

June 27, 2000

Mr. Jim Rondeau
Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB
R3C 0V8

Dear Mr. Rondeau,

I am writing to thank you for your response to our letter of April 26, 2000. Your expression of support and interest is most appreciated.

Specifically, in response to your request for information about income security and disability insurance issues for people with MS, we are active on this front both nationally and provincially. Our focus can be described as being two-fold: i) to educate our members and people with MS, as well as those involved in administering income support programs; and ii) to advocate for change in the systems that provide income support.

Our national office is currently finalizing a new publication, *Assets and Abilities*, designed to guide individuals and families through the impact of chronic illness on employment and income security. The publication provides practical advice about staying employed, sources of replacement income and getting back to work. It will be launched in the fall.

Here a very active working group of the Manitoba Division Social Action Committee is also dealing with this issue. Currently it is preparing a workshop on disability insurance, Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and income support issues to be presented during the Manitoba Division's Individual and Family Service Conference in November.

Work is also being undertaken regarding needed changes to the CPP disability benefit program. Nationally, there are regular deputations and letters to government making recommendations that express the concerns of Society members with this program. I am enclosing for your information a copy of a letter sent by Frank Bowman, Chairman of the MS Society of Canada National Social Action Committee to Carolyn Bennett, M.P., Chair of the House of Commons Human Resources Development Subcommittee on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. In addition, I have enclosed a brief submitted last November by the Multiple Sclerosis of Canada to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. This makes recommendations not only about CPP disability benefits, but also several other matters that would enhance the quality of life of people living with MS.

In addition, locally we are working with a coalition of community organizations with common concerns about CPP disability benefits. The group has met several times with local CPP officials, with the aim of working towards improvements in the regional administration of CPP, while supporting and encouraging efforts for broader policy and legislative change at the national level.

A report has also been prepared by the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities that makes recommendations about ways the provincial income assistance program could be improved to better serve the needs of people with disabilities. This has been presented to the provincial government and is, we understand, currently under review.

I hope this information answers some of your questions and will be of use to you.

Once again, thank you for your interest and support. We look forward to maintaining ongoing dialogue and communication with you. If you have further questions or want more information please do not hesitate to contact our Social Action Coordinator, Sharon Segal, at 988-0904.

Sincerely,

Marlene Lock
President, MS Society of Canada, Manitoba Division

Enclosures: Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, "Enhancing the Quality of Life of People Affected by Multiple Sclerosis. A Brief Submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance", November 29, 1999.
Letter to Carolyn Bennett M.P. Chair, House of Commons Human Resources Development Subcommittee on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, from Frank Bowman, Chairman, National Social Action Committee, Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada.