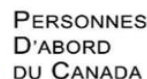


# Shaping Canada's Disability Inclusion Action Plan:

April 2023 - Executive Summary

Plain Language Version

Bridging the gap between lived experiences and policy through a community-led, capacity building and knowledge-exchange approach



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## Executive Summary and Recommendations

### What is the Disability Inclusion Action Plan?

In 2020, the Government of Canada decided to make the first Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP). It is just called the 'plan' in this report. The plan will make life better for people with disabilities.

The plan will do the following things.

- Improve inclusion of people with disabilities
- Reduce poverty for people with disabilities
- Remove barriers for people with disabilities
- Make it easier for people with disabilities to get programs and services
- Make sure the government thinks about disability inclusion
- Help Canadians be more inclusive
- Reduce the unfair treatment of people with disabilities in Canada

The plan will make things better in four areas. These areas are called 'pillars.' These pillars will support people with disabilities in Canada.

1. Having enough money: Reduce poverty with a Canada Disability Benefit (CDB).
2. Improving employment: Make it easier for people with disabilities to get jobs and work.
3. Making places and spaces inclusive: Remove barriers in public spaces.
4. Defining disability in a new way: Have a modern definition for disability. Make it easier to access programs.

The plan is a new way to improve inclusion. It is a complete plan for change. It includes many actions. These are all connected. They support each other. They work together to promote inclusion.

The plan will change many things at the same time. This will make disability inclusion better in all areas of life.

The plan will make sure government thinks about disability in everything they do. They will think about disability in all programs and services. There will be money for new programs. This will make positive changes.

There have been other programs to improve inclusion. The plan will build on these. It will also do more to make inclusion even better.

Community partners and people with disabilities have been part of creating the plan.

In this project, we talked to people with disabilities. We heard about their lives. They told us what they thought about the plan. They told us what should be in it. We did this to make sure they were part of creating the plan. This follows the saying “*Nothing Without Us.*” People with disabilities should be included in everything Canada does.

### What is in this report?

We wrote this report to make the plan better. We want to listen to people with disabilities in Canada. We want to show the following things.

- How they can be part of the community.
- How they can be included in jobs and the economy.
- What barriers they face getting programs and benefits.
- What is important to them.
- What they need to be included.

This will make sure Government programs include people with disabilities. It will show new ways to support people with disabilities. It will make sure the plan makes things better for them.

We thought about several important things when we did this project, including the following.

- There is not just one disability community. There are many. This process can bring them together.
- We needed to hear from people with a broad range of abilities.
- People with disabilities know the most about barriers. They know what works for them. They are the best people to talk about this.
- Inclusion of people with disabilities is good for everyone. Everyone’s life is better when everyone is included.
- Groups that support and work with people with disabilities should work together. This will really help remove barriers for everyone.

## What is disability?

We used a human rights model of disability. This is used by the Accessible Canada Act. It is used by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This model looks at impairments and barriers.

Some people have impairments. Their body or brain does not work the same way as most peoples. Here are some areas where people have impairments.

- Physical – Parts of the body
- Intellectual – The brain and thinking
- Sensory – Seeing and hearing

People with impairments can face barriers. These are things that get in their way. Here are some barriers they face.

- Attitudes – People think they can not do things
- Physical – Places are not accessible

Disability is caused when people with impairments run into barriers. The barrier stops them from doing things other people can do.

We thought about the other ways people can be. No one is just a person with a disability. There are other things about them. The following things about people can affect the barriers they face.

- Are they white, Black, Asian, or another race?
- Are they young or old?
- Are they a man or a woman?
- Are they gay or straight?
- Are they transgender?
- Do they have a job?
- Are they rich or poor?
- Do they have a place to live?
- Are they new to Canada?
- Are they Indigenous?

These are just some examples. In each person, these things are connected. Some people face different barriers because of this.

## Why did we do this report?

People and governments do not always listen to people with disabilities. People with disabilities are 'on the margins.' This means they are at the edges of their community. It is easy to ignore them. They are often left out and forgotten.

Some people with disabilities are never heard. They are 'on the margins of the margins.' They are the most excluded. They are the easiest to ignore.

There are many reasons some people with disabilities are ignored, here are some examples.

- They have very severe disabilities.
- They cannot speak.
- They cannot read or write.
- They live in remote places.
- They are poor.
- They do not have jobs.
- They are in long term care.
- They are in prison.
- They do not have homes.
- They belong to other groups that are excluded, like the following.
  - Women
  - Indigenous peoples
  - Children
  - Old people
  - Minority races
  - The Two Spirit Lesbian Gay Transgender Intersex Questioning community

We worked hard to find these people with disabilities and listen to them. They have lives and stories other people almost never hear.

This report includes these people with disabilities. Listening to them will make sure the Disability Inclusion Action Plan can help all people with disabilities.



## How did we prepare this report?

To prepare this report we listened to people with disabilities. They told us about barriers and challenges. They told us about ways to solve their problems. They told us how to promote inclusion. They told us how to make Canada more accessible.

We wrote a discussion guide. The guide had ideas on how to start talking about the plan.

We looked at each of the four pillars in the plan. Each pillar was led by a disability group, as shown below.

- Having enough money – Inclusion Canada
- Improving employment – Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work
- Making places and spaces inclusive – Canadian Association of the Deaf
- Defining disability in a new way – Eviance and People First of Canada

The groups talked to people with disabilities. They talked to groups that work with people with disabilities. They heard from them many different ways, including through the following ways.

- Public meetings
- Small group meetings
- Interviews with one person
- Letters
- Emails
- Phone calls and TTY (Teletype) calls

We met people with disabilities in new places and in new ways, including the following.

- Meeting online and offline
- Meeting during special events like Toronto Pride
- Talking to people without homes in Vancouver
- Meeting with deafblind people in Quebec

These are just some of the ways we reached people.

Almost everyone we spoke to had a disability. Most of them were 'on the margins' of the community.

We talked to people from every province and territory in Canada. Most people spoke to us in English. We also spoke to people in French. We used ASL and LSQ sign languages.

We did an accessible survey. This had 35 questions about the Disability Inclusion Action Plan. We did four town hall sessions. We told people what we had heard so far. They told us what they thought and gave us more ideas.

When we were done, we had heard from people with disabilities over 4000 times, in all these different ways.

## What did people tell us?

This report is about what they told us. This is some of what we heard on each pillar.

## Pillar 1: Having enough money

### What we learned

This is what we learned from people with disabilities. This part is about having enough money.

Living with a disability can be hard. It costs more money. It makes it harder to have a job. Many people with disabilities are poor. They have to make hard choices. They cannot pay for everything they need.

Some people with disabilities face even more barriers. This includes the following groups.

- Women
- Indigenous peoples
- Children
- Minority races
- People in the Two Spirit Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersex Questioning community



This makes it even harder to access support and services.

People with disabilities who are poor also feel alone. They do not feel like part of the community.

Accessible transport is hard to find. They cannot go out. It is hard to get to the doctor. It is hard to go to work or go shopping. It is hard to visit friends and family.

Family support is important. Family is the only thing that stops some people with disabilities from being poor.

Other people with disabilities do not have family support. This is not because of disability. It is often for another reason.

For example, some Indigenous people with disabilities do not have family support. This is because of how Indigenous people were treated in the past. This treatment broke up their families.

### **What should be done**

This is what people said should be done to help in this area.

The Canada Disability Benefit (CDB) is meant to help people with disabilities. It is just called the benefit in this report. People who get disability support payments now should get the benefit. They should not have to apply again.

People who do not get disability support payments should be able to apply for the benefit. We need to decide who can get the CDB. All people with disabilities should be included.

We should think about how disability affects their life. It should not just be a medical decision. People who are not doctors should be able to do this. They can help decide if someone has a disability.

Here are some other ideas people had about the Canada Disability Benefit.

- It should be for everyone who lives in Canada.
- People should get the benefit even if they have a job.
- People should get the benefit even if they have saved money. They should get it even if they have a house or a car.
- Some people may need to see a doctor to decide if they have a disability. This should be paid for by the benefit or another program.
- It should be easy to get the benefit. There should be different ways to get it.
- Government workers should be trained to help people get the benefit. They should be caring and inclusive.
- There should be help for people to apply for the benefit. Workers can show them how to get it. They can help people who need it the most.
- If someone does not get the benefit they should be told why. They should be able to appeal. This means someone else will look at the decision. They will decide if it was fair.
- People who get disability support payments now should keep getting them. They should not lose these payments. The benefit should be extra money for them.
- People should be able to work and earn money while they get the benefit.
- People should not need a Disability Tax Credit to get the benefit.
- People should not pay tax on the benefit.
- The benefit should make sure people with disabilities are not poor. It should help with the extra costs of having a disability.
- The benefit should be between \$2,200 and \$2,400 per month.
- The benefit should go up when prices go up.

Some people think every person with a disability should get the CDB. It should not matter how much money they make. Other people think that some people with disabilities who make money do not need the CDB.

Some people may need more CDB. This depends on what they need and where they live.

But it's not just money that people need help with. Below are other areas where people with disabilities need help.

- Personal support
- Accessible housing
- Assistive devices
- Accessible communication
- Accessible transport
- Healthcare
- Education
- Food
- Jobs

People with disabilities who live in the north part of Canada need extra help. They have problems that other people with disabilities in Canada do not have.

Canada should have a national disability insurance plan. This will help pay for the things people with disabilities need during their life.

## Pillar 2: Improving employment

### What we learned

This is what we learned from people with disabilities. This part is about employment and having a job.

Many things got harder because of Covid. Here are some examples.

People needed training for jobs. But employers were not giving much training. They still do not have enough people working for them. They still do not have enough people to train new workers.

People could not travel during Covid. It was hard to connect to new people and groups. This made it harder to look for work.

People with disabilities saw the support people got during Covid. People who lost work got benefits like CERB very easily. CERB is the Canada Emergency Response Benefit. This was money for people who could not go to work during the first 6 months of Covid. It was \$2,000.00 per month.

It was easy to get. People did not have to wait. They did not have to prove they needed it. People with disabilities think this was not fair. It is much harder to get benefits as a person with a disability. People with disabilities often lose benefits if they work.

Covid also changed how people work. Many jobs now do not last long. More jobs are part time. People often have to work more than one job. Many new jobs are things like delivery services. More jobs are done from home.

Some people think work from home is better for people with disabilities. But there are still problems. There are other issues. People with disabilities may need someone to visit them on the job. They may need help with workspace accommodations. They may need ways to connect to other workers. This did not happen during Covid even if people were working on site.

## What should be done

This is what people said should be done to help in this area.

Most job programs are run by provinces. People in one province do not know what other provinces are doing. This makes it hard to learn new ways to do things.

There should be a system to share information. Groups in different provinces can tell each other what they are doing. They can share ideas that work for them.

People with disabilities need help to look for work. Employers also need support. They need tools and ideas to help them hire people with disabilities.

There should be a National Accommodation Fund. This Fund will help employers pay for accommodations for people with disabilities. This is really important for smaller businesses. The fund should also stop claw backs when people with disabilities find work. The fund should have room to account for rising prices.

We need to share ideas to help people with disabilities who are looking for work. This was very important during Covid. Job coaches were not able to help people at the job site during this time.

People at all levels should have a place to share ideas. Ideas can be shared between people, between groups supporting people with disabilities, and between governments.

It should be easy to these share ideas. People should not have to write long reports or fill out forms.

## Pillar 3: Making places and spaces inclusive

### What we learned

This is what we learned from people with disabilities. This part is about being able to access and use places and spaces.

Barriers make it hard to be part of a community. There are many kinds of barriers. There are barriers in the following areas.

- How places and spaces are built
- How people communicate
- How technology is made and used
- How rules and policies are made and followed
- How society thinks about people with disabilities

There are many reasons for barriers. It happens in all parts of society. Plans are made without thinking about people with disabilities. They are excluded. They are not thought of as part of the community. It often has to do with not knowing what barriers they face. Planners do not know what people with disabilities need. They do not understand disability. This means people with disabilities are left out.

This is not only about getting into places and spaces. That is not enough. Everything has to be accessible and inclusive, including in the following areas.

- Things everyone can do
  - Going out
  - Going to events
  - Shopping
  - Sports and games
  - Other activities
- Getting support
- Rules and policies

## What should be done

This is what people said should be done to help in this area.

The Canadian Government looks after many things. Here are a few examples.

- Airlines and Railways
- National highways
- Post office
- Banks
- Television, radio and the Internet

The Government should take action to remove barriers in these areas. They should see how important this is for people with disabilities. The Government should work hard to make the things they run more accessible, like the following.

- Government buildings
- Public spaces, like parks and museums
- Benefit programs

Older buildings should be fixed so they are accessible to everyone.

The Government should think of all groups, including people with disabilities. They should respect their needs.

The Government should use more ASL and LSQ to help Deaf people. They should improve services for the Deaf in the following areas.

- Buildings
- Emergency services
- Offices
- Telephone and online services

Emergency services and messages should be sent in many different ways. They should be accessible for everyone. People should also be able to get Government services in many different ways. It should not just be by phone or over a computer.

Virtual and online spaces should be accessible. They should be built this way.



There should be a Video Remote Interpreting Service. This can be used by the public and the Government.

Government employees need to learn how to remove barriers. They need to change rules and policies to remove many barriers.

## Pillar 4: Defining disability in a new way

### What we learned

This is what we learned from people with disabilities. This part is about defining disability in a new way

People with disabilities are people. They have the same rights as everyone else. They deserve respect.

People with disabilities can do many things. We should think about what people with disabilities can do. We should think about what they could do with more support. We should not just be concerned with the things they cannot do.

There are many programs and services for people with disabilities. We need to decide who can use them. Sometimes we need to decide who has a disability. This has to be fair. We cannot leave out some people with disabilities.

Sometimes people with disabilities need to tell us medical things. This can be very personal. They need to talk about their bodies or brains. They need to talk about being sick or getting hurt. This can help show what their disability is. It can help decide what support they get.

These are very private questions. We should not ask too much. We should ask only what we need to know. When we look at disability, we should not only think about medical problems.

Some programs and services are not for all people with disabilities. They need to decide which people with disabilities can use them. They might need to know more about a person's disability. People with disabilities need to be treated well when this happens. They need to be part of the process.

## What should be done

This is what people said should be done to help in this area.

There needs to be a new way to define disability. It should take into account the following ideas.

- It should be inclusive.
- It should be able to grow and change.
- It should include everything about a person.
- It should work for all programs and services.
- It should treat people fairly and with respect.
- Each program can have different rules about who can use it. All of them should define disability the same way.
- People should be able to use different ways to show they have a disability. They should not always have to use a doctor.
- People should only have to show that they have a disability once. They should not have to prove it over and over again.
- People should be able to challenge decisions. If they disagree, the decision should be reviewed.

The information about this should be in plain language. People should be able to get it in different ways. They should get it in a way they can understand.

Disability affects people in different ways at different times. Something can be easy for a person with a disability with support. The same thing can be very hard without support. It can be easy to do something at home but hard to do it at work. We need to remember this. We need to think about how disability affects people everywhere they go. It is not always the same.

We need to look at barriers people face in different parts of their life. These can stop them from being a full part of the community. A person with a disability who can go to the store might not be able to go to work. A person with a disability who needs a support person cannot go out any time they want to. We need to think about how this affects them.

Some people with disabilities have times when they are better and times when they are worse. Their disability is not always the same. Other people have disabilities that are the same all the time. We need to think about both types.

We should think about how a disability affects a person over time. We should not just look at them at one time. Their disability could be different at another time.

The new approach should let all people with disabilities be equal to everyone else. They are a part of Canada like everyone else. They should be treated the same in these areas.

- With the same rights
- With the same benefits
- With the same responsibilities

## Conclusion

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan is a very important project. It will promote inclusion for people with disabilities in Canada. It will make Canada more accessible.

In this project we wanted to work with the whole disability community. We wanted to hear from everyone. We wanted them to be a part of our work.

We made sure that we heard from people with disabilities 'on the margins of the margins.' We listened to them. We thought about them when we wrote this report.

The people and groups who did this project want to thank everybody who took part. We thank them for what they told us. We thank them for their ideas. We thank all the people with disabilities who helped us.

This project worked because people with disabilities were a part of it. They told us what they thought. They were helpful and thoughtful. We learned a lot from people with disabilities. They gave us many ideas and solutions.

We did some town hall sessions. We told people what we had heard. We told them what we would put in the report. Almost everyone said we got it right. Our report matched what they knew from their own lives. Most people told us that there was nothing missing from the report.

We did not hear enough from some people with disabilities. We need to talk more to some groups, like the following.

- People with mental health problems
- People with chemical sensitivities. These are people who get sick from many things around them. Things like smoke, soap, perfume, or mold make them sick.

The plan can make Canada more inclusive. If it is going to work it has to include people with disabilities. We need to listen to people with disabilities and include what they tell us. They must always be part of it. We must always ask people with disabilities and the groups that support them how we are doing. We must listen to their ideas to make the Disability Inclusion Action Plan better.

This summary is available in the following formats.

- Plain language
- French
- ASL
- LSQ

To access different formats, visit [www.muscle.ca/diap](http://www.muscle.ca/diap).