

## **Backgrounder**

### **Citizen Consultation Team: Biographies**

**Amy Alsop:** Amy is a Regina woman who has a vision disability. Amy has experience advocating for persons with disabilities in the workplace, and is very involved in SaskTel's internal advocacy group SaskTel Employee Network on Disability. She created a mentoring program at SaskTel that matches high school students with visual impairments to visually impaired SaskTel employees. The goal of the program is to help prepare high school students with visual disabilities for the work force. Amy is also involved with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind and has represented Canada at numerous Paralympic Games as a goalball athlete. She won gold medals at the 2004 Paralympics in Sydney, and in 2004 in Athens.

**Merv Bender:** Merv is a Prince Albert resident who is very active in the disability community in both his home community and provincially. Merv is the Executive Director of the Prince Albert and District Community Service Centre, which provides a range of services to persons with disabilities - including employment counseling, work preparation programs, money management skills training and transportation services. He has held this role for 24 years. Merv also co-chaired the joint community-government task team on income support for people with disabilities, which led to the creation of the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID) program. Merv continues to serve as the chair of the Program Implementation Advisory Team (PIAT) for SAID.

**Larry Carlson:** Larry is a Regina man with an acquired brain injury. He is a retired provincial civil servant who has worked in the field of disabilities his entire adult life. Larry has experience teaching children with visual disabilities, working as a consultant on children with disabilities for the Saskatchewan Department of Education, and lecturing on Special Education at the provincial universities. Larry also worked as a consultant for the Ministry of Advanced Education, where he helped develop and introduce the Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities program (now the Workforce Development Program for Persons with Disabilities). Larry participated in SGI's Acquired Brain Injury Partnership Project and served on the Advisory Group until last year. He has also served on the boards of the Brain Injury Association of Canada, the Saskatchewan Brain Injury Association, the Canadian Braille Authority and the Council for Exceptional Children.

**Roger Carver:** Roger is a Saskatoon man who is deaf. Roger has provided leadership and advocacy training to deaf communities across Canada. He has considerable experience in researching and presenting on issues for deaf and hard of hearing persons. Roger has also been active in cross-disability movements. He is scheduled to retire from his position as the Executive Director of Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services at the end of October. Roger was the Assistant Coordinator (and later Coordinator) of the Western Canadian Centre for Deaf Studies at the University of Alberta and taught a course in Deaf Studies at the University of BC. He is affiliated with the Saskatoon Association of the Deaf, and the Saskatchewan Deaf Association.

**Dawn Desautels:** Dawn is the mother of an adult son with a developmental disability. She lives in Shaunavon, where she is board member for Cypress Hills Ability Centres. Dawn is a former

President of the Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres and remains affiliated with the organization. Dawn also served as an appointed member of the Council on Disability Issues and actively participated in the consultation process and the development of the provincial Disability Action Plan in 2000 and 2001.

**Carole Eaton:** Carole is a registered psychologist living in Regina, who has spent her entire professional life working with people with psychiatric disabilities, people with concurrent disorders of mental illness and substance misuse, and people with acquired brain injuries. Carole has worked for Phoenix Residential Society for over 30 years. She began her work at the Phoenix Residential Society as the Program Director, and since 2001 has served as the Executive Director. Carole also teaches psychology as a sessional lecturer at the University of Regina, and is affiliated with Psychosocial Rehabilitation Canada, Schizophrenia Society of Canada, and the Canadian Mental Health Association.

**Lynette Griffin:** Lynette is a Regina woman who has lived her entire life with a physical disability. For the past 10 years, she has served as the manager of ParaTransit and Accessibility for the City of Regina. Previously, she worked as an Access Consultant and Social Policy and Research Analyst with a focus on disability issues. She currently chairs the Canadian Urban Transit Association's National Accessible Transit Committee. She is also affiliated with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, Provincial Paratransit Service Providers and is connected to numerous other disability-related organizations. Lynette was an appointed member of the provincial Council on Disability Issues and actively participated in the consultation process and the development of the Disability Action Plan. She is also a former Paralympic athlete who represented Canada at the Paralympics in Seoul, South Korea in 1988.

**Charmaine Landrie:** Charmaine is a Lloydminster woman who is employed as a consultant with the Cognitive Disability Strategy. She has experience supporting individuals with cognitive disabilities and their families as well as working with integrated planning teams. Charmaine has worked as a child protection worker with the Ministry of Social Services and has also facilitated a recreation/education program for youth in care. Charmaine works with her local women's shelter to provide programming for children who witness domestic violence. She also coaches children's mini rugby.

**Andrea Lavallee:** Andrea and her husband have four children. Their son, Max, has Spinal Muscular Atrophy type II. She lives in Meadow Lake, where she co-founded and is a past vice president, current member of People Advocating for Children with Exceptionalities - a grass-roots non-profit agency that supports children with physical and cognitive disabilities and their families. Her involvement in the organization provides her with many connections to families of children with disabilities in the North. She is also a Board Member and Trustee for Families of Spinal Muscular Atrophy Canada Society, and a member of Muscular Dystrophy Canada. She has advocated at the government level, and enjoys speaking and advocating at various events and community organizations.

**Michael Lavis:** Michael is a Regina man, and the founding Executive Director of Creative Options Regina - a non-profit organization that develops personalized support services for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Michael also has over 15 years of experience in

developing opportunities for marginalized people in other countries. He is a member of the Gentle Teaching International Board of Directors and is actively involved in the development of the Gentle Teaching Canada Association. Other organizations Michael is affiliated with include the Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres and the Regina and District Association for Community Living.

**Marie Lindenschmidt:** Marie is the mother of a child with autism. She worked for 13 years as an occupational therapist, and has experience integrating her clients into their home, work, school, leisure and community as a whole. She remains affiliated with the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists and is also affiliated with Autism Services in Saskatoon. Marie currently lives in Dundurn, and has the unique perspective of having lived and worked in several other provinces and European countries.

**Laurie McSymytz:** Laurie is a rural resident of Wynyard actively involved with Wynyard Access Committee, School Council and Saskatchewan 4-H. She currently works as a contract mediator for the Dispute Resolution Office of the Ministry of Justice. She was a past Rehabilitation and Peer Counsellor for the Canadian Paraplegic Association and involved with the development of the South Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre in Regina. Laurie has travelled internationally, uses a wheelchair, and she and her husband are parents of two busy daughters.

**Eugene Paquin:** Eugene is a retired senior school administrator whose work experience includes responsibility for the special education needs of students, including the identification and designation of special needs students, and the design and implementation of programs for students with disabilities. He is a caregiver to a daughter with type-one diabetes, a spouse with multiple sclerosis, and a second daughter who is deaf. Eugene leads the caregiver initiative with the MS Society and has volunteer experience with the United Way, the Canadian Diabetes Association, Canadian Red Cross and the Royal Canadian Legion, as well as affiliations with the MS Society of Canada and the Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services. Eugene resides in Saskatoon with his family.

**Shaun Soonias:** Shaun is a First Nations man living in Saskatoon. He is the current Director of Social Development for the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. In this role, Shaun manages the Disabilities Office. His work involves creating partnerships with First Nations and federal and provincial disability organizations and providing individual and systemic advocacy to persons with disabilities. Shaun has extensive experience working with children with disabilities, including over 10 years as an advocate for Saskatchewan's Advocate for Children and Youth. Shaun is also affiliated with the Assembly of First Nations Disability Working Group.

**Ian Wilkinson:** Ian is a Saskatoon resident, and father of a child with autism. In addition, he assists several individuals deal with their respective mental health issues. Professionally, Ian is the Executive Director of the Saskatchewan Abilities Council. He collaborated with a wide variety of organizations and persons with disabilities while preparing the report and recommendations on establishing the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability program. Ian

is affiliated with the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres, Autism Services Saskatoon, and Easter Seals Canada.