



# The VOICE of Albertans with Disabilities

June 28, 2021

## Accessibility in Alberta

*If you became disabled, what impact would that have on your life?*

*Would your career or workplace be open to you?*

*Would you be able to access your favorite restaurant or store?*

*How would your financial situation change?*

*How would it affect your family?*

*Would you be able to access your community?*

For many people with disabilities, many barriers exist preventing them from performing everyday tasks, some as simple as gaining wheelchair access to a building or as complex as social barriers such as filling out paperwork for government programs or accessing referrals to other resources.

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities is a provincial non-profit organization dedicated to promote programs and procedures that pledge equal opportunity for all individuals with disabilities and to empower them to achieve self-sufficiency, independent living, inclusion and integration into all aspects of society and community life. We conduct research into disability issues so we can speak with a united and unified voice to improve the quality of life through educational, legislative, and social policy changes.

For over forty-five years, Voice of Albertans with Disabilities has promoted full participation in society by all Albertans. As a cross-disability organization we bring disability issues to the attention of government officials, influencer establishments, and other organizations in order to break down barriers that stop people with disabilities from fully participating in society.

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities has worked hard to ensure that Albertans with disabilities are heard. Our activities include projects and research, school presentations, building accessibility assessments, public education, partnerships with disability organizations and information and referral services. We support individuals by assisting with applications for government programs.

We believe in the principles of Accessibility, Equity, and Inclusion.

Our slogan "Together, We Hold The Power" reflects our

commitment to developing effective dynamic partnerships with like-minded organizations and individuals.

### MISSION STATEMENT

*We actively promote full participation in society and provide a voice for Albertans with disabilities.*

Sam Mason, VAD's Accessibility Coordinator, can work with your organization to create a plan for accessibility.

Here are some easy accessibility tips for your organization to implement.

- Bring an accessibility lens to every decision moving forward, even if you can't control it right now, make sure it is considered!
- Caption any audio content you put out. (built into Facebook and Youtube, but go over them to make sure they are correct-you only have to do this once and it's important). Zoom does have a caption feature but someone has to do it, Google meet has it built in. YouTube offers various closed captioning options.
- Use ALT text, or image/video descriptions for all visuals you put out (there is space to do it on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter for images, it can be done in the caption/post/tweet and video descriptions have to be put into the main body of the post, or can be put in a second tweet).
- Ask if anyone needs accommodations or has preferences: On contact forms, on job postings, on meeting invites, and more. Give them space to tell you what would make things better/easier and do it deliberately.
- Contact Sam at 780-488-9088 or email her at [accessibility@vadsociety.ca](mailto:accessibility@vadsociety.ca) for more information about accessibility assessments and easy tips for your business to implement.





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## The Edmonton Epilepsy Association



### Our Vision - Empowering People Who Live With Epilepsy

Our Mission - To assure the well being of persons with epilepsy through increased public awareness and education. The objective of the Edmonton Epilepsy Association is to promote, in any way possible, an improved life for persons with epilepsy, their families and caregivers.

### Our Programs & Services

- Advocacy
- Epilepsy 101 Webinars
- Educational Webinars
- HOBSCOTCH (Memory Coaching Program)
- Kids on the Block Epilepsy Puppet Show
- Educational Scholarships
- Member Activities
- Mentoring Program
- Epilepsy Educational Booklets



## Bill C-35 Canada

### Backgrounder

The Government of Canada has introduced legislation to create a new Canada Disability Benefit (CDB). The benefit would help reduce poverty among low-income, working-age Canadians with disabilities by providing direct financial support. The CDB is a cornerstone of

Canada's first-ever Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP), a commitment made in the 2020 Speech from the Throne. Engagement on the Action Plan is underway with a focus on developing concrete actions that will contribute to:

- reducing poverty;
- creating more good quality jobs for persons with disabilities;



*Together, We Hold the Power!*

**Full Participation - Accessibility - Equity**



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- helping to realize the Accessible Canada Act's stated objective of a barrier-free Canada by 2040;
- making it easier for persons with disabilities to access federal benefits, programs and services; and
- fostering a culture of inclusion to equalize long-standing inequities.

In the spirit and principle of “nothing without us”, the CDB will be developed in consultation with persons with disabilities, disability organizations, Indigenous representatives and other stakeholders. The Government will also engage its provincial and territorial government partners on the CDB, as they play a central role in providing support to many Canadians with disabilities.

Beyond the introduction of CDB legislation, the Government will continue to support persons with disabilities in the post-pandemic recovery by continuing to build back better while “leaving no one behind”. The CDB legislation is the latest step to building a more accessible and disability inclusive Canada

Since 2015, the Government of Canada has named a Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities, and signed on to both the Marrakesh Treaty and the Optional Protocol of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The Accessible Canada Act (ACA) came into force on July 11, 2019. The Act includes seven priority areas: employment; the built environment; communication; information and communication technologies; the procurement of goods, services and facilities; the design and delivery of programs and services; and transportation.

Accessibility Standards Canada was established by the ACA to create, review and revise accessibility standards, and to lead research, in order to support society reach the highest level of accessibility and inclusion for all Canadians.

The Government of Canada created the COVID-19 Disability Advisory Group to advise the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion on the lived experiences of persons with

disabilities during the pandemic, along with disability-specific issues, systemic gaps and potential responses. Beginning October 30, 2020, the Government provided a one-time payment of up to \$600 to support Canadians with disabilities with additional expenses incurred during the pandemic.

On September 23, 2020, the Government committed in its Speech from the Throne to bring forward the first-ever Disability Inclusion Action Plan that includes: a new Canada Disability Benefit modelled on the Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors;

- a robust employment strategy for Canadians with disabilities with a focus on training, employment supports, barrier removal and the business case for disability inclusion; and,
- a new, inclusive process to determine eligibility for federal government disability programs and benefits – one that reflects a modern understanding of disability.

On February 15, 2021, the Canada Gazette (Part 1) published for comment the first set of proposed Accessible Canada Regulations under the ACA.

The Government of Canada is processing applications to fill two Governor in Council appointments, the Accessibility Commissioner and a Chief Accessibility Officer who will work to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility. The deadline for applications is June 28, 2021.

On June 4, 2021, the Minister launched the first round of engagement on the development of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan. Canadians can complete an online survey until August 31, 2021.

#### News release

June 22, 2021, Gatineau, Quebec

Employment and Social Development Canada  
Canadians with disabilities are twice as likely to live in poverty than those without disabilities, a situation that has been made even worse by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. By addressing the longstanding inequities that lead to financial insecurity, hardships and social exclusion faced by persons with disabilities, the Government of Canada is delivering on its



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commitment to building a disability-inclusive Canada.

As part of the Government of Canada's plan to ensure an inclusive recovery that "leaves no one behind", the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Carla Qualtrough, introduced new legislation today that would establish the framework for a new Canada Disability Benefit.

This ground-breaking legislation would enable the Government of Canada to take a proactive approach in the creation and delivery of the new benefit, to support working-age Canadians with disabilities. The Canada Disability Benefit would supplement, not replace, existing federal and provincial-territorial supports with a goal of lifting hundreds of thousands of persons with disabilities out of poverty.

In the spirit of "Nothing Without Us", the Government of Canada will build on the legislation introduced today to engage with stakeholders and persons with disabilities to have their voices heard on the design of the benefit leading up to the development of regulations. This engagement has already started with the recent launch of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan, a public survey that asks Canadians how the Government of Canada can build a barrier-free country. Engagement activities will continue through the summer and fall.

The legislation also recognizes the leading role that provinces and territories play in providing supports and services to Canadians with disabilities and the importance of engaging with them in developing income and other supports. Federal, Provincial and Territorial (FPT) Ministers responsible for Social Services and Disability intend to meet this summer for an initial discussion on the proposed new benefit.

The Government of Canada committed in the 2020 Speech from the Throne to develop the first-ever Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP). This plan will include:

- a new Canada Disability Benefit;
- a robust employment strategy for Canadians with disabilities;
- and a better process to determine eligibility for federal disability programs and benefits.

The new Canada Disability Benefit is the cornerstone of this plan.

*"When the pandemic struck, Canadians with disabilities were hit hard. Many experienced job loss and financial pressures, which increased existing financial insecurity and hardship. By proposing to create the new Canada Disability Benefit, the Government of Canada is respond-*

*ing to the unique and vital needs of persons with disabilities. This supplementary income benefit would help people to rebound and to fully participate in all aspects of our society and economy. It would address the long-standing financial hardships experienced by persons with disabilities predating the pandemic, and would be an investment in the realization of a fully inclusive society. Canadians with disabilities continue to be at the centre of our country's inclusive recovery."*

– Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Carla Qualtrough

#### Quick facts

According to the 2017 Canadian Survey of Disabilities, nearly 850,000 (21%) working-age Canadians with disabilities live in poverty. Persons with severe disabilities (26%) and very severe disabilities (31%) are particularly vulnerable and experience a high rate of poverty, nearly three times the rate of persons without disabilities (11%). Working-age Canadians with more severe disabilities, who live alone (44%) and are lone parents (37%), are more likely to live below the poverty line.

Among persons with disabilities, women, members of the LGBTQ2 community, racialized Canadians and Indigenous people are more likely to be financially insecure.

The Government of Canada provides supports to Canadians with disabilities, largely seniors and children, through direct targeted, statutory income programs and tax measures. It also awards grants and contributions through third-party disability organizations.

Public engagement on the Disability Inclusion Action Plan is open until August 31, 2021. Canadians are encouraged to complete the online survey and share their views, to help guide the development of the Plan.

Budget 2021 committed the Government to undertaking consultations with stakeholders that would feed directly into the design of the new disability benefit, including engagement with provinces and territories, which play a central role in providing support to many Canadians with disabilities.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/news/2021/06/background-supporting-canadians-with-disabilities---canada-disability-benefit.html>



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## Canada Disability Benefit Design Recommendations

In 2020, the Government of Canada promised to introduce a new Canada Disability Benefit. This document explains Inclusion Canada's suggested design for this benefit.

*"This benefit has the potential to significantly address issues of inequality, poverty and discrimination experienced by people with disabilities." - Inclusion Canada*



The Government promised to talk with people, provinces, and territories about the benefit. They haven't said when the benefit will be ready for people to start getting payments.

The Government of Canada said the new Canada Disability Benefit will:

- be a new permanent income support program from the Canadian Government
- focus on low to modest-income people with disabilities
- support working-age people with disabilities (usually 18-64)
- be modelled after the Old Age Security (OAS) and Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) program (OAS/GIS)

Who we think should get the benefit:

- people with a disability
- to start, 'disability' should, at minimum, include everyone who already gets federal disability benefits or provincial/territorial disability income assistance
- the definition of disability should then be expanded to align with the Accessible Canada Act

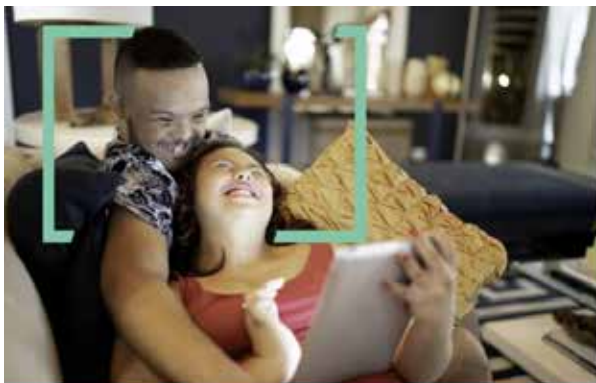


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#### How we think it should work:

- apply anytime
- no employment requirement or asset test
- automatically signed-up when you file your income tax return
- information and application processes are accessible and easy to understand
- move between provinces and still get the benefit

#### What we think the benefit should look like:

- up to \$2,200 a month. When combined with other federal, provincial/territorial programs brings all people with disabilities up to a minimum income of \$2,200 per month
- paid to every person who qualifies
- allows people to earn and keep their employment income
- no income tax paid on the benefit money
- benefit amount increased four times per year to keep up with the cost of living



#### We don't want:

- existing benefits and supports reduced or eliminated (federal or provincial/territorial)
- the benefit tied to family income or paid to the household
- a lower benefit for people who are married or live with someone else.
- people with disabilities being excluded and left in poverty
- decisions being made without the disability community's meaningful participation
- this process to take too long - people with disabilities need financial support now

#### How you can help:

##### Spread the word


- tell a friend about this issue
- share this document with someone

##### Click [here](#) to call, email or write to your Member of Parliament

- tell them why the Canada Disability Benefit matters to you.
- ask them to support Inclusion Canada's design.
- share this document with them

#### Follow us on social media

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Share our posts about the Canada Disability Benefit

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