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# **Practice, Policy and Politics: A Cautionary Tale Against Magical Thinking**

*National Conference on Re-Inventing  
Community Supports*

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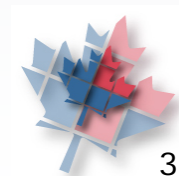
# Outline

- Speak from my experience as a policy maker, policy teacher and policy researcher
- Identify current issues being managed by governments in the field of persons with disabilities
- Understand the effect of historical approaches to changing policy for persons with disability



# Outline continued

- Identify the policy levers available to deal with the trends and the tensions in the choices available
- Identify ways in which we can build & maintain inclusive communities



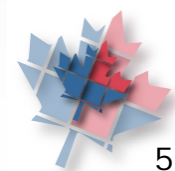
# Current Issues

- Increasing costs – on average 7% per year – no surprise that NL, NB, ON, BC are all focused on disability
- Welfare costs are decreasing for the employable and increasing for persons with disabilities



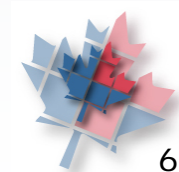
# Current Issues continued

- Persons with disabilities are represented by various stakeholder groups that have different objectives – No one group speaks for the entire community
- Historical development of policies for persons with disabilities constrain the policy choices



# Summary of Issues

- Price is going up for support and care of persons with disabilities
- No one voice on behalf of persons with disabilities
- Embedded policy frameworks are not citizen centered



# Historical Context

- Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601 set up the policy framework for social welfare support
- The Poor Law divided the poor into two classes: the deserving poor and the undeserving poor
- Deserving poor were those people who could not work
- Undeserving poor were those that would not work



# More History

- That meant that the deserving poor got support while the undeserving poor got work
- The Work Houses and Poor Houses were examples of how this policy framework was expressed
- Complex systems of supports were setup following this basic model of separating the poor as either working poor or unable-to-work poor regardless of need





# More History

- Benefit to be a part of the deserving poor as there was less stigma and generally greater levels of support
- Similarly today persons with disabilities are seen as deserving poor who should be cared for by the state
- Persons with disabilities receive more money than people on general welfare – there is real economic incentive to maintain the current division and special treatment



# The Eds – Six 40 year old men who need special support because they were ...

1. Injured due to an auto accident
2. Hit with a baseball bat – in a school yard
3. Hit with a baseball bat – in a crime
4. Hit with a baseball bat – in a work accident
5. Born with a developmental disability
6. Brain damage due to chronic alcoholism



# Sources of Income (Disparity!)

- Auto Accident
  - Insurance private and public; civil action
- Hit with a baseball bat – in a school yard
  - School Board liable; civil action
- Hit with a baseball bat – in a crime
  - Victim's Compensation Services



# Sources of Income (Disparity!)

- Hit with a baseball bat – in a work accident
  - Workers Compensation Board; disability pension
- Born with a developmental disability
  - Welfare for persons with disability; family support
- Chronic Alcoholism
  - Welfare; Charitable support



# Model of Citizenship Is Victimship

- Deserving poor
- Cannot work
- Must be cared for by others
- Separate and not equal



# Pressure to Reform the System

## Positive Side

- Very expensive - bill for disability is rising on average 7% per year
- Very expensive to administer
- Questionable outcomes

## Negative Side

- Benefits are spread over several levels of government and departments
- Welfare benefits are a “no win” politically
- Disability benefits have strong lobby groups



# Policy Levers

- Provincial governments are the main administrators of programs for persons with disabilities
- Municipalities and the Federal government are also involved
- Programs and definitions of eligibility vary across all provinces – no single standard for support or service or eligibility
- Resistance to national standards due to jurisdictional disputes



# Policy Levers

- Income transfers based on eligibility and need (usually capped)
- Income transfers of a set amount (usually insurance based)
- Programs and services delivered to groups or individually in the community
- Institutions





## Service Categories

- Information
- System planning
- Income support
- Respite
- Housing
- Employment
- Specialized supports
- Complex supports
- Access mechanisms
- Delivery mechanisms

## Recipient Categories

- Physically/medically disabled
- Mentally disabled
- Developmentally Disabled
- Deaf/Deaf Blind
- Head Injured
- Homeless
- Addictions



# Policy Framework

- Persons with disability need special support
- Need to define who needs what
- Gatekeeper function to protect the public purse and be accountable for the spending
- Stakeholder interest to open the purse
- Multiple stakeholders' interest is to ensure that the money goes into their particular purse
- Competitive process based on a model of victimship – who is the more deserving poor?



# Transforming Victimship into Citizenship

- Model of citizenship is built on rights AND responsibilities
- Give up special privileges in exchange for rights to citizenship
- As a citizen what do you need to participate?



# Maintaining Political Support

- Watch the money – think like a taxpayer
- Work together collaboratively – support each other
- Agree to Pilot Projects – change is often easier when it is incremental
- Pay attention to each new government and each new Minister – support progressive steps
- Remember that the Minister has to sell the new idea - new money - new program to their colleagues – give them the tools they need
- Say Thank you





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