

MAPC Resolution approved May 7, 2016 – AMENDED 2018 Providing Supports in Public Spaces for Manitoba Students With Disabilities

- *Respectfully submitted by Manitoba Association of Parent Councils Board of Directors for consideration at its 2018 Annual General meeting*

Manitoba Association of Parent Councils (MAPC) and parents of school aged children throughout the province, support Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning's philosophy of inclusion, which states that,

Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued, and safe. An inclusive community consciously evolves to meet the changing needs of its members. Through recognition and support, an inclusive community provides meaningful involvement and equal access to the benefits of citizenship. In Manitoba, we embrace inclusion as a means of enhancing the well-being of every member of the community. By working together, we strengthen our capacity to provide the foundation for a richer future for all of us.

(Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2016, <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/index.html>)

Parents and families, as well as parent councils, work tirelessly to ensure that children have the ability to access opportunities in schools, which strengthen inclusion by promoting social interaction, learning experiences, and community building. These efforts include planning or participating in special events, field trips, family fun days, playground enhancement, and more. However, many children and their families are often excluded from participation because of a disability and any barriers that may prevent them from participating in a meaningful way.

One concern for many families and caregivers is the lack of safety equipment and appropriate toileting stations in public areas frequented by students of early, middle, and senior years schools during field trips. These items promote safety, hygiene, and dignity for students as well as their caregivers. They are often forced to either improvise the situation to the best of their ability (such as using the floor rather than a change table for diapering needs) or worse, refrain from participating in an event due to a lack of equipment which promotes safety and inclusion (such as a lift or ramp system in a public swimming pool).

Youth and adults with disabilities are often victims of the poverty cycle and a lack of social inclusion. Although they are not specifically indicated in the provincial strategy for poverty reduction, *All Aboard*, it is noted in the action plan for creating opportunities for youth that "...an important part of poverty reduction and **social inclusion** is allowing and supporting youth to become socially connected, engaged and supported by their community. Young people need access to recreation, arts, and education." (All Aboard, http://www.gov.mb.ca/allaboard/pubs/proposed_actionplan_2013-2016.pdf)

In the Accessibility for Manitobans Act, recently introduced in 2013, a key area identified to remove barriers is the Accessible Built Environment. This area identifies that architectural and structural barriers often prevent citizens from accessing opportunities and resources which should be available to all. It is within this area that improvement can be made so more recreational activities can be accessed to contribute to the enjoyment for all people and their daily living. (Accessibility for Manitobans Act, http://www.gov.mb.ca/dio/pdf/introducing_accessibility_for_manitobans_act.pdf)

Action Request:

MAPC supports the Accessibility for Manitobans Act and its intent to remove barriers to participation for all citizens. We strongly urge the provincial government and all committees contributing to the consultation and implementation contained within this act, to consider the need for safety and hygiene equipment to be included. These required improvements will increase accessibility, address safety issues, and promote dignity for all students and caregivers while accessing public areas in Manitoba.

**** In order to further support the Accessibility for Manitobans Act, MAPC will update its existing policies and processes in order to be compliant with requirements regarding the Accessible Customer Services Standards contained within the Act. <http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/customer-service-standard.html> *** (updated by the MAPC Board of Directors, 2018)*