect the aging of Alberta's population. In contrast, Alberta's Aboriginal population is comparatively young, so the participation rate increase likely reflects the number of individuals reaching the age of

employment and higher levels of educational attainment. The reason for the decline in labour force participation for persons with disabilities is not as clear in light of a general trend toward labour force participation by persons with moderate disabilities. More research is needed to better understand this finding. With regard to recent immigrants, individuals may be unable to enter the labour market right away due to language and skill deficits.

Opportunities and Challenges

While individuals with significant barriers may access and benefit from many human resource development opportunities, there are still those for whom more comprehensive or specialized supports may be required in order to improve their self-sufficiency. In addition, there are some barriers that are best addressed by improving public and employer awareness of the challenges that persons with barriers face, along with the strong contributions they make to society.

Are there pragmatic approaches which could be taken to promote greater participation in learning and work opportunities by Aboriginal Albertans, people with disabilities and immigrants? Our challenge is that every Albertan should have the chance to achieve his or her potential, and to confidently progress through learning systems and work opportunities.

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