



**Council of Canadians
with Disabilities**

A VOICE OF OUR OWN

**Conseil des Canadiens
avec déficiences**

CETTE VOIX QUI EST LA NOTRE

People with Disabilities:

Getting Beyond Being the Population in Waiting

Key Messages and Commentary

CCD Brief for Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance

April 5, 2013

We are women and men, boys and girls, moms and dads, children and seniors, workers and the unemployed, students and teachers, leaders in our communities and recipients of services. We are long-time citizens and new Canadians, we are members of visible minority communities and Aboriginal and First Nations Peoples and we are people with disabilities. Disability is an issue of concern for all Canadians. At some point in our lives we all will use services built and designed to make Canada more accessible and inclusive.

Canadians with disabilities, their families and their organizations have worked collaboratively with the Government of Canada for over 35 years to make Canada more accessible and inclusive. Our collective work has improved the status of Canadians with disabilities and created greater access for persons with disabilities and their families. Persons with disabilities, and the organizations that represent us, have contributed to the prosperity, social and economic development of Canada.

In Canada to have a disability means you will likely live in poverty. Equally true, living in poverty increases the incidence of disability. It is a vicious cycle and one that must be changed.

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Introduction

10 Key Messages on Addressing Income Insecurity and Employment and Persons with Disabilities

1. The Government of Canada must develop a 5 year Strategic Plan to address the employment needs of persons with disabilities. Minister Finley should create a small Technical Advisory Committee to provide community input into the development of a Strategic Plan.
2. First priority for new investments should be given to youth with disabilities (18-30) in transition – moving from school to work.
3. A range of initiatives and supports must be provided which include longer term supports for those with more complex needs (e.g. multiple disabilities, greater experience of discrimination, Aboriginal people, and women). Current accountability regimes penalize those with complex needs.
4. Research must be undertaken on the changed nature of work and whether new barriers are being created for persons with disabilities.
5. The Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities and the Opportunities Fund must be maintained and expanded until designated resources and targets for the employment of persons with disabilities are established within Labour Market Agreements with the provinces and territories. Performance indicators must be established within LMA reporting mechanisms to highlight the employment initiatives regarding persons with disabilities.
6. Current barriers to employment have been well documented over the years and HRSDC should create a user-friendly report highlighting current barriers and where possible best practices to address these barriers.
7. From 2005 – 2010 there has been a 38% increase in the participation rate of persons with disabilities in social assistance programs. Research should be undertaken to determine why this is occurring. Some refer to this as the “welfarization” of disability, meaning welfare is the only option for far too many Canadians with disabilities.
8. Appropriate accommodation is critical to success, but beyond accommodation people with disabilities require affirmative action programs that create incentives to work. Current Employment Equity initiatives have not improved labour force participation for persons with disabilities.
9. Government must lead by example and be a model employer.

10. It must be recognized that employment in today's competitive labour market is not possible for all persons with disabilities and thus income support measures similar to those initiatives that have lifted many seniors out of poverty must be created to address the disproportionate poverty of Canadians with disabilities.

Conclusion

The government of Canada has a clear labour force agenda and one in which persons with disabilities can participate. We are a population in waiting – waiting for government to implement strategies and approaches which support people with disabilities to exercise their skills and expertise. Such action by the Government of Canada would demonstrate that they both recognize and value the place of people with disabilities in this country – after all, there is no “THOSE PEOPLE”. We are you.

Appendix – Demographics

Did You Know ...¹

Disability and Gender

Among working-age Canadians without disabilities, half are women (50.3%) whereas this is the case for slightly more than half of working-age Canadians with disabilities (53.2%).

Education, Employment and Social Assistance - Women tend to assume responsibility for childrearing and elder care and are more likely to be lone parents and to have fewer opportunities for stable, high-paid employment. It is therefore reasonable to anticipate that women with disabilities would be more likely than men to live in low-income households. The data reveals that women with disabilities are indeed slightly more likely than their male counterparts to live below the low-income cut-off (21.3% vs. 19.6%, respectively).

Among working-age women with disabilities who live in low-income households, nearly four in ten (38.6%) have not received a high school graduation certificate and only one in four (24.2%) are working at a job or business. Among women without disabilities, only 17.5% haven't received a high school graduation certificate and most (70.7%) are employed.

Among working-age women with disabilities who live in low-income households, half (49.5%) received social assistance in the past 12 months compared with fewer than one in ten (8.6%) whose household income was above the LICO.

Secondary and Post-Secondary Education among People with Disabilities

Working-age people with disabilities are more likely to have no formal educational certification – not even a high school diploma – than those without disabilities (27.4% and 18.3%, respectively) and are also less likely to have a university degree or certificate (13.2% vs. 20.7%).

Disability, Low-Income Status and Highest Level of Educational Certification

In general, regardless of the level of education obtained, people with disabilities are still about twice as likely to live on low incomes as people without disabilities.

For example, 28.7% of people with disabilities who don't have a high school graduation certificate are in low-income households, compared with 14.2% of their counterparts without disabilities. The two to one spread in low income rates between people with vs. without disabilities is similar for people with a high school graduation certificate (20.2% vs. 11.1%), trades certificate or diploma (17.8% vs. 9.2%) and a college certificate or diploma (17.0% vs. 8.3%).

¹ This information was produced through the Council of Canadians with Disabilities' Disabling Poverty/Enabling Citizenship project, which is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council's (SSHRC) Community-University Research Alliances (CURA).

However, the spread decreases where people with disabilities earn a degree, diploma or other certificate from a university. Here, 12.4% of people with disabilities and 8.2% without live on low incomes, a spread of 1.5 times instead of twice the rate of poverty.

Educational Experiences and Disability

Working-age people living below the LICO who acquired their disabilities before completing their formal education are more likely than their counterparts living above the LICO to report difficulties with their education.

These difficulties include starting school later than their same-aged peers (18.1% vs. 8.3%), changing schools because of disability (23.3% vs. 15.6%) and changing their course of study due to disability (24.7% vs. 17.2%).

This group is more likely than their counterparts living above the LICO to have experienced various forms of separation or segregation in the education system. For instance, they are more likely to have attended special schools or special classes in regular schools (25.8% vs. 17.9%), to have undergone home schooling (14.8% vs. 10.5%) and to have left their community to attend school because of disability (16.3% vs. 8.6%).

Members of this group are also more likely than their counterparts living above the LICO to report that they have had extra educational expenses because of disability (14.4% compared to 10.5%). As well, they are more likely to have experienced interruptions in their education (36.5% vs. 19.8%) and to have taken fewer courses than they would have if they didn't have a disability (39.3% vs. 22.4%). These factors contribute to this group's greater likelihood of reporting that they feel it has taken longer for them to achieve their present level of education (44.3% below vs. 24.5% of those living above the LICO).

Despite the increased likelihood of experiencing difficulty in obtaining an education, those who had disabilities prior to completing their formal education are more likely to return to school for re-training if they live below the LICO (31.9%) than if they live above it (21.6%).

Labour Force Status

According to Statistics Canada people with disabilities are persistently less likely to be employed than people without disabilities; in 2006 51.3% of working-age people with disabilities were employed compared to 75.1% of people without disabilities. However, only half with disabilities who are outside of the labour force indicate that they are completely prevented from working due to their disability and many who feel completely prevented face social and economic barriers to employment aside from disability itself.

The low employment level of people with disabilities helps to account for the greater prevalence of poverty they experience. Yet even those with disabilities who are employed are more likely to have a low income than those without disabilities (11% vs. 7.3%). Furthermore, among people with disabilities who are not working, the rate of low income is 1.5 times higher than for their counterparts who do not have disabilities.

People with disabilities on low incomes were almost twice as likely to work part-time for most of the year (40 to 48 weeks) compared to those without disabilities on low incomes (27% and 14.9%, respectively).