

**No One Left Behind:  
Sustainable economic recovery that is inclusive of  
persons with disabilities and their families**

Prepared by the Canadian Association for Community Living  
Submitted to the Standing Committee on Finance  
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## **Executive Summary**

The Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) welcomes the opportunity to submit a brief to the Standing Committee on Finance as part of the pre-budget consultation process. CACL believes that the 2012 Federal Budget is an opportunity to ensure that economic recovery efforts and the creation of quality sustainable jobs must equally benefit Canadians with intellectual disabilities and their families. At a time when the aging of the population and a shrinking labour force pose current and future challenges for the Canadian economy, people with disabilities largely remain an untapped human resource. Measures are needed, from both a human rights and an economic perspective, to ensure their full participation in the labour market. Further, CACL believes that any efforts to achieve a balanced budget must not negatively or disproportionately impact people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

CACL's brief makes following three recommendations for consideration by the Standing Committee on Finance:

- 1. The 2012 Federal Budget should establish an Advisory Committee on Income Reform, reporting to both the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, to explore options for addressing poverty, income reform and the federal role in income support for people with disabilities, including making the Disability Tax Credit (DTC) refundable.**
- 2. The 2012 Federal budget should include a specific employment investment in youth with intellectual disabilities transitioning from high school and/or post-secondary education to the labour market and a focus within federal-provincial/territorial labour market initiatives for active programming to enable transitions from sheltered and day program services to a comprehensive provincial/territorial Employment First policy and programming framework for people with intellectual disabilities.**
- 3. The 2012 Federal Budget should commit to the renewal of the Social Development Partnerships Program – Disability component funding with the National Community Inclusion Initiative (CII) continuing as a central and priority component of SDPP-D.**

## **Introduction**

The Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) welcomes the opportunity to submit a brief to the Standing Committee on Finance as part of the pre-budget consultation process. CACL believes that the 2012 Federal Budget is an opportunity to ensure that economic recovery efforts and the creation of quality sustainable jobs must equally benefit Canadians with intellectual disabilities and their families. Further, CACL believes that any efforts to achieve a balanced budget must not negatively or disproportionately impact people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

In Canada today, we know that:

- Overall, working-age persons with intellectual disabilities are almost three times more likely than working-age Canadians without disabilities to be living in poverty.
- 45.5% of working-age people with an intellectual disability indicate they receive provincial/territorial social assistance.
- The employment rate for working-age adults with an intellectual disability is only one third of the employment rates of people without a disability (25.5% compared to 75.5%)
- The average income for working age persons with an intellectual disability who are working is less than half of that of Canadians without a disability.
- Less than one in five working-age adults with an intellectual disability work more than 49 weeks in a year (either full or part time).
- Research clearly demonstrates that the transitional planning process and school-to-work placement programs in secondary schools are inadequate in preparing young people with intellectual disabilities for the world of work.<sup>1</sup>
- Adequate investment designed to increase the capacity of the disability community is essential if policy development, best practice and innovation is to occur.

Sustainable economic recovery or job creation efforts cannot be sufficient or effective if they do not begin to address the factors that shape this reality of disability in Canada.

Over one year ago, on March 11, 2010, Canada ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Yet little effort since ratification has been invested in ensuring the CRPD is being realized. The 2012 Federal Budget is an opportunity for Canada to demonstrate its commitment to making the CRPD real and taking concrete steps to address the staggering rates of poverty and unemployment facing Canadians with intellectual disabilities and their families.

## **Income Reform to Tackle Poverty**

In Canada we have created poverty as the most likely outcome of life with a disability. People with disabilities and their families lack the disability supports, employment supports and

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<sup>1</sup> See Cameron Crawford (2011), "Youth with Disabilities in Transition from School to Work or Post-Secondary Education and Training" (Toronto: Institute for Research on Inclusion and Society).

income supports they need to live free of poverty, isolation and exclusion. Sustainable economic recovery cannot be successful while poverty rates and over-reliance on income support programs continue to be the reality for the majority of persons with intellectual disabilities.

**The 2012 Federal Budget should establish an Advisory Committee on Income Reform, reporting to both the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, to explore options for addressing poverty, income reform and the federal role in income support for people with disabilities, including making the Disability Tax Credit (DTC) refundable.**

An advisory committee could begin to map out the federal role, the long-term vision and a strategy to better support people with disabilities and their families. An advisory committee could identify the short, medium and long term steps needed to tackle poverty and reduce reliance on income support programs. In the short-term the advisory committee could explore making the DTC refundable. For many Canadians with disabilities and their families' their taxable incomes, if existent, are often not sufficient enough to receive any real benefit from the Disability Tax Credit (DTC). A refundable DTC for low-income Canadians would have immediate positive impact on thousands of Canadians with disabilities and their families.

### **Quality Sustainable Employment**

The employment statistics for Canadians with intellectual disabilities are appalling. Persons with intellectual disabilities have repeatedly demonstrated they can and want to work. Employment is a critical factor in addressing poverty and promoting community inclusion. Inclusive labour market attachment has shown higher outcomes in quality of life, incomes and benefits, individual autonomy, individualization of services, individual and family preferences, social inclusion, personal satisfaction and cost efficiency. Efforts to create quality sustainable jobs must include a specific focus on active measures to enhance employment of persons with intellectual disabilities in the open labour market at competitive wages.

**The 2012 Federal budget should include a specific employment investment in youth with intellectual disabilities transitioning from highschool and/or post-secondary education to the labour market and a focus within federal-provincial/territorial labour market initiatives for active programming to enable transitions from sheltered and day program services to a comprehensive provincial/territorial Employment First policy and programming framework for people with intellectual disabilities.**

Currently, youth with intellectual disabilities lack the education and training of their peers without disabilities and are ill-prepared to transition from school to employment. By and large their job prospects are slim and our systems are providing policy and program responses that only perpetuate isolation and reinforce outdated modes of employment. Even labour market measures designed to support inclusion in the workforce are creating layers of disadvantage and multiple barriers to employment. Negative employer attitudes and misperceptions continue to be a challenge. A strategic initiative targeting youth with intellectual disabilities in

transition could have transformative impact on the future employment status of working-age adults with intellectual disabilities.

### **Continued Investment in the Capacity of the Disability Community**

The input and involvement of persons with disabilities, their families and the organizations that speak with and on their behalf is critically needed to ensure the coherent development of a disability policy and delivery framework. Disability is a national concern and one that requires the ongoing involvement of the federal government in supporting and ensuring that the voices of persons with disabilities and their families are always present in such matters of public policy. Current financial supports as provided via the Social Development Partnership Program (SDPP) have been most effective in investing in and enhancing the capacity of the disability community, and should be renewed within the 2012 budget.

### **The 2012 Federal Budget should commit to the renewal of the Social Development Partnerships Program – Disability Component funding as well the National Community Inclusion Initiative.**

A central component of SDPP has been the funding of the national Community Inclusion Initiative (CII). A renewed CII will continue to direct efforts toward addressing issues that remain rooted within various community systems and that continue to contribute to the exclusion of many of our fellow citizens. To do so will require continuation of an annual \$3M allocation within a three-year funding agreement. A renewed CII will continue to make a real difference in the lives of thousands of people with intellectual disabilities and their families in communities, large and small, throughout this country.

### **Conclusion**

CACL believes these recommendations to be both fiscally responsible and socially responsive. The 2012 Federal Budget can take meaningful steps to make an immediate difference in the lives of people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

The Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) is a Canada-wide association of family members, people with intellectual disabilities and others working to advance the human rights and full inclusion of persons of all ages who have an intellectual disability. Founded in 1958, by parents of children with intellectual disabilities who wanted supports and services within the community instead of in institutions, CACL has become one of Canada's ten largest charitable organizations, and has grown into a federation of 10 provincial and three territorial associations and is recognized as a leading national organization representing the voice of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families.