



# THE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

## **The Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) program in Alberta is nearly at a \$1 billion budget with numerous challenges to overcome. Reform is needed now. New School of Public Policy report**

For Immediate Release

July 18, 2019

Calgary- In January 2018, then-premier Rachel Notley's New Democratic Party (NDP) government announced a full review of the Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) program. The PDD funds more than 12,000 adults with a budget totalling almost \$1 billion. Despite numerous funding increases over the years, the PDD program still has many challenges to overcome.

Today, The School of Public Policy with author Nilima Sonpal-Valias released a report that examines the history of the PDD over the past 114 years, and exposes the influences underpinning current structures, mechanisms and policy approaches.

According to Valias, "The current program review is an important opportunity for all groups including people with developmental disabilities, their families and advocates, the agencies that provide daily supports, program administrators and members of Alberta's newly elected government, to bring in alternative perspectives and propose new solutions. Once existing guidelines or new recommendations become formalized, the window to influence change is lost. Thus, it is important to keep discussions open until robust solutions are found that are acceptable to as many stakeholders as possible. The history of this policy field shows us that success is more likely when there is alignment of goals across all vested parties, and when proposed solutions build on shared beliefs and can leverage existing policy mechanisms, tools or structures provided these are viewed as legitimate and acceptable to all stakeholders."

The report identifies four critical junctures resulting in transformative shifts in the evolution of Alberta's field of developmental disability policies and services including: institutionalization and the medical model of disability, deinstitutionalization movement, social model of disability and neoliberal reforms.

As we approach the end of the second decade of the 21st century, with Alberta facing new economic and social realities, and uncertain global influences, we may well be on the brink of a new window of opportunity to shape this policy field onto a new trajectory. Policy entrepreneurs and field advocates are best served by keeping discussions, debates and avenues for expression of alternative ideas open; it is within this window that they can exert the most influence.

The paper can be downloaded at <https://www.policyschool.ca/publications/>

-30-

**Media contact:**

Morten Paulsen

[morten.paulsen2@ucalgary.ca](mailto:morten.paulsen2@ucalgary.ca)

403.220.2540