



“A voice of our own”
“Cette voix qui est la notre”

COUNCIL OF CANADIANS WITH DISABILITIES
CONSEIL DES CANADIENS AVEC DEFICIENCES



Canadian
Association for
Community Living

Association canadienne
pour l'intégration
communautaire

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE CANADA: DEVELOPING A NATIONAL DISABILITY AGENDA

Vision for an Inclusive and Accessible Canada

Canadians with disabilities – children, youth, working-age adults, and seniors – have the disability-related supports they require to fully access Canada and benefit equally from all it has to offer.

This means that people with disabilities have the income, aids and devices, personal supports, medications and environmental accommodations that make social, economic, cultural, and political citizenship accessible to all. The result is that people with disabilities benefit from Canadian society in ways that are equal to other Canadians.

The Widening Gap Between Theory and Practice

In the last 25 years there have been many significant milestones on the path toward full citizenship and inclusion for persons with disabilities and their families. However, despite these improvements, several gains are being eroded and Canadians with disabilities are losing ground. Persons with disabilities and their families continue to experience exclusion and high incidence of poverty. Exclusion, poverty and a lack of access to needed disability supports negatively impact the earning power and income levels of persons with disabilities and their families, thus weakening their productivity and role in Canada's future.

Current measures are narrow in scope and remain inadequate. The investments have not realized the promise of full citizenship and inclusion and are demonstrated in these numbers:

- 56.5% of persons with disabilities are currently unemployed or out of the labour market;
- Persons with disabilities face levels of poverty almost twice that of persons without disabilities;
- Two-thirds of Canadian adults with disabilities lack one or more of the educational, workplace, aids, home modification or other supports they need;
- Slightly more than half of Canadian children with disabilities do not have access to needed aids and devices.

Consensus Exists – What's Missing is Follow Through

Currently, there is unprecedented consensus among the Canadian public, governments, the disability community and experts about the need for national action on disability. In July 2005, more than 55 civil society organizations representing Canadians with disabilities, their families, the early learning

and childcare community, the education community, Canadian workers, and millions of Canadians stood in solidarity on the issue of disability supports. They wrote to all Ministers of Social Services asking for a new strategic investment in disability-related supports and a process of defining a long-term strategy for addressing the inequality faced by Canadians with disabilities.

In October 2005, FPT Ministers of Social Services committed to making persons with disabilities a key priority and reaffirmed their commitment to achieve the full inclusion of Canadians with disabilities. They also agree that disability and income supports must be addressed. Federal, provincial and territorial Ministers agreed that:

“The focus for achieving [the full inclusion of Canadians with disabilities] will be joint work with emphasis on improving access to and funding for disability supports and services and for income supports for persons with disabilities, at the same time working to build public awareness and stakeholder and government support to address the challenges facing people with disabilities.”

Time for ACTION

Enough is enough. There have been more than 25 years of reports and studies and consensus exists as never before. The issues, though complex and multi-jurisdictional, are well understood and several potential solutions have been offered. Fiscal limitations of province and territories are creating barriers to substantial new investment. Persons with disabilities and their families need a commitment from all parties.

Disability supports is the immediate issue. Properly executed, a new approach to disability supports is the lever for transformational change instead of perpetuating well-known systems of poverty, welfare and exclusion.

Our Request of the Next Federal Government:

- **Establish an ‘early win’ with an immediate downpayment in the next budget.** Targeted at flowing funding to improve disability supports.
- **Increase investment from current levels and provide for accountability, joint participation and flexibility in cost sharing.**
- **Find different and innovative ways to ensure investments trigger change.** Including taking action on *In Unison*, e.g. individualized dollars that follow the person.
- **Go beyond the tax system to enhance program spending** (as recommended by the Technical Advisory Committee on Tax Measures).

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