



# Saskatchewan Abilities Council Bulletin

## EVERY CLIENT MATTERS – Leading in Innovation at the Council

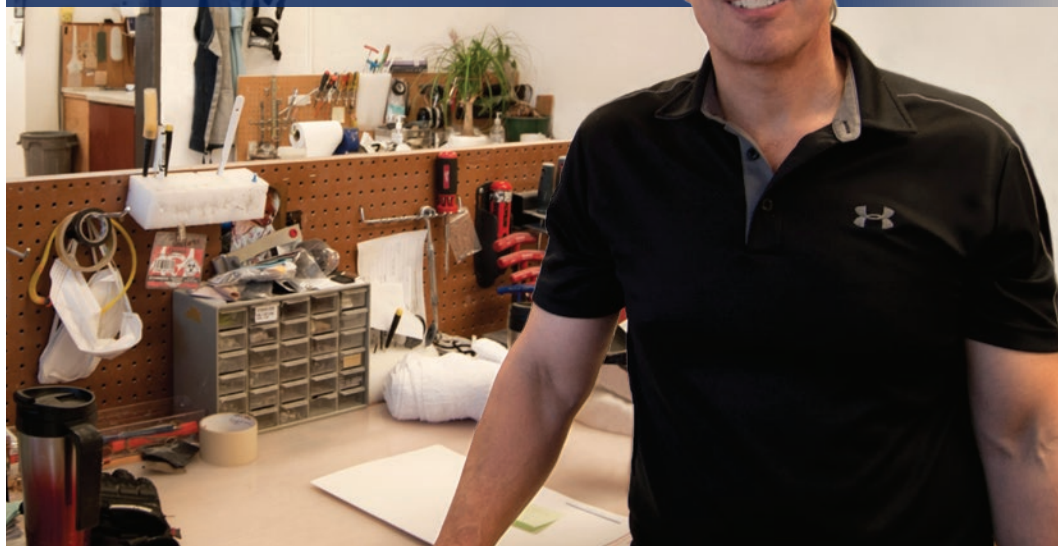
For over 66 years, the Saskatchewan Abilities Council has believed in providing the best client experience. Within that commitment to improving lives is a dedication to innovation. Without it, the Council wouldn't be what it is today.

“Innovation is part of an overall culture of doing the best we can in each individual circumstance, for each individual client, for each individual family, and for each professional we work with,” said Heather Rasmussen, Director of Rehabilitation Services at the Council. “We support innovation in a variety of ways—through professional training and development for staff members, empowering staff to look at innovative approaches, and budgeting for state-of-the-art equipment.”

“When you walk through our doors, you'll be welcomed, you'll get the service you require whether it's a parking permit, a brace, artificial limb or power wheelchair, and our goal is you'll leave feeling you got what you need and were treated with respect and compassion,” said Rasmussen. “That's what we do every day.”

As part of this commitment to innovation, the Council is at times called upon to help facilitate research. For the past year, the Council has been participating in a University of Saskatchewan study on bilateral AFOs (ankle foot orthoses) and the effects of alternative walking braces for children with cerebral palsy. This has involved Certified Orthotist Grant Fillinger casting, fabricating

*With over 30 years of experience at the Saskatchewan Abilities Council, Grant Fillinger loves the work he does as a Certified Orthotist. To continue the legacy of innovation at the Council, Grant is participating in a research project at the University of Saskatchewan that considers alternative casting methods for children with cerebral palsy who wear bilateral AFOs (ankle foot orthoses).*



and fitting the new walking braces on study participants while physical therapy researchers at the University of Saskatchewan conduct assessments.

Orthopaedics is part of a whole suite of programs that make up Rehabilitation Services including Special Needs Equipment, the Parking Program for People with Disabilities and Adaptive Technology, all of which support innovation and individualized service.

To remain a leader in innovation, the Saskatchewan Abilities Council invests in advanced technology to meet the diverse needs of clients. We utilize equipment like a

3D scanner to provide accurate measurements for braces and helmets, myo electric prostheses for upper extremity amputees, alternative controls for power wheelchairs, and adapted computer technology to support individuals to achieve greater independence.

Sometimes the services we provide may seem simple—we can replace the Velcro on your brace, repair your wheelchair, provide a parking permit or suggest software that you may not be aware of—but it all contributes to a positive experience and more importantly to improved mobility and accessibility, which are the foundations of meaningful participation in work, play and all everyday activities.

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# Rehabilitation Services —The Numbers

**21,059** permits issued through the Parking Program for People with Disabilities

**12,305** clients served by Orthopaedics

**103** clients served by Adaptive Technology

**35,838** pieces of equipment issued by Special Needs Equipment

**29,840** pieces of equipment returned to Special Needs Equipment

*Statistics courtesy of the Saskatchewan Abilities Council 2015 Annual Report*

## OUR MISSION

*The Saskatchewan Abilities Council works with people of varying abilities to enhance their independence and participation in the community through vocational, rehabilitation and recreational services.*

## OUR VALUES

*At the Council we treat people with:*

• Respect • Honesty • Compassion

*Our programs and services are:*

• Client-centred • Goal-oriented • Accountable

*We value:*

• Teamwork • Excellence • Innovation

## Improving lives—one permit at a time



*Although relatively simple, the Parking Program for People with Disabilities administers parking permits that make a major difference in the lives of those who need it. Shannon Saemann (pictured left), Kristi Weeks (right) and Audrey Bueckert (seated) are part of the Parking Services team that issues over 21,000 parking permits annually.*

Have you ever seen those blue parking permits hanging off a vehicle's rearview mirror? Well, the Saskatchewan Abilities Council is the organization responsible for administering the Parking Program for People with Disabilities in Saskatchewan.

A parking permit can have a big impact on the life of someone with a disability. The permit helps individuals maintain day-to-day activities like grocery shopping, doctors' appointments, employment and social activities—all of which add to quality of life and overall independence.

Common misconceptions related to the permit program are that it is only for individuals with visible disabilities or that you must have a driver's license to qualify for a permit. Actually the program is for individuals who have difficulty walking more than 50 meters without danger to their health and safety, regardless of age.

"Just because you don't see the disability, doesn't mean it's not there," said Shannon Saemann, Parking Administrative Clerk at the Council. "People with congestive heart failure or breathing difficulties like COPD

are good examples. Walking may be a risk or may be impossible for them."

Age or a driver's license are also not qualifying criteria. "If your child uses a wheelchair, you still need access to designated parking spots, even though the child isn't driving the vehicle," Saemann notes.

As a parking permit holder, Audrey Bueckert knows first-hand the impact a permit has on an individual. "When I got my first permit, it was like Christmas. I was so excited!" she said. The parking permit supports her mobility, which allows her to enjoy her independence, remain active in the community and maintain employment.

Audrey joined the Parking Services team at the Saskatchewan Abilities Council in 2012, before which she participated in the employment training programs offered by the Council. She's not only a shining example of the transition from program participant to full-time employee, but also a success story of the parking permit program.

For more information about the Parking Program for People with Disabilities, please call 306-374-4448.



# A little TLC makes all the difference!

At the Saskatchewan Abilities Council, our orthotics department fabricates and fits braces that help increase mobility and function to improve quality of life for clients. The casting, fabrication and fitting process can seem overwhelming to some, but sometimes a little extra TLC added to the everyday work of making a brace can make all the difference, especially for a child.

Elara Johnson first came to the Saskatchewan Abilities Council in 2013 to be fitted with a back brace to help with her scoliosis. While Certified Orthotist Jon Pickering measured Elara's back in her first appointment, he noticed she was nervous. Afterward, Elara's mom Tara suggested Jon try including Elara's favourite toy, a stuffed lamb, in some way to help ease Elara's anxiety.

At Elara's next appointment, Jon surprised Elara with a matching back brace for her lamb he made out of excess materials. She was ecstatic! This small piece of plastic made all the difference to Elara. She went from feeling anxious to feeling comfortable, happy and even excited for her visits to the Saskatchewan Abilities Council.

Now, when Elara arrives at the Council for her appointments, she runs up to Jon with a big smile and wants to hold his hand as they walk down the hall. Whenever Elara's brace needs adjusting, Jon adjusts her lamb's brace too. After all, they're in it together. Elara's so accustomed to her brace that she has acted as an advocate to another young child who was nervous about getting her first back brace. The Johnson family is able to share their experience with others in hopes of facilitating more positive experiences for other families.

At the Saskatchewan Abilities Council, we are proud to go the extra mile for our clients to ensure they feel welcome, happy and appreciated while in our care. Jon and the team of orthotists and technicians work to meet the unique needs of every individual. From knee and hip braces to shoulder and wrist braces to helmets and neck collars, the products we carry directly impact an individual's quality of life. Knowing we are making a difference in someone's life is the best part of the job!



*When 6-year-old Elara Johnson needed a back brace to help with her scoliosis, the Saskatchewan Abilities Council wanted to give her the best experience possible, so Certified Orthotist Jon Pickering made a matching brace for her stuffed lamb. She was ecstatic!*



*As a Certified Orthotist with the Saskatchewan Abilities Council, Jon Pickering fabricates and fits braces that help increase mobility and function to improve quality of life for clients.*

## Join the Saskatchewan Abilities Council today!

# Yes!

I know my membership will help improve the quality of life for thousands of people living with disabilities in Saskatchewan.

Enclosed is my membership contribution of:

☐ \$25.00 ☐ \$75.00 ☐ \$150.00 ☐ surprise us! \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I am already a member, but I am purchasing a membership for \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

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SASKATCHEWAN  
**Abilities**  
COUNCIL

PLEASE MAKE CHEQUE  
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2310 Louise Avenue  
Saskatoon, SK S7J 2C7

OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE:  
[www.abilitiescouncil.sk.ca](http://www.abilitiescouncil.sk.ca)

## 40<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL EASTER SEALS SNOWARAMA

Snowarama is turning 40! Mark your calendars for February 11, 2017 as we gear up for our favourite snowmobiling fundraiser. Yorkton Easter Seals™ Snowarama is a family-oriented event combining winter fun and community spirit all in support of Easter Seals™ Saskatchewan! With a minimum of \$200 in pledges, riders receive a free breakfast and lunch, free fuel at the midway point and a complimentary invitation to the evening awards banquet. This year we're excited to host a new trail and a cabaret following the banquet. To find out how you can participate, please contact Community Relations Coordinator Deana Jesmer at 306-782-2463.



Back by popular demand, the Saskatchewan Abilities Council will be hosting its second Prairie Perogy YXE event. After selling over

9,000 perogies at the first event, it was clear Saskatchewanians love perogies! Join us on February 12, 2017 between 11am-2pm and 4pm-7pm at the Saskatoon Branch on Kilburn Avenue to get your fill of Mexican fiesta-themed perogies, all for a great cause! For more information, please contact Community Relations Coordinator Karly Shanks at 306-374-4448.



Are you ready to rock? Rock 'n' Bowl that is! This year's Ability Bowl is scheduled for April 22, 2017. Grab a team,

dress as your favourite rockstar and get ready to Rock 'n' Bowl. Last year the event raised almost \$58,000 in support of the Saskatchewan Abilities Council Swift Current Branch. For more information, please contact the Community Relations Coordinator Jessica Sauder at 306-773-2076.

# General Information

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*We welcome your comments.*

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SASKATCHEWAN

# Abilities

COUNCIL

## Directors Corner – Ian Wilkinson

Celebrating 25 years with the Saskatchewan Abilities Council!

What wakes Ian Wilkinson up in the morning? The desire to help make a difference in someone's life. As the Executive Director and employee of the Saskatchewan Abilities Council for the past 25 years, Ian has played an active role in evolving the organization into the community leader it is today.



*Ian Wilkinson – Executive Director of the Saskatchewan Abilities Council*

Ian began his career advocating for individuals with disabilities 30 years ago when he joined the Children's Rehabilitation Centre. Interestingly enough, the Centre was one of the first programs ever established by the Saskatchewan Abilities Council in the 1950s. The program later transitioned to the administration of the government and ultimately the Saskatoon Health Region. It was here where Ian realized his interest, aptitude and passion for supporting families with disabilities. Five years later in 1991, Ian was introduced to the Saskatchewan Abilities Council and felt like he found his fit.

At the Council, the aim is to design and implement person-centred programs and services, where the choice, control and decision-making resides with the individual. But it's more than just an inclusive, person-centred approach—it's about equality for all people.

"Too often we talk about person-centred and inclusion in our terms as professionals or what the system thinks, but I want to change that to talk about what it means to be a Canadian, what it means to live in Saskatchewan. All of us have certain rights and freedoms that each of us should be able to express as we see fit," Wilkinson said.

As a leader in supporting the rights of individuals with disabilities, Wilkinson

was asked to be part of a team to help develop a vision of what Saskatchewan should look like for persons with disabilities. In 2014, the team met with over 1,000 people in person, over social media and in letters to develop the Disability Strategy. The recommendations of the Strategy were based on four main areas: promoting accessible and inclusive communities, the impact of disability, person-centred approaches, and promoting and protecting human rights. These recommendations have since been accepted by the provincial government as the strategy moving forward for the province.

"It's becoming the norm to have a very inclusive and diverse society," Wilkinson said. "I see an ongoing push to do more where inclusion and participation in society is becoming more acceptable to broader society. We've still got more work, but I'm pleased every day that we're making progress."

## Saskatchewan Abilities Council Programs & Services

### VOCATIONAL SERVICES

- Employment Opportunities
- Supported Employment
- Support Services
- Training

### REHABILITATION SERVICES

- Adaptive Technology
- Orthopaedics
- Parking Program for People with Disabilities
- Special Needs Equipment

### RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS

- Quality of Life Centres
- Camp Easter Seal
- Life Enrichment
- *SLYP-Out*
- *Summer Fun*
- Access Transit

