



**Council of Canadians  
with Disabilities**

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**Conseil des Canadiens  
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CETTE VOIX QUI EST LA NOTRE

## **Invest in Accessibility and Inclusion of People with Disabilities**

### **Pre-Budget Consultation Brief**

**to**

**the Standing Committee on Finance**

**Submission from the**

**Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD)**

**August 5, 2016**

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## **Executive Summary**

The Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD) is a national cross-disability organization of men and women with disabilities working for an inclusive and accessible Canada, through the elimination of barriers that prevent the participation of people with disabilities in society.

Recognizing Canada's federal/provincial/territorial jurisdictions and Canada's relationship with Indigenous Canadians, CCD urges the Government of Canada to work collaboratively with all provinces and territories and the leaders of the Indigenous community on labour market strategies and broad social policy initiatives to address the needs of persons with disabilities. Wherever possible, CCD urges the Government of Canada to use its legislative and programmatic powers to ensure that persons with disabilities are included fully in Canadian programs and services and thus have opportunities to contribute to Canadian society. To more fully address the vulnerability, labour force exclusion and lack of support faced by Canadians with disabilities, particularly women and girls with disabilities and others facing multiple forms of discrimination, CCD proposes the federal government include in Budget 2017 measures that would expand its leadership and role in three areas:

- Poverty alleviation (income security and labour force attachment)
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- Access and inclusion

which would have the effect of enabling people with disabilities to maximize their contribution to economic growth and creating communities that empower people with disabilities to make their desired contribution to Canada.

**REQUEST TO APPEAR** - CCD seeks the opportunity to appear as a witness before the Finance Committee, while it conducts its pre-budget consultations.

### **Canadians with Disabilities: A Context**

CCD's research project *Disabling Poverty, Enabling Citizenship* found "...throughout the working years (15-64 years of age) people with disabilities remain about twice as likely as those without disabilities to live with a low income. People with disabilities are much less likely than people without to have jobs. Even where employed, people with disabilities are 1.5 times more likely than people without to live with low income. As the degree of severity of disability increases, so does the risk of poverty. Age has a significant bearing on low income, with rates falling sharply among people with disabilities who are in the retirement years. 18.4% of working-age women with disabilities in low income households are lone parents compared with 9.9% of their counterparts who live above the low income measures used by Statistics Canada and 7.9% of women without disabilities. Only 4% of men with disabilities who live on low incomes are lone parents." <sup>i</sup>

## Poverty Alleviation

To improve the social and economic conditions of people with disabilities, particularly women and girls with disabilities and others facing multiple forms of discrimination, the Committee is encouraged to recommend Budget measures to:<sup>ii</sup>

### *Income Security*

- Convert the Disability Tax Credit (DTC) to a refundable credit equal to the maximum current value of \$2,000 per year. (The \$2,000 value includes the current federal amount of the DTC and an assumed average provincial/territorial amount.) Everyone eligible for the DTC should get the full credit regardless of their income or employment status. A refundable DTC would extend compensation for the extra costs of disability to those eligible living in poverty.
- Harmonize the eligibility rules between the DTC and CPP-Disability (CPP-D), whereby every person with a disability of a year's duration who receives CPP-D should automatically be qualified for the DTC.
- Extend the duration of the Employment Insurance (EI) sickness benefit from the current maximum duration of 15 weeks to 50 weeks, for those eligible who have a prolonged or episodic serious illness or health condition.
- Expand the Working Income Tax Benefit (WITB) Supplement. Possible options for positive changes to WITB are:
  - Lower the annual earnings threshold at which benefits begin to be paid, so as to better support low income wage workers.
  - Phase-out more gradually the income level at which the maximum benefit is payable, so as to better support low income working families.
  - Increase the value of the Disability Supplement, so as to better acknowledge the additional costs for employees living with a disability.
- Enhance the Canada Disability Child Benefit. Three potential reforms which could be done in sequence over time:
  - Increase the maximum amount of the benefit and ensure that it is not clawed back under provincial social assistance schemes.
  - Raise the current income level for which the benefit is phased-out, thus extending the benefit to more moderate-income families.
  - Extend the coverage to those above age 18 to youth with severe and prolonged impairments. This extension could be introduced in 2 stages; first, to add those eligible from ages 19 to 24, and then in a subsequent budget year, include those eligible ages 25 to 30. The program could be renamed the Canada Disability Child and Youth Benefit.
- In the longer term, CCD recommends that the federal government, in close co-operation with other governments give serious consideration to a basic income program for people with severe disabilities that would be modeled on the Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement programs.

### *Labour Market Attachment*

- Increase investment in the Opportunities Fund and the Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities, which are federal transfers to provinces and territories.

- Enhance targeted initiatives focused on building employer confidence and demand for recruiting and hiring people with disabilities.

### **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

To strengthen human rights protection for Canadians with disabilities, the Committee is encouraged to recommend Budget measures in support of:

- Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the CRPD.
- Development of a CRPD implementation strategy, developed jointly by Government(s) of Canada and the community of persons with disabilities.<sup>iii</sup>
- Naming and supporting the Canadian Human Rights Commission as the CRPD monitoring body.<sup>iv</sup>
- Implementing in the strictest manner the safeguards and restrictions on Medical Aid in Dying.<sup>v</sup>
- Ensuring effective access to palliative care, including in rural communities – to meet unmet needs and support caregivers, and to help ensure assisted suicide is a last resort.<sup>vi</sup>
- Recognizing ASL/LSQ as an official language.<sup>vii</sup>

### **Access and Inclusion**

The Committee is encouraged to recommend Budget measures that would lead to accessible and inclusive communities that enable people with disabilities to make their desired contribution to Canada's economy and society:

- Funding to support the creation of new access regulations for federally-regulated transportation systems, telecommunications and the National Building Code.<sup>viii</sup>
- Expand funding through the Social Development Partnerships Program-Disability component to include targeted initiatives outlined below and to strengthen capacity of the disability sector to build national partnerships and leadership.<sup>ix</sup>
- Reinstate support through the Social Development Partnerships Program – Disability for ongoing support for provincial cross disability advocacy organizations to enhance the ability of national groups to provide a 'truly' national perspective to policy makers.
- Expand capacity of people with disabilities, families and caregivers to meet disability-related and respite needs through targeted initiatives to:
  - Provide information and navigation support to families supporting a family member with a disability.
  - Build family-to-family networks for mutual support.
  - Promote disability- and family-friendly community and health care services.
  - Strengthen employer support for family caregiving responsibilities.
  - Support recommendations from the "Employer Panel for Caregivers," released in January 2015 by Minister Wong.<sup>x</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup>. Prince, M. 2014. *Disabling Poverty, Enabling Citizenship: Recommendations for Positive Change*.

<sup>ii</sup>CRPD Article 6 (Women with Disabilities), 27 (Work and Employment), and 28 (Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection).

<sup>iii</sup>CRPD Article 33 (National Implementation and Monitoring).

<sup>iv</sup>CRPD Article 33 (National Implementation and Monitoring).

<sup>v</sup>CRPD Article 5 (Equality and Non-Discrimination), Article 13 (Access to Justice).

<sup>vi</sup>CRPD Article 4 (General Obligations), Article 10 (Right to Life), Article 19 (Independent Living and Being Included in the Community), Article 25 (Health), and Article 26 (Habilitation and Rehabilitation).  
CRPD Article 25 (Health).

<sup>vii</sup>CRPD Article 2 (Definitions), Article 21 (Freedom of Expression and Opinion and Access to Information).

<sup>viii</sup>CRPD Article 9 (Accessibility).

<sup>ix</sup>CRPD Article 29 (Participation in Political and Public Life).

<sup>x</sup>CRPD Article 4 (General Obligations), Article 19 (Independent Living and Being Included in the Community), Article 25 (Health), and Article 26 (Habilitation and Rehabilitation).