

**SPEAKING NOTES – Joanne MacDonald, O.C., O.N.L., Chairperson,
Provincial Advisory Council for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities**

Proclamation for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities

November 29, 2011 – 3:30 p.m.

Main Lobby, East Block, Confederation Building

Thank-you Minister Burke. I would like to welcome everyone here today to help recognize the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

This upcoming day is a time to reflect on how far we have come as a community in the disability rights movement - how far we have come in the movement towards ensuring equitable rights for individuals with disabilities. It is a time to recognize the progress we have made on an international level. And, just as importantly, a time to celebrate the achievements we have made within our own communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

This year's theme for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities is "Together for a better world for all: Including persons with disabilities in development". It highlights the vital need for individuals with disabilities to be involved in all aspects of society including development. When we include a disability perspective in development, we are actively including the expertise of individuals with disabilities in decision-making. Decision-making that intimately affects us but also ultimately affects the future of this province and our communities. Individuals with disabilities have a

role to play in molding the education and health care systems, in shaping major economic development projects, in community planning and in all aspects of development for our province. This results in a society that is more inclusive and more progressive.

Our province, like provinces and countries throughout the world, recognizes the importance of drawing on expertise from within the community of persons with disabilities when making decisions at all levels of development. We have seen this through the public consultations on developing a strategy for the inclusion of persons with disabilities held last year. We will continue to see it through the development and implementation of this strategy.

Being here today highlights a cooperative approach towards making full inclusion a reality. It demonstrates the vital role each of us plays – as an individual, as a community, as a government – in achieving this goal.

I especially see this cooperation and collaboration in my role as the Chair of the Provincial Advisory Council. I see it when Council members are sharing their knowledge and expertise. I see it when partnering with the community. And I see it when providing advice to government. Everyone working together toward the common goal to ensure individuals with disabilities have all the same opportunities as individuals without disabilities.

These are exciting times ahead. We have much to look forward to. There is solid leadership within community, on Council, and within government with our Minister and her colleagues. This leadership will ensure opportunities will continue to grow for individuals with disabilities to participate in all that this province has to offer.

As we move forward to achieve inclusion; we want to facilitate a shift in attitudes, build knowledge and remove the barriers that individuals experience on a daily basis.

There is much work to be done. We must continue to collaborate. We must strive not to fall back, but to aggressively move forward with removing barriers. This includes barriers that are physical, attitudinal, technological and systemic. I know with our combined strengths, experiences, resources, knowledge and will; we can achieve inclusion.

Thank you for coming. I wish everyone well with their celebrations of International Day of Persons with Disabilities.