

**SPEAKING NOTES – Minister Burke**  
**Proclamation for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities**  
November 29, 2011 – 3:30 p.m.  
Main Lobby, East Block, Confederation Building

Good afternoon, it is a pleasure to be here with you to celebrate such an important day.

The United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities is a time for us to come together. We recognize the value of inclusion in all aspects of society, so individuals with disabilities, have the same access, opportunities and choices as other citizens.

The theme of this year's day is "Together for a better world for all: Including persons with disabilities in development."

The United Nations points to the fact that persons with disabilities make up an estimated 15 per cent of the world's population. Furthermore, a quarter of the global population is directly affected by disability, including care-givers or family members. In Newfoundland and Labrador, over 74,000 residents report having a disability.

This is why ensuring an inclusive society is a priority for this government. It is vital that we work towards the removal and prevention of barriers to people with disabilities.

Initiatives by this government to promote inclusion focus on

creative solutions. We have addressed barriers affecting housing, transportation, health care, education and employment in Newfoundland and Labrador. Through initiatives and strategies to remove barriers and increase accessibility, everyone benefits.

For example, The Home Accessibility Modification Program offsets the costs of making modifications to private homes to accommodate persons with disabilities. Modifications have and will be made to public housing to accommodate persons with disabilities.

As well, this government supports the principle of inclusive education in the classroom. We have provided schools with training on the philosophy of inclusion as well as strategies for teaching to help better address the diverse needs of all students.

To further support our efforts we will be releasing a strategy that will reflect the ideas and solutions that came from individuals with disabilities and their families.

Individuals with disabilities have a right to live with dignity in their chosen community, participate in all aspects of society and make decisions about their own lives. There is still work to be done, attitudes to change and barriers to remove. This government will work towards a more inclusive Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you all for coming today to recognize and celebrate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. This day is a reminder to us that everybody has a role in ensuring a more inclusive society.

I now invite Joanne to say a few words.