

# Advancing the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

## Executive Summary

A Government of Canada Report  
December 2002

*“Let the world see in  
Canada a society marked  
by innovation and  
inclusion, by excellence  
and justice”*

The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien  
Prime Minister of Canada

“  
*The Government of Canada has made it a priority to remove barriers to full participation for persons with disabilities. We want to make an inclusive society part of our heritage for the 21st century.*”

Jane Stewart,  
Minister of Human Resources Development

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This report is also available in large print, on audio cassette, in Braille and on computer diskette by calling 1 800 O-Canada.

The information in this Executive Summary is drawn from the main report *Advancing the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities*.

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Cat. No.: RH37-4/1-2002-1  
ISBN: 0-662-67027-2

## Introduction

All Canadians, including persons with disabilities, have rights and responsibilities under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Research shows however that too many people with disabilities still face barriers to full participation in society despite the important contribution of policies and programs of the Government of Canada.

This first comprehensive report on disability in Canada describes where our country has made progress, how the Government of Canada has contributed, and where work remains to be done. The report presents a profile of disability, describes disability related issues and reviews the Government's progress toward inclusion based on a framework of societal outcomes and indicators.

Governments, communities, families, volunteer organizations, learning institutions, the private sector and labour are all important partners in addressing disability issues.

Since the early 80s, the Government of Canada and provincial and territorial governments have introduced initiatives, enhanced programs and reformed legislation to support the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

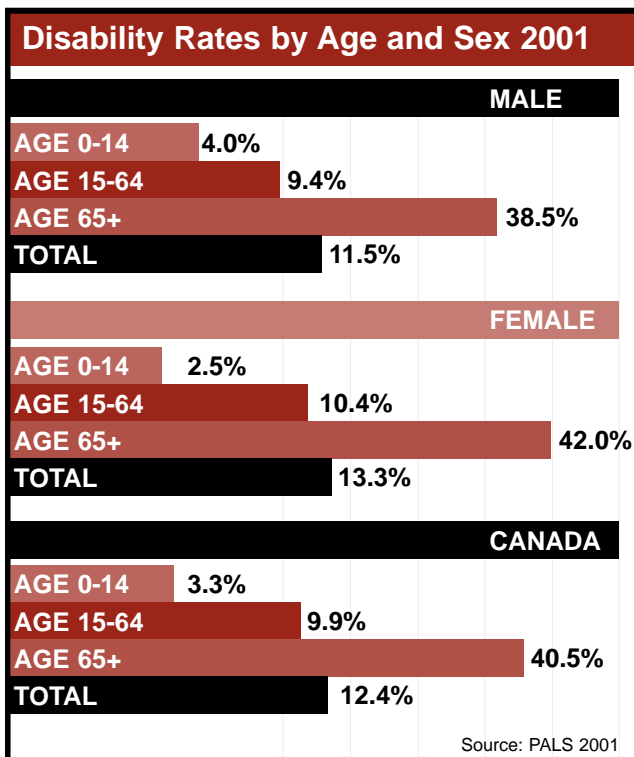
Despite these efforts, by the mid-1990s it was clear that much remained to be done. In 1996, the Prime Minister and the provincial and territorial premiers declared that disability issues and the needs of children were priorities for continued social policy renewal.

## PROFILE OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN CANADA

In 2001 there were 3.6 million Canadians—1 in 8—with disabilities, according to the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS).

Disabilities vary widely in their cause, duration and effect on a person's life. Some people have more than one disability.

In many cases it is societal barriers—for instance, inadequate transportation or lack of modifications in the home—that create limitations for persons with disabilities. Some Canadians with severe disabilities can participate fully in society, but some with much milder disabilities cannot because of these barriers.



Persons with disabilities face significant obstacles in education, employment and income, as well as challenges in transportation, communication and accessibility.

### **Aboriginal persons with disabilities**

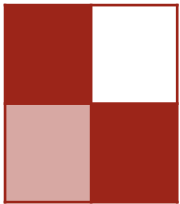
Information about Aboriginal persons with disabilities is very limited with most detailed data coming from the 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey. As more information becomes available, the Government of Canada will be better equipped to identify indicators and assist Aboriginal persons with disabilities participate in society more fully.

### **IMPROVING OUR KNOWLEDGE BASE ON DISABILITY**

Developing policy to advance the full inclusion of Canadians with disabilities in society requires knowledge of their current situation, the issues they face and the successes and limitations of existing policy. In recent years, however, the limitations of current information have hampered progress in this area.

Much of the information in this report comes from Census 1991 and Census 1996, and from national surveys in which people identify themselves as having disabilities.

Some preliminary data from the new PALS is provided in this report. Statistics Canada indicates that it is not possible to develop reliable trend data by comparing information from Health and Activity Limitation Survey (HALS) 1991 and PALS. The new PALS survey used an improved approach to survey persons with disabilities, enhancing the identification of disabilities such as learning, memory, developmental and psychological disabilities, as well, intermittent and cyclical disabilities.



## Measuring Progress On Inclusion

In 1999 the Government of Canada released its disability agenda, entitled *Future Directions to Address Disability Issues for the Government of Canada: Working Together for Full Citizenship*. *Future Directions* builds on the framework introduced in 1998 by *In Unison*, the federal, provincial and territorial vision of full inclusion for persons with disabilities.

In 1999 the Government of Canada made a commitment to Parliament to report regularly on the Government's progress on disability issues, and to report in a way that reflects the key principles of the *In Unison* framework.

The accountability framework presented in this first Government of Canada report builds on the groundwork laid by *Future Directions* and the indicators developed for the *In Unison* framework.

The report is structured around five outcomes and their indicators developed in consultation with the disability community and Aboriginal representatives:

The report describes the indicators that measure progress toward ensuring that persons with disabilities have

### FIVE INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

Disability supports
Skills development, learning and employment
Income
Injury prevention and health promotion
Capacity of the disability community

the supports and tools they need. It also describes the Government of Canada's commitments and actions in each area, including highlights of specific programs and services.



## Disability Supports

The daily activities that Canadians take for granted—getting up in the morning, showering, getting dressed, reading a sign, taking the bus to work, remembering a phone number, buying groceries, walking to school, caring for a home—can present sizeable challenges for persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities and governments alike have agreed that disability supports are critical to full inclusion at all ages and stages of life.

### SIX INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

Help with everyday activities
Aids or devices for everyday activities
Home modifications
Local and long-distance transportation
Information in multiple formats
Health care requirements

### SOME KEY FINDINGS

- In 1991 there were over 800,000 persons with disabilities aged 15 and over whose homes required either interior or exterior modifications or both; only a minority of those persons had all the modifications they needed.
- Families remain the most important source of help with daily activities. Many persons with disabilities do not have the aids they need.
- Access to transportation is often inadequate, varying greatly among urban, rural and remote communities.
- Persons with disabilities are less likely to receive the health care they believe they need than those without disabilities.



## Government Action – *Examples*

The Government of Canada through recent budgets has enriched existing programs and measures and added new ones to assist persons with disabilities and those who care for them. Specific measures include:

- Tax measures (Disability Tax Credit, Caregiver Tax Credit, Medical Expense Tax Credit and Infirm Dependant Tax Credit);
- Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program for Persons with Disabilities;
- Home Adaptations for Seniors' Independence;
- FlexHousing;
- Veterans Independence Programs and Transition Services Initiative; and
- Information resources (Persons with Disabilities On-line, Disability WebLinks, Access to travel website, increased closed captioning from major broadcasters).

In addition, the Government of Canada is continuing work to improve disability supports for Canadians with disabilities and moving forward on commitments made in the Speech from the Throne “*to put in place targeted measures for low-income families caring for children with severe disabilities*”.

While provinces, territories and municipalities have jurisdiction over local transportation systems operating wholly within their boundaries, the Government of Canada is continuing its efforts to advance research on accessible transportation.



## Skills Development, Learning and Employment

By the year 2020, Canada may have a shortage of nearly one million workers. Skills development and learning are some of the government's highest priorities for Canadians, especially for persons with disabilities and Aboriginal people. Research shows that persons with disabilities still encounter a number of barriers to full participation in learning and work.

### SIX INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

Children aged six to 15 attending school
Working-age adults with post-secondary diplomas or degrees
Employment rate
Persons employed all year
Hourly wage
Employers providing facilities, equipment or aids to accommodate persons with disabilities

### SOME KEY FINDINGS

- Canadian adults with disabilities are about two thirds as likely to have a post-secondary education as adults without disabilities.
- Consultations on *Knowledge Matters* pointed to a strong consensus that Canada's priority should be to invest in the skills of Canadians - in particular, to bring Aboriginal people, people with disabilities and older workers into the mainstream workforce.
- The 1996 Census found that persons with disabilities are only half as likely to be employed as those without disabilities, and the situation deteriorated since 1991.
- People with disabilities work for lower wages.



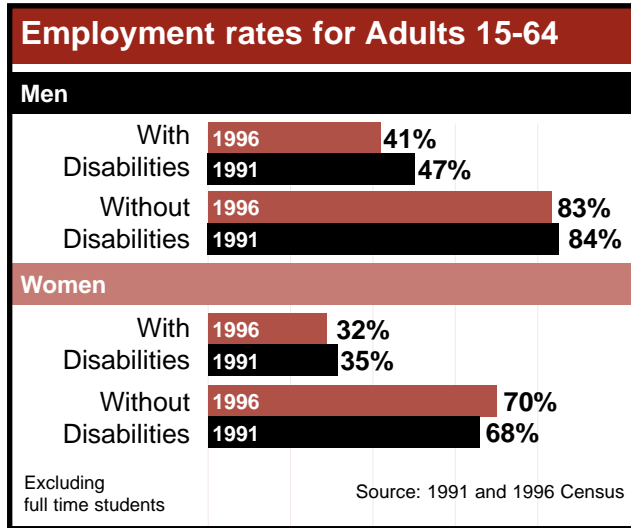
## Government Action – *Examples*

The Government of Canada has made significant investments to assist persons with disabilities take advantage of skills development, learning and employment opportunities. Specific measures include:

- Increased funding for First Nations children with disabilities who live on reserve and Inuit children with disabilities;
- Increased funding for the Canada Study Grants for Students with Disabilities;
- Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities with a special component for Aboriginal persons with disabilities;
- Canada Pension Plan Vocational Rehabilitation Program;
- Tax measures (refundable medical expense supplement, attendant care deduction, childcare expenses deduction for children with disabilities);
- Government of Canada as a model employer (*Employment Equity Act* for employers under federal jurisdiction, Employment Equity Positive Measures Program, policy on the Duty to Accommodate Persons with Disabilities);

In addition, the Government of Canada is currently working on its commitment to “fast track a comprehensive agreement with provinces and territories to remove barriers to participation in employment and learning for persons with disabilities” as well as working with the provinces and territories to develop a successor agreement to the Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities initiative which expires at the end of March 2003.

As a result of the recent review of the *Employment Equity Act*, the Government of Canada has begun developing workplace integration strategies to support the hiring and job retention of persons with disabilities and Aboriginal people in both the private and public sectors.





## Income

The ability to earn an adequate income can be influenced by a number of factors, among them health, access to education and training, employment opportunities in the community and transportation. For persons with disabilities, the added costs of disability can reduce the amount of income available for other needs.

### THREE INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

Household income
Persons living in-low income households
Major source of personal income

### SOME KEY FINDINGS

- In Canada there is an income gap between households of people with disabilities and households of people without.
- Some 25 percent of people living in low-income households are persons with disabilities, and adults with disabilities are over four times more likely to experience four successive years of low income than persons without disabilities.
- Women with disabilities are three times more likely than women without disabilities to rely on government programs for their main source of income. Men with disabilities are five times more likely to rely on government programs than men without disabilities.



## Government Action – *Examples*

The Government of Canada, and other governments, have acknowledged the need for an income safety net that recognizes individual work efforts as much as possible and that provides financial help if self-support is impossible or insufficient to meet basic needs.

While income security and social assistance for persons with disabilities is mainly under provincial and territorial jurisdiction, the Government of Canada does provide support to persons with disabilities through the following measures:

- Canada Pension Plan disability benefits (similar benefits are provided under the Quebec Pension Plan);
- Disability Pension Program for veterans; and
- Federal Workers' Compensation Service.

## Injury Prevention and Health Promotion

Life expectancy in Canada is among the highest in the world and has been for many years. However, Canadian workers are at high risk for injury and potential disability. On average in Canada, one worker is injured every nine seconds worked and every workday three workers die as a result of accidents.

Preventing injuries, diseases and conditions that can lead to disabilities is an important goal. For people with disabilities, this may mean taking action to prevent further injuries or to keep conditions from worsening.

### FIVE INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

Disability-free life expectancy
Injury-related hospital admission rate
Occurrence of major diseases and conditions that may cause disability
Physical activity
Opportunity for athletes with disabilities

### SOME KEY FINDINGS

- There are a number of preventable diseases and conditions that can cause long-term disabilities.
- People with disabilities experience a much higher rate of family violence than those without disabilities, including physical, emotional and sexual abuse.
- Only a small percentage of adults with disabilities are unable to participate in any significant amount of physical activity. The most common obstacles are cost, distance and inaccessible facilities.



## Government Action – *Examples*

The Government of Canada will continue to seek measures that will assist in reducing injuries and preventable diseases and conditions as well as promoting well-being through the following measures:

- Amendments to part II of the *Canada Labour Code* to strengthen the role of workplace partners in resolving health and safety concerns;
- Canadian Agriculture Safety Program;
- Falls Prevention Initiative for veterans and seniors;
- First national conference on youth health and safety in the workplace;
- Funding for projects and research initiatives concerning violence against women with disabilities;
- Prevention, control and fight against major diseases (Canadian Diabetes Strategy, Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), Fetal alcohol effects (FAE), Strategic Project Fund, Canadian Strategy on HIV/AIDS);
- Support for the Active Living Alliance of Canadians with Disabilities; and
- Support for athletes with disabilities.

## Disability Community Capacity

Canadians with disabilities across the country are served by, and are members of, a wide variety of disability organizations.

Together, they are building the capacity of their community to work cooperatively with governments to develop policies, programs and services that lead to full citizenship and participation for persons with disabilities. Capacity includes not only skills, people and plans, but also commitment, resources and all the other elements that help make policy and program development successful.

To assess community capacity at this early stage, Human Resources Development Canada funded the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies (CCDS) to conduct a research study in the spring of 2002.

CCDS used the following indicators of progress to conduct its research:

<b>SEVEN INDICATORS OF PROGRESS</b>	
	Involvement with elected and non-elected officials
	Human resource capacity
	Financial resource capacity
	Organizational partnerships
	Media relations
	Quality information about disability
	Responsiveness to clients and members



## SOME KEY FINDINGS

- Most disability groups and organizations do not have enough human resources.
- Many disability groups still rely heavily on government funding.
- Exchange and dissemination of information (by these organizations), especially to clients and consumers, are still major concerns to them.

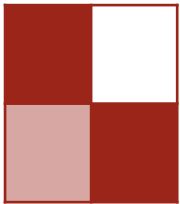


### **Government Action – *Examples***

The Government of Canada recognizes that the voluntary sector, including the disability community, plays a critical role in Canadian society. The Government of Canada has implemented or is moving forward on the following measures:

- Social Development Partnerships Program – Disability component;
- Funding for Aboriginal organizations for public education on disability issues;
- Canadian Partnership funding for international cooperation activities by disability organizations; and
- The \$ 94.6 million Voluntary Sector Initiative.

The Government of Canada is committed to put into action the five-year initiative and its accord with the voluntary sector to enable the sector to contribute to national priorities and represent the views of those too often excluded.



## Conclusion

This report was compiled to fulfill the Government's promise to begin regularly reporting to Canadians on its progress on disability issues. In order to do this, the report has assembled a wide range of information and structured it into an accountability framework. This framework is based on the fundamental idea that the Government's commitments, programs and initiatives should be judged on the basis of their results for Canadians with disabilities.

The disability community has stated that progress toward full inclusion has slowed, and in some cases even eroded, and that governments are not doing enough to resolve the many issues faced by Canadians with disabilities.

While the Government of Canada has worked hard to realize the vision of full inclusion of people with disabilities, many obstacles remain. As this report has shown, many Canadians with disabilities do not have the same opportunities or quality of life as others.

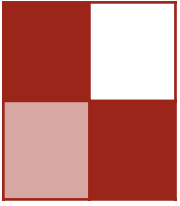
There is still much work to be done, and this report has highlighted many areas where progress is needed. The Government acknowledges its responsibility to continue working with all its partners—including provinces, territories, the disability community, Aboriginal people and veterans organizations—to achieve the full inclusion of Canadians with disabilities.

Future reports will build on this first accountability framework, and contain much more information on PALS that should allow us to develop improved societal indicators. Additional comprehensive, long-term evaluations of key programs will also help to provide evidence of program impacts.

## Contributing Departments

The departments and agencies listed below directly contributed information to *Advancing the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities*. Their participation is gratefully acknowledged.

- Human Resources Development Canada (coordinator)
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Canada Customs and Revenue Agency
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
- Canadian Forces
- Canadian Heritage
- Canadian Human Rights Commission
- Canadian Institutes for Health Research
- Canadian International Development Agency
- Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission
- Canadian Transportation Agency
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- Department of Finance
- Department of National Defence
- Environment Canada
- Health Canada
- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
- Industry Canada
- Justice Canada
- National Library of Canada
- National Research Council
- Privy Council Office
- Public Service Commission of Canada
- Public Works and Government Services Canada
- Social Science and Humanities Research Council
- Solicitor General Canada
- Status of Women Canada
- Statistics Canada
- Transport Canada
- Treasury Board Secretariat
- Veterans Affairs Canada
- Western Economic Diversification Canada



**NOTES**