



50 years

Canadian
Association for
Community Living

Diversity includes.

Federal Election 2015

Inclusion Matters to Canada

www.inclusionmatters.ca

Canadians with an intellectual disability and their families are calling for:

Access, Opportunity & Inclusion

750,000 Canadians with intellectual disabilities, and their millions more family members face almost insurmountable barriers to social and economic opportunity in their communities. The federal government has the policy levers to address this situation, yet:

- ▶ Pervasive poverty exists among adults with intellectual disabilities. Only 25% of people with intellectual disabilities are in the regular workforce, compared to 75% of the general population.
- ▶ Lost economic productivity and income from labour force exclusion is mounting. For family members trying to juggle caregiving responsibilities and their paid jobs, the loss is estimated at \$1.3 billion annually.
- ▶ Access barriers in housing, education, training, the workplace, transportation, health care, community services and recreation continue to negatively impact health and social well-being.

Fact: Almost 50% of adults with intellectual disabilities live on social assistance at working age.

Fact: People with intellectual disabilities are at higher risk of cancer and ill-health, twice as likely to have core housing needs and four times more likely to experience violence and abuse than the general population.

An inclusive labour market, economic opportunity, income security and community access are within reach for Canadians with disabilities and their families; and within the power of the federal government to make happen. We believe it starts with a five-point plan.

Five-Point Plan for an Inclusive Canada

1. Protect and promote **HUMAN RIGHTS**
2. Address **POVERTY** and **INCOME INSECURITY**
3. Opening the **LABOUR MARKET**
4. Support and strengthen **FAMILIES**
5. Improve **ACCESS**



1. Protect and Promote Human Rights

▷▷ Reinstatement Court Challenges Program & Implement the UN Convention

The Supreme Court of Canada and all levels of government have recognized the historic disadvantage, discrimination and exclusion of people with disabilities. Canada's record on protecting and promoting the rights of people with disabilities is in question, given persistent poverty and exclusion. Proactive measures are urgently needed to ensure people with intellectual and other disabilities can enjoy their rights, and have them realized in practice, including:

- ▶ In consultation with people with disabilities, their families, and their representative organizations, develop and implement a plan to meet Canada's obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- ▶ Re-introduce the cancelled Court Challenges Program to assist people with disabilities (and other disadvantaged groups) in securing legal recognition of their constitutional rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Questions for the candidates:

- ▶ How will you improve Canada's record on protecting and promoting the rights of people with disabilities?
- ▶ How would you support the development and implementation of a plan to improve Canada's alignment with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities?

2. Address Poverty and Income Insecurity

▷▷ Make the Disability Tax Credit Refundable

The Disability Tax Credit (DTC) currently provides tax relief for just one-third of working age Canadians with severe and very severe disabilities. However, for most of the 750,000 working age people with severe and very severe disabilities the DTC is of limited assistance, because their income and earnings are too low to be taxable. Which means most of this group live in poverty and without the resources to cover disability-related expenses. Keeping the credit non-refundable contributes to a vicious cycle of poverty and disability. Refundability would provide indexed income to help cover disability-related costs, possibly paid on a monthly or quarterly basis.



Questions for the candidates:

- ▶ What is your solution for 2/3 of working age Canadians with disabilities that do not qualify for the Disability Tax Credit?
- ▶ Would you consider a Basic Income Program that would replace provincial/territorial social assistance for most working-age persons with severe disabilities?

3. Open the Labour Market

▷▷ Expand Federal Labour Force Inclusion Initiatives

Less than 50% of people with disabilities are employed (an even lower rate for people with intellectual disabilities), compared to almost 80% of non-disabled Canadians. The gap is not closing. Opening the Labour Market for Canadians with disabilities is essential and could be achieved through:

- ▶ Increased investment in the Opportunities Fund and in federal transfers to provinces and territories (Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities)
- ▶ Enhanced, targeted initiatives focused on building employer confidence and demand for recruiting and hiring people with disabilities (like the Ready, Willing & Able initiative). For more on RWA visit: readywillingable.ca

Questions for the candidates:

- ▶ With less than 50% of people with disabilities employed, is closing the employment gap for individuals with disabilities on your radar? Why or why not?
- ▶ How will you ensure federal-provincial partnerships and programs like Ready, Willing & Able lead to jobs for individuals with disabilities?

4. Support and Strengthen Families

▷▷ Enhance Tax Fairness & Community Innovation

Families are the front line of support, access and inclusion for children, youth and many adults with disabilities. Yet, the majority are without the financial resources, employment accommodations, or community support to play this role. The federal government could play a leadership role in meeting needs and strengthening the role of families in making inclusion a reality, by enhancing tax fairness and investing in community innovation:

- ▶ Enhance the Canada Disability Child Benefit by improving benefits and transition to a 'Child and Youth Benefit' for eligible individuals age 19 to 30.
- ▶ Provide Canada Pension Plan contributions on behalf of family caregivers who have stayed out of the paid labour market in order to provide long-term support and care to a family member with significant disability.
- ▶ Expand capacity of families and caregivers to meet disability-related and respite needs through targeted initiatives to: 1) Provide information and navigation support to families supporting a family member with a disability; 2) Build family-to-family networks for mutual support; 3) Promote disability- and family-friendly community and health care services; and 4) Strengthen employer support for family caregiving responsibilities as recommended by the 'Employer Panel for Caregivers,' released in January 2015.



Questions for the candidates:

- ▶ How will this <Liberal, Conservative, NDP, or Green> government empower families of individuals with disabilities to make inclusion a reality by enhancing tax fairness and investing in community innovation?
- ▶ Would you support enhancing the Canada Disability Child Benefit into a 'Child and Youth Benefit' for eligible individuals age 19 to 30?
- ▶ What ideas do you have to strengthen government supports for families who support individuals with disabilities?

5. Improve Access

▶▶ Adopt a Canadians with Disabilities Act

Federal leadership on accessibility is needed to address long standing access barriers. A federal Canadians with Disabilities Act would mandate accessibility standards in federally-regulated programs, facilities, benefits, communications and services. This legislation would be based on principles of universal design, effective participation, and equality of opportunity, and would be a major step in Canada meeting its obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Standards would be monitored, enforceable, and reported on to Parliament and Canadians every year by the responsible minister.

**Questions for the candidates:**

- ▶ What is your stance on a Canadians with Disabilities Act?
- ▶ How will you accomplish the legislation of a Canadians with Disabilities Act and by when?

For more information

Visit: www.inclusionmatters.ca

Email: inform@cacl.ca

Follow us on social media:



Canadian Association
for Community Living



@CACL_ACIC

Join the conversation about the 2015 Federal Election using hashtags #elxn42 and #cdnpoli. Use hashtag #inclusion to talk with us and others around the world about issues around the inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities in community.

Visit Elections Canada for all you need to get out and vote.

To find out how to vote, where to vote, and voting rules and rights, please visit www.inclusionmatters.ca for Election Canada resources specific to individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families.