

Alberta Party

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Alberta Party reinforces commitment to persons with disabilities

April 12, 2019 - Edmonton, AB- Alberta Party Leader Stephen Mandel announced this evening how an Alberta Party-led government would improve services and supports to improve quality of life of 370,000 Albertans living with disabilities.

Stephen Mandel, Leader of the Alberta Party: “A growing number of Albertans are living with disabilities which impact their ability to access critical services. Rather than forcing people to make do, Government must take leadership in improving the lives of its most vulnerable citizens.”

The Alberta Party is committed to developing innovative solutions to improve the lives of Albertans.

For more information or to arrange an interview:

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Backgrounder

An Alberta Party Government would take actions would include introducing the Alberta Accessibility Act, appointing an Accessibility Advisory Council, updating the Alberta Building Code to include the installation of hearing loops at points of service, backfilling AISH benefits to account for inflation since 2012, and collaboratively implementing specific suggestions by Albertans with disabilities.

Alberta Accessibility Act

- Alberta Party government would introduce an Alberta Accessibility Act analogous to the Federal bill C-81, *An Act to ensure a barrier-free Canada* and similar provincial legislation to require provincially-regulated public and private sectors to identify and remove barriers that hinder the full and equal participation in society of persons with disabilities.

Accessibility Advisory Council

- Approximately 370,000 people in Alberta experience disabilities.
- An Alberta Party government would appoint an Accessibility Advisory Council to collaboratively develop a strategy, set standards, and support implementation of recommended changes.
- The Council would have guiding principles such as Access, Equality, Universal Design, and Systemic Responsibility to achieve accessibility.

Update Building Code to Include Hearing Loops

- One in four Albertans have some form of hearing loss. One in ten Albertans identify as deaf or hard of hearing. An Alberta Party government will add hearing loop requirements to the *Alberta Building Code* for buildings offering important government services, health services, and provincially regulated services
- Grants will be made for community organizations to obtain and install hearing loops to serve demonstrated needs of their respective clients and members

Backfill Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) benefits

- In 2012, the maximum monthly core benefit rate for a single person under AISH was raised to \$1,588 per month. Between 2012 and 2019, inflation was 11.7%. In 2019, the benefit rate was raised by only 6.1% (\$97) to \$1,685.
- An Alberta Party government would backfill the increase to match inflation from 2012 to a rate of \$1779 per month.

Conclude and implement results from the PDD Review

- In Fall 2018, the government initiated a Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) program review. The panel met with community members and stakeholders but did not report back to Albertans prior to the 2019 General Election being called.

- Release of the PDD program review report is overdue and very important to members of the PDD community
- Persons with Developmental Disabilities currently experience a patchwork of services which need to be streamlined to better meet client needs
- Programs need to be more focused on clients and their families, rather than attempting to fit all clients into a single model and size of service. We will provide clients with more flexible programming, and simplify access for clients and their families.