



# **IN UNISON: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues**

**A VISION PAPER**

**Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers  
Responsible for Social Services**

SP-113-10-98E

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## □ PREAMBLE

The following document entitled *In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues*, sets out a blueprint for promoting the integration of persons with disabilities in Canada. As Ministers of Social Services, we have developed this document together in response to the request by First Ministers in June 1996, and reaffirmed in December 1997, to make disability issues a collective priority in the pursuit of social policy renewal (see Appendix F). The Quebec government has not participated in this initiative.\*

In addressing the challenges for persons with disabilities, we recognized the evolving nature of Canadian society and within it the place of persons with disabilities. As the needs and attitudes of Canadians change, public policies and programs need to reflect these changes. Most persons with disabilities do not consider themselves permanently unemployable. They see themselves as independent individuals with the ability to control all facets of their lives. The attitudes of Canadians also are evolving to be more consistent with the views and realities of persons with disabilities. As a result, Canadians with disabilities are no longer viewed as 'exceptions' whose needs must be met through segregated programs.

While the current system of social policies and programs offers much to persons with disabilities, there is clearly a need for policies and programs to embody these evolving attitudes and meet the

changing needs of persons with disabilities. The reality today is that persons with disabilities still face barriers and discrimination which prevent them from participating or contributing as equal partners in society. Accordingly, we need to renew our efforts to adapt our policies and programs to reflect the fact that persons with disabilities should be full participants in society. We need to continue our work to remove barriers and systemic discrimination.

We agree that there is much scope to improve the current patchwork of federal, provincial and territorial benefits and services. Work needs to be done at both levels of government to reduce the fragmentation of our supports and services. More effective and coordinated programs would better serve Canadians with disabilities and the country as a whole.

These changing attitudes and realities led the Prime Minister and Premiers at the June 1996 First Ministers' Meeting to identify persons with disabilities as a collective priority and to task governments to "make a proposal for the integration of income support." In examining the options that were developed for our consideration,

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\*Quebec shares the concerns raised in the *In Unison* report. However, the Government of Quebec did not take part in the development of this document because it wishes to assume control over programs for persons with disabilities for Quebec. Consequently, any references in this document to joint federal/provincial/territorial positions do not include Quebec.

we concluded that focussing on income support alone would result in missed opportunities to address the various and diverse needs of Canadians with disabilities. Other related issues, including citizenship, disability supports and employment had to be considered in concert with the issue of income support.

In reaching this conclusion, our work built on the legacy of studies over the past decade that explored the system of disability supports and services. Many laws, policies and programs represent an important inheritance and should comprise the cornerstones for future work. Nonetheless, some laws, policies and programs can be modified to better reflect changing needs. It is especially important to remove the barriers and disincentives that prevent persons with disabilities from fully participating in society.

From this perspective, we agreed that a long-term vision should be developed to address these areas and their interrelationships. Taking action in any one area affects the others, and accordingly, a coordinated approach is required to ensure effective policies and programs for Canadians with disabilities. A coordinated approach requires Ministers of Social Services to involve other Ministers such as those responsible for the issues of health, labour, employment, education, training, learning, finance, aboriginal affairs, women, justice, housing, transportation, Workers' Compensation, and citizenship. Together, we will work to set new disability priorities and explore potential actions, in

particular joint federal/provincial/territorial actions, consistent with the document.

In moving from vision to action, the starting point for governments is to recognize that much can be done to improve the existing system and the interaction of its various components. While much of this new disability agenda can be achieved through improvements in efficiency and effectiveness of programs and the coordination between programs, jurisdictions recognize that new investments may be required. New opportunities for investment or reinvestment would be explored as fiscal resources permit.

Moving from vision to action will require the engagement of the disability community and the support of all Canadians. This agenda also will include the development of accountability frameworks that will permit Canadians to assess the effectiveness of disability policies and programs. It is essential that governments and Canadians work in partnership in order to achieve the vision of full participation of persons with disabilities as we move into the 21st century.



## □ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In 1991, 4.2 million (16 percent) Canadians reported some level of disability.\* Aboriginal Canadians are particularly affected with over 30 percent reporting a disability. Many of these individuals face significant barriers that prevent them from participating fully in the life of our country.
- Some persons with disabilities face economic hardship in their daily lives. Many live below the poverty line and are unable to participate as full citizens. Equal access to education, training and support programs will increase their potential for employment and a better economic future.
- Federal, provincial and territorial governments, First Nations, community groups and the private sector deliver the current system of benefits and services supporting Canadians with disabilities. Although it is a complex system, it is not working effectively for many individuals.
- The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms offers protection against discrimination based on physical and mental disability. Through the Charter and Human Rights legislation, the federal, provincial and territorial governments are working to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities and to support their participation in all aspects of Canadian life.
- Over the years, Canadians with disabilities have shared their common concerns and have articulated their vision. In June 1996, disability issues were identified as a collective priority by the Prime Minister and Premiers. At their December 1997 meeting, First Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to disability issues and agreed that a vision and framework to guide future collaborative work in this area needed to be concluded.
- During the past year, jurisdictions have been working together to better address the needs of persons with disabilities. The product of their collaborative work is *In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues*, which is to guide future reform.
- The document articulates a vision that seeks to ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of Canadian society. It recognizes that the achievement of the vision is a responsibility shared by all Canadians:

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\*Health and Activity Limitations Survey, Statistics Canada, 1991.

**Persons with disabilities participate as full citizens in all aspects of Canadian society. The full participation of persons with disabilities requires the commitment of all segments of society. The realization of the vision will allow persons with disabilities to maximize their independence and enhance their well-being through access to required supports and the elimination of barriers that prevent their full participation.**

- The vision is based on the values of equality, inclusion and independence.
- *In Unison* translates this vision of full citizenship into objectives and policy directions within three interrelated building blocks: disability supports, employment and income.
- The document recognizes the need for governments to focus their initial efforts on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of programs and the coordination between programs. At the same time, *In Unison* recognizes that new investments may be required to achieve this new disability agenda. New opportunities for investment or reinvestment would be explored as fiscal resources permit. Finally, the document recognizes the important role that all parties play in those situations where the occurrence or severity of a disability can be prevented or minimized.

## **THE VISION OF FULL CITIZENSHIP**

- Citizenship refers to the full inclusion of persons with disabilities. The intent of *In Unison* is to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to the systems and programs open to other Canadians.
- This objective will be met by focussing on policies that promote access to generic programs and services for all Canadians, including persons with disabilities.

## **DISABILITY SUPPORTS**

- *In Unison* recognizes the need to move beyond actions focussed primarily on income support. It includes measures that address the costs related to disability and the need to change workplaces and communities to accommodate persons with disabilities.
- Flexible and responsive delivery of disability supports is explored to allow for more independent lifestyles. The objectives are to:
  - improve access to disability supports;
  - enhance the portability of these supports;
  - help offset the cost of disability supports.

## EMPLOYMENT

- *In Unison* seeks to enhance the employability of persons with disabilities, encourage (re)entry into the labour market and help promote work and volunteer opportunities. The objectives are to:
  - reduce reliance on income support programs;
  - promote access to the training programs available to all Canadians;
  - increase the availability of work-related supports;
  - encourage employers to make appropriate job/workplace accommodation;
  - promote work and volunteer opportunities for persons with disabilities.

## INCOME

- *In Unison* recognizes the need for an income safety net that rewards individual work efforts to the greatest extent possible — but which provides financial assistance if self-support is impossible or insufficient to meet basic needs. The objectives are to:
  - encourage economic independence by removing disincentives to work;
  - detach eligibility for disability supports from income programs;
  - improve access and reduce administrative duplication through greater co-ordination of income programs;
  - ensure availability of income support for periods during which

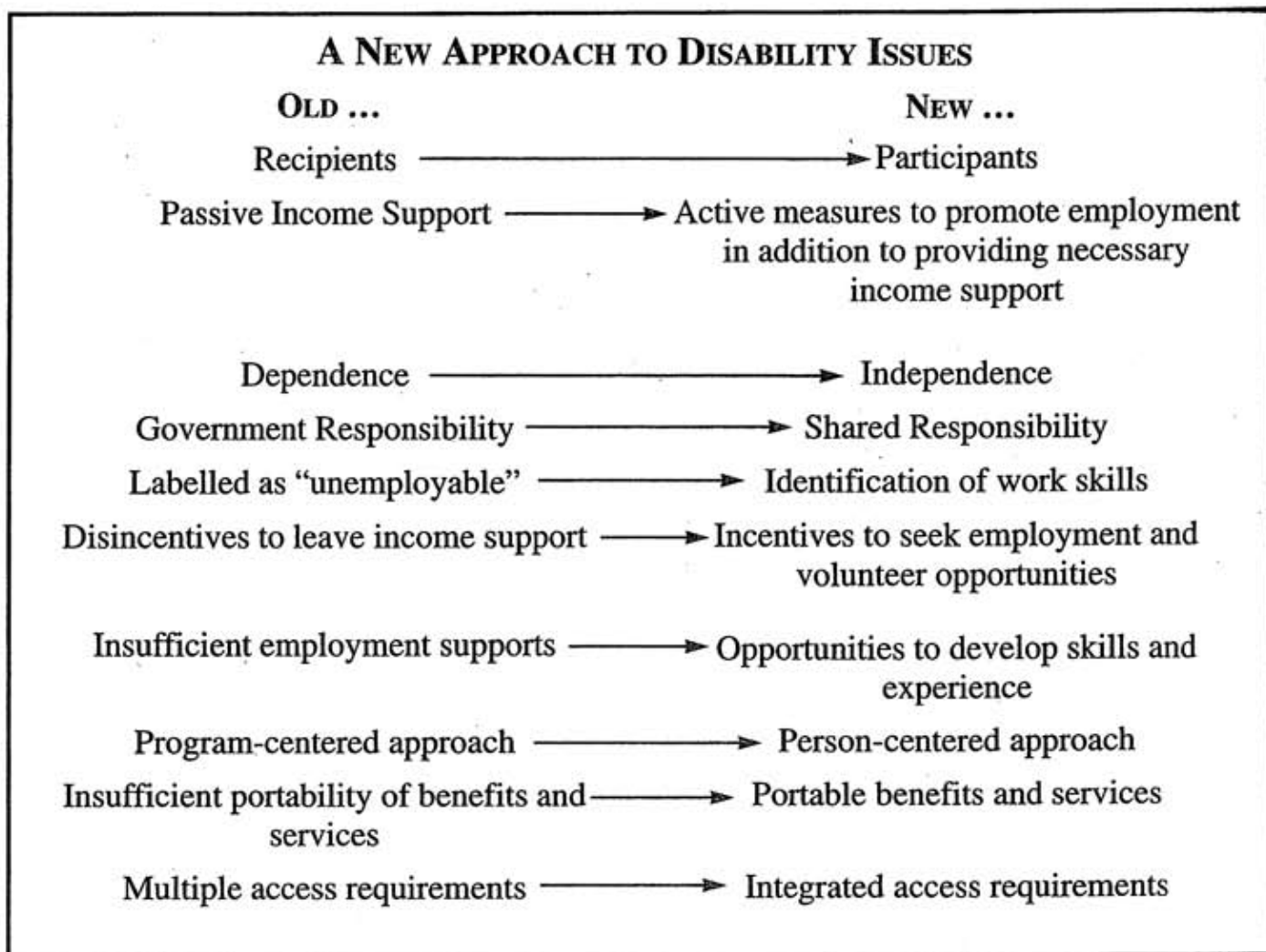
individuals are not able to support themselves.

## NEXT STEPS

- Ministers of Social Services are taking steps in the areas within their mandates. The Vocational Rehabilitation for Disabled Persons (VRDP) program has been redesigned into a more employment-focussed initiative called the *Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities* (EAPD) program. Most of the new federal-provincial/territorial agreements have been negotiated and implementation is underway. The commitment on a strategy to harmonize income support is another important step toward improving the current system.
- The needs of persons with disabilities and the proposed policy directions are complex and multifaceted and transcend the borders of any single government, department or agency. An integrated and client-centered approach is required to meet these needs.
- As noted by First Ministers at their December 1997 meeting, intersectoral support is necessary to achieve the vision and policy objectives in practical terms for all Canadians. That process will allow jurisdictions to identify priorities and explore where potential actions, in particular joint federal/provincial/territorial actions, can be undertaken over the next number of years.



- To complement the ongoing intersectoral discussions, the disability community will be engaged in this agenda.
- The agenda also will require the development of accountability frameworks to permit all Canadians to assess the effectiveness of disability-related policies and programs.
- The collective and individual efforts of governments have contributed towards real progress in advancing a new approach to disability issues. The chart below serves as an illustration of important trends and evolving perspectives and approaches to disability issues that will continue to guide future reform.



## □ INTRODUCTION

Disability touches everyone. In 1991, 4.2 million (16 percent) Canadians reported some level of disability.\* Aboriginal Canadians are particularly affected with over 30 percent of Aboriginal persons reporting a disability — almost double the national average\*\*. All Canadians have some experience with disability through their own experience, contact with relatives, colleagues or friends. Most individuals experience some form of functional incapacity or limitation as a normal part of aging.

Canadians with disabilities represent a diverse group which includes individuals with physical, sensory and mental disabilities. Disabilities vary in terms of severity, longevity, cause and consequences. Some disabilities remain static throughout a person's life while others may have periods of remission or regression.

A variety of definitions of "disability" exist, including the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (the ICIDH), developed by the World Health Organization. The ICIDH (see Appendix A) is internationally recognized and is becoming widely used around the world.

Despite their diverse profile, Canadians with disabilities share many common concerns. They face personal, social and economic disadvantages and barriers that prevent access to the same opportunities as other Canadians. Persons with disabilities

are more likely, for example, to have lower education levels and to be socially isolated and discriminated against in the workplace. They often face economic hardship in their daily lives and many live below the poverty line. Women and Aboriginal persons with disabilities, in particular, experience greater disadvantages, reporting higher incidences of unemployment and poverty (see Appendices B and C for detailed profiles).

Over the years, persons with disabilities have articulated their vision in an effort to have their concerns addressed. Recently, they told the Federal Task Force on Disability Issues that they want a nation which demonstrates leadership with respect to disability concerns. Persons with disabilities desire a country which takes an holistic approach to disability issues that is sensitive to individual needs and ensures that Canadians with disabilities have input into the policies, programs and decisions that affect them. They seek a country which makes it possible to achieve a decent standard of living and support an approach to disability issues that is common to all jurisdictions but sensitive to regional differences and needs. Persons with disabilities want a nation that uses legal and other measures to promote social and economic equity and equality of outcomes.

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\*Health and Activity Limitations Survey, Statistics Canada, 1991.

\*\*Aboriginal Peoples Survey, Statistics Canada, 1991.

In recognition of this vision, federal, provincial and territorial governments have come together to better address the concerns of persons with disabilities. At the First Ministers' Meeting in June 1996, the Prime Minister and Premiers agreed that improving the current system of benefits and services supporting persons with disabilities was a collective priority. At their recent meeting in December 1997, First Ministers reaffirmed their

commitment to persons with disabilities, and agreed that a vision and framework to guide future collaborative work in this area needed to be concluded. Governments from across Canada, with the exception of Quebec, have developed *In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues* that sets out a vision and long-term policy directions which promote greater equality for and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

## □ A CANADIAN APPROACH

*In Unison* is a vision made up of values, principles and building blocks that affirms the importance of ensuring the full participation of persons with disabilities in society.

**Persons with disabilities participate as full citizens in all aspects of Canadian society. The full participation of persons with disabilities requires the commitment of all segments of society. The realization of the vision will allow persons with disabilities to maximize their independence and enhance their well-being through access to required supports and the elimination of barriers that prevent their full participation.**

Although the vision does not promote special treatment of persons with disabilities, it does recognize the need for specialized services for persons with disabilities within the generic framework for the delivery of services and supports. The intent is that persons with disabilities will have the same opportunities as other Canadians. The vision also reflects the changing attitudes of society. Most persons with disabilities no longer are seen or see themselves as dependent individuals with no ability to control their lives. They no longer are considered permanently unemployable or unable to contribute to society. Indeed, persons with disabilities contribute to Canadian society through art, culture, sports, political, voluntary and community activities, and other activities

which are not solely economic. These realities must be reflected in legislation, public policy and programs.

To realize the vision, governments have identified an overarching theme of citizenship and three key building blocks of disability supports, employment and income. These building blocks are guided by a set of values and principles.

In meeting the needs of persons with disabilities, governments recognize above all that an integrated approach is required. An integrated approach will help ensure that actions taken in one building block are consistent and complementary with actions taken in another building block. If actions are uncoordinated, they can offset or reduce the effectiveness of actions taken in another area.

Governments can facilitate, for example, the transition to work for persons with disabilities by adopting complementary income and employment strategies. Currently, persons with disabilities face significant barriers to work because access to disability supports is tied rigidly to eligibility for specific programs such as income support, training and employment. Some income programs also adopt an 'all or nothing' approach to providing financial assistance. Individuals are classified as either incapable (eligible for income support) or fully capable (of working) and as such, income programs do not provide an incentive to work or volunteer. Individuals who find work not only lose their income

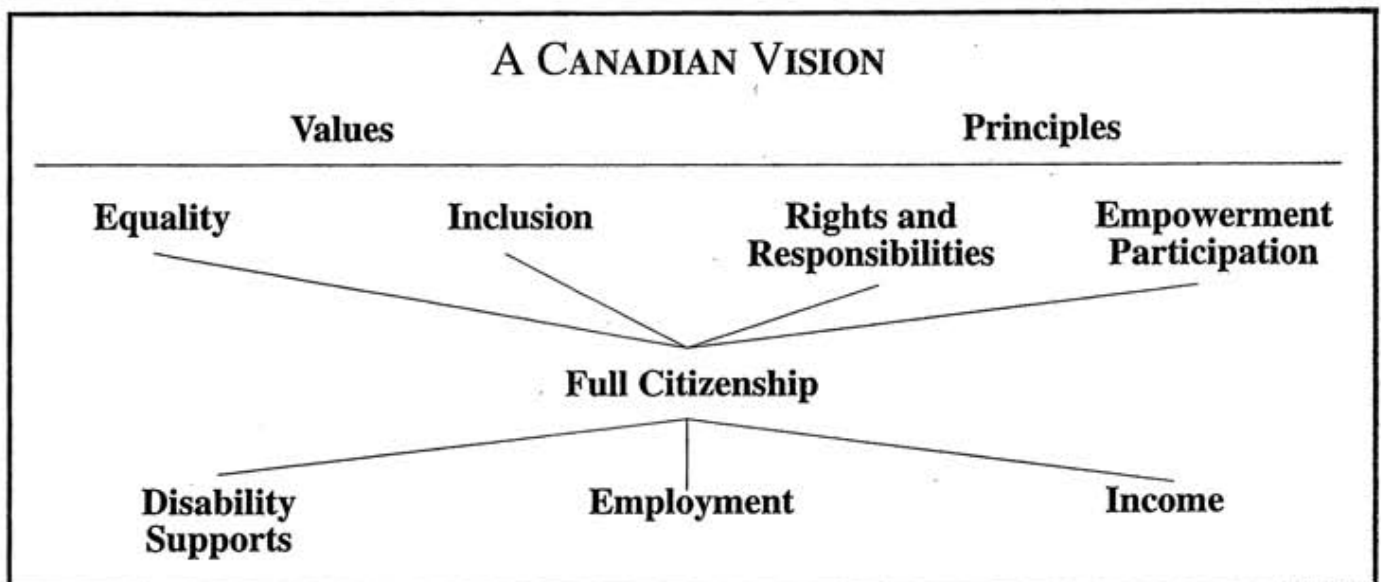


support but also may lose their disability supports. Many individuals are unable to make the transition to work unless they can purchase disability supports with their employment income. The rigid link between income programs and disability supports as well as the lack of adequate incentives in many income programs to pursue work or volunteer opportunities counteract employment strategies targeted for persons with disabilities.

From this perspective, *In Unison* promotes a common approach by governments to persons with disabilities. The objective is to ensure a seamless and coordinated system of benefits and services for Canadians with disabilities. At the same time, governments recognize that each jurisdiction requires a degree of flexibility to address the specific circumstances and priorities of its citizens. Moreover, *In Unison* recognizes the need for governments to focus their initial efforts on improving the efficiency and effectiveness

of programs and the coordination between programs. At the same time, the document recognizes that this new disability agenda may require new investment or reinvestment as fiscal resources permit.

*In Unison* builds on years of consultation and government study. The building blocks — disability supports, employment and income — evolved from the many initiatives undertaken by governments over the years to improve the lives of persons with disabilities. The building blocks have been guided and shaped by this extensive body of work, summarized in Appendix D. *In Unison* is also consistent with recent reform initiatives by the Government of Canada and provincial/territorial governments to harmonize income support programs and to develop and implement the *Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities* initiative (successor to the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons program).





## □ VALUES

In developing this document, jurisdictions focussed on the set of values rooted in the notions of equality, the social union and federalism.

Equality is a right guaranteed to all Canadian citizens. The values inherent in the concept of equality include self-determination, autonomy, dignity, respect, integration, participation and independent living. These values are consistent with those that shape the social union (Appendix E):

compassion, dignity, sharing, fairness, equity, equal opportunity and independence. The values that underlie Canadian federalism provide for mutual respect among jurisdictions and an acceptance of diversity; flexibility to respond to local priorities and circumstances; and citizen engagement and public accountability.

## □ PRINCIPLES

*In Unison* also is guided by three sets of principles which relate to the substance and process of reform. The substance of the proposed changes is informed by the principle of inclusion which seeks to enhance the full participation of persons with disabilities in all domains of Canadian society. The process of reform is shaped by the work of the social union and the principles inherent in the concept of flexible and efficient federalism. Finally, both the substance and process are framed by a set of principles that guide social policy reform.

### INCLUSION

The full inclusion of persons with disabilities is a central theme in previous reports and initiatives of both governments and nongovernmental organizations. The Federal Task Force on Disability Issues was the most recent major initiative that employed this theme as a key organizing concept.

Participation and inclusion also are embodied in the following principles set

out more recently by Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Social Services. These principles were derived from the federal/provincial/territorial review, *Mainstream 1992 — Pathway to Integration*.

- **Rights and responsibilities:** Persons with disabilities have the same rights and the same responsibilities as other Canadians. They are entitled, as others are, to the equal protection and the equal benefit of the law and require measures for achieving equality.
- **Empowerment:** Persons with disabilities require the means to maximize their independence and enhance their well-being.
- **Participation:** Persons with disabilities require full access to the social, economic and physical infrastructure which supports our society so that they can participate fully and equally in their communities.

## □ FULL CITIZENSHIP

### OBJECTIVES:

- To make as inclusive as possible all domains of Canadian society.
- To mobilize all sectors to enhance the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities.

### POLICY DIRECTION:

- Policies that promote access to generic programs and services for all Canadians, including persons with disabilities.

Citizenship refers to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of Canadian society. It is the overarching theme that shapes the vision and the building blocks. Full inclusion means that the needs of persons with disabilities are met through generic programs, while additional essential supports are provided to those individuals whose needs cannot be met through generic programs and services. Future reforms will need to ensure that the policies and programs in each building block are consistent with this concept.

The achievement of full citizenship is not limited to any one building block. The needs of persons with disabilities are complex and multifaceted, and transcend all three areas. As a result, measures to reduce barriers and to ensure access to programs and services enjoyed by other Canadians need to be adopted in each of the building blocks. At the same time, measures need to be viewed from gender and Aboriginal perspectives in recognition that women and Aboriginal persons with disabilities face greater barriers to full participation.

Citizenship also refers to rights and responsibilities. It implies participation in and contribution to the systems and the 'core' services in which all Canadians can participate and to which most Canadians have access. These include schools, training programs, postsecondary education institutes, health care, workplaces, recreation facilities, cultural programs, transportation, parks and other forms of public space. *In Unison* seeks to expand the boundaries of the core services to make them as inclusive as possible. The needs of persons with disabilities would be incorporated in the initial design of all programs and activities in every domain of society. For example, student loan programs would acknowledge that some students may require more time to complete their curriculum. Training programs would be open to all potential participants. Employers would accommodate jobs and workplaces to ensure the inclusion of employees with disabilities. Workplaces, recreation centres, and libraries would make provision for participation by all citizens. Within this context, the needs of

women and Aboriginal persons with disabilities would require particular attention as they must overcome greater barriers and disadvantages. Persons with disabilities will achieve full citizenship as systemic discrimination and barriers are eliminated. Federal, provincial and territorial governments are determined to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities and to support their participation in all aspects of Canadian life.

While governments acknowledge their role in providing leadership, the achievement of full citizenship requires more than the involvement of governments alone. Persons with disabilities should be able to make their own choices, take risks, and set their own goals and society should facilitate their participation and contribution. Efforts from all sectors of society are required to contribute to the overall goal of full citizenship. Government departments and agencies, private enterprises and voluntary organizations can all take steps to make various forms of accommodation within their respective spheres of activity. Community development, including all sectors, must take place to provide opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate fully in Canadian society. A healthy infrastructure of disability organizations also can help to interpret and implement the concept of full inclusion.

The first step in this process is to change attitudes and to provide information as to how to make core programs and services more inclusive. For example, information on accommodation could be disseminated widely to schools, training

institutes, employers and various programs. Accommodation does not need to be costly. Since accommodation encompasses more than modifications to physical infrastructure, procedural changes to accommodate persons with disabilities could also be undertaken at almost no cost. Accommodation plans incorporated at the design stages of any process is usually a much more cost effective approach than retrofit or redesign. Information on accommodation complements potential measures discussed under the Employment building block.

Voluntary action to ensure inclusion would help breathe life into the protections afforded by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Human Rights legislation.

Section 15(1) of the Charter states

15(1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

The intent is to reduce the need to invoke the Charter as an instrument of litigation. Ideally, it should be seen more as a beacon whose spirit guides all government actions. Jurisdictions also might contemplate a legislative review to support efforts to encourage action and the commitment to inclusion.

## □ BUILDING BLOCKS

The building blocks are defined as follows:

- 1) **Disability Supports:** These refer to a range of goods, services and supports tailored to the individual requirements for daily living. It will always be necessary to provide for the availability and accessibility of disability supports (e.g., technical aids and devices; special equipment; homemaker, attendant or interpreter services; life skills; physiotherapy and occupational therapy; respite care) which respond to individual needs. These goods, services and supports are essential for active participation at home, at school and in the community and are a key component of maximizing personal and economic independence.
- 2) **Employment:** Persons with disabilities require access to opportunities for education, training and employment which together comprise the basis for economic independence. The intent of *In Unison* is to enhance the employability of persons with disabilities, encourage (re)entry into the labour market and help promote more work and volunteer opportunities. Enhancing employability means supporting access to education, providing supports and flexibility in training programs, making job accommodation available and offering job seekers and employers adequate information.
- 3) **Income:** Some individuals with disabilities may not be able to support themselves sufficiently or at all. Governments recognize the need for an income safety net which rewards individual work efforts to the greatest extent possible — but which provides financial assistance if self-support is impossible or insufficient to meet basic needs.



## DISABILITY SUPPORTS

### OBJECTIVES:

- To improve access to disability supports.
- To enhance the portability of these supports.
- To help offset the cost of disability supports.

### POLICY DIRECTIONS:

- Policies and programs that promote greater access to supports.
- Policies that separate access to supports from eligibility for income and other programs.
- More consumer control, flexibility and responsiveness in the provision of disability supports.
- Measures that provide greater assistance for disability costs.

A key issue for persons with disabilities is that access to disability supports is often tied to the eligibility for income support and other programs. Also, in most cases, supports are not portable across sectors. The supports provided at home can not be used in schools or in the workplace. Inversely, the accommodation provided at school or work cannot be brought home.

At the same time, disability supports often are attached to residential care such as group homes, nursing homes or institutions. Because the funds go to the residences, the services are not portable — creating problems for residents who wish to seek independent living arrangements. The provision of disability supports through welfare also makes it difficult to move off the program.

*In Unison* proposes a commitment to the principle of portability so that persons

with disabilities are not locked into certain living arrangements or income programs in order to retain access to certain disability supports. 'Portability' in this context means that disability supports are attached to the individual; they go with that person regardless of the region or setting in which they are required. A commitment to portability would require each jurisdiction to develop an approach for ensuring access to disability supports. It could include a set of actions that articulates how disability supports might be detached from income and other programs, and 'assigned' instead to the individual. Disability supports should be portable across any and all sectors — at home, school, work and community.

One way to help implement a commitment to portability is through a form of financing known as individualized funding. Individualized funding helps offset the direct and additional costs of

disability and allows services to be tailored to individual needs — the amount of payment is different for every person and is determined on an individualized basis depending on specific needs. This form of financing also has the potential to improve the responsiveness and flexibility of disability supports. Several jurisdictions already employ this form of funding, both experimentally and systemically, to meet disability needs. But while individualized funding can help respond to many identified problems, it is not a panacea for resolving all problems related to disability supports. In some areas, services may not be available in the marketplace, thus limiting the effectiveness of individualized funding.

Finally, governments recognize that affordability creates significant problems of access. The cost of disability supports can be prohibitive. Relatively limited assistance is available to help offset these costs.

Statistics Canada's Health and Activity Limitation Survey (HALS) estimates that some 33 percent of adults face costs related to their disability that are not reimbursed by any public or private plan.

Currently, there is a wide and complex range of measures in place to help offset disability costs to individuals, including tax measures; specific provisions in programs such as social assistance, Workers' Compensation, provincial health and social services; and private initiatives. Various options for providing additional assistance to offset disability costs, including tax-related measures, could be developed for further consideration. In many cases, however, problems of access arise from an inadequate supply of certain disability supports, such as homemaker services. Jurisdictions could decide that additional investments in selected disability supports are required to expand the available supply.

## EMPLOYMENT

### OBJECTIVES:

- To reduce reliance on income support programs.
- To promote access to the training programs available to all Canadians.
- To increase the availability of work-related supports.
- To encourage employers to make appropriate job/workplace accommodation.
- To promote work and volunteer opportunities for persons with disabilities.

### POLICY DIRECTIONS:

- Widespread understanding and application of the concept of accommodation.
- Measures that provide more assistance to offset work-related disability costs.
- Greater support for community economic development and self-employment for persons with disabilities.
- Enhanced employability through better access to education, training and transition mechanisms.

At all educational levels, students with disabilities often report that they find themselves at a disadvantage. Many have difficulty gaining access to the supports they require to enter or remain at school. There are also concerns with current training. Persons with disabilities typically are relegated to separate programs rather than integrated within existing training initiatives. Even within specialized programs, there are problems of accessibility — often interpreted narrowly to address only physical access.

Barriers to education and training translate into employment problems later in life. Persons with disabilities have lower than average workforce participation — partly because of lower than average educational attainment and lack of disability supports. More than one million

adults with disabilities are unemployed or outside the labour force. Women and Aboriginal persons with disabilities generally face more barriers to employment, and as a result, are more likely to be unemployed. While most persons with disabilities would like to work, they face a range of barriers in acquiring the skills and experience which would help them prepare for jobs (see Appendices B and C for further details). Education, training and transition programs need to become more flexible and accessible. This is key to ensuring better educational attainment for persons with disabilities and securing a better economic future through employment.

'Accommodation' refers to the range of modifications to a given job and/or workplace to promote the employment of

persons with disabilities. It addresses the physical, procedural and attitudinal barriers that persons with disabilities often encounter which prevent them from finding and retaining employment. Although the *Canadian Human Rights Act* does not include an express duty to accommodate,\* Canadian courts, including the Supreme Court, have recognized that this duty does exist in Canadian law and is therefore legally enforceable. Human rights codes provide similar protection in jurisdictions throughout the country. Yet there is a lack of information about the various dimensions of accommodation and relatively little assistance to help offset associated costs.

Until recently, one of the principal means of addressing the employment needs of persons with disabilities had been the Vocational Rehabilitation for Disabled Persons (VRDP) program which provided for federal-provincial-territorial cost sharing of rehabilitation programs delivered and administered by the provinces and territories. While the VRDP program has served Canadians with disabilities well, governments recognized that fundamental changes were needed to develop a greater employability focus.

In early 1997, the federal and provincial/territorial governments began working together to explore ways to improve the VRDP program. The Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities (EAPD) initiative has a strong employability focus, as reflected in the new name, a results-based accountability and greater emphasis on public reporting. The initiative

responds to the need for appropriate programs and services to help people with disabilities overcome the barriers they face in the labour force.

EAPD will support a broad range of programs and services, ranging from employment counselling and assessment to wage subsidies and assistive aids and devices. Provinces have the flexibility to tailor programs to reflect local priorities and circumstances. A periodic review of the employability-focused programs funded under EAPD agreements will help ensure that the programs are effective. Under EAPD, the federal and provincial governments have also committed to a planning process, which will ensure a more coordinated approach to employment-related issues for people with disabilities. The views of stakeholders will be considered in the planning process.

Greater awareness of accommodation could be raised through national roundtables that would explore the various dimensions of job/workplace accommodation in order to promote the hiring of persons with disabilities and help injured workers remain at work. These roundtables could include representatives from business, labour, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and current training programs. This information would

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\*In October 1997, the Government of Canada introduced an amendment to the *Human Rights Act* to include the duty to accommodate. This is consistent with recent Supreme Court decisions that there is an enforceable legal responsibility to accommodate.



be widely disseminated, as discussed in the section on Full Citizenship.

At the same time, strategies directed towards employers could be undertaken. For example, additional support could be provided to employers in order to encourage workplace accommodation. Currently, Workers' Compensation, certain training programs and the tax system provide some assistance. These measures could be expanded to help employers hire and retain persons with disabilities. A subsidy in respect of the salary paid to employees with disabilities also could be considered. Income benefits for persons with disabilities who return to work could continue to be paid for a limited period as an employment subsidy.

Another important issue is the transition from school to work. Programs which assist and support individuals as they move from educational settings to employment could be explored. Transition

programs would ensure that individuals have an opportunity to utilize their training and maximize their potential. Without these programs, the resources that have been committed to education and training may be underutilized.

Opportunities for enhancing the integration and employment of persons with disabilities also could be explored through support for community economic development (CED) and self-employment. CED is an approach to local economic development that combines economic and social goals. It seeks to create employment opportunities through the development of locally-run and controlled businesses while at the same time responding to the social needs of individuals involved in CED efforts (e.g., ensuring access and various forms of job/workplace accommodation). Currently, there is a wide range of CED initiatives under way throughout the country.



## INCOME

### OBJECTIVES:

- To encourage economic independence by removing barriers to working.
- To detach eligibility for disability supports from income programs.
- To improve access and reduce administrative duplication through greater coordination of income programs.
- To ensure the availability of income support for periods during which individuals are not able to support themselves.

### POLICY DIRECTIONS:

- Income programs that reduce financial disincentives to work.
- Income programs that separate access to disability supports from eligibility for financial assistance.
- Improved coordination of assessment procedures and rehabilitation between income programs.
- Income programs that continue to ensure financial assistance when labour market participation is interrupted or not possible.

Canadians whose work is interrupted temporarily or permanently as a result of disability or who have no workforce attachment must rely on various income programs. Multiple assessment and administrative procedures create frustrations and high costs.

Eligibility generally is determined by where and how claimants became disabled or by the nature or severity of their disability. For many Aboriginal Canadians, eligibility to disability supports can depend on residency or status. Those who do not qualify under existing criteria often rely on welfare for financial support.

In determining eligibility, most welfare systems classify persons with disabilities as long-term cases or as 'permanently

unemployable.' But this classification ties many persons with disabilities to the welfare system because they typically receive higher benefits, have access to various disability supports and are not required to show continuing proof of job search. Similarly, the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) requires that a person be out of the labour market entirely and incapable of performing any work that would provide sufficient income for basic support.

These expectations regarding employability — or unemployability — are dated. Many persons with disabilities can work, especially if their needs are accommodated through technical aids or equipment, specialized training, modified job or adapted workplace. Indeed, some

recent welfare and CPP initiatives actively support workforce participation.

In order to improve service, reduce unnecessary duplication and remove financial disincentives to work, the federal and provincial/territorial governments already have agreed to a strategy for harmonization actions for income support, composed of three key goals to guide future initiatives: removing disincentives to work, rehabilitation and labour market (re)entry measures that encourage independence and social integration, and streamlined assessment and reassessment processes. Jurisdictions also have made a commitment to examine their respective income programs (e.g., CPP and social assistance/ Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped) and will select the areas around which they plan to work, both individually and together. A progress report of harmonization initiatives will be produced.

These harmonization activities, many of which are already under way, will help pave the way towards long-term reform. Streamlining multiple assessments and vocational supports, for example, moves well along the path to a more integrated system of income security, a key dimension of comprehensive reform. Streamlined assessment and reassessment can be made possible through the sharing of information. Such sharing potentially could lead to an application process which employs common assessment criteria for determining eligibility. Privacy protocols would have to be developed, however, to protect personal and confidential information.

Moreover, several measures could help remove disincentives to work. Many governments have already implemented some of the following measures. Entitlement to disability supports (e.g., medications) could be retained after entry or return to the labour market. Cut-off levels for qualifying and for maximum benefits could take into account the cost of disability. Rapid reinstatement could be introduced if work efforts do not succeed. Earnings exemption rules within welfare could be revised to encourage workforce participation. Program criteria which automatically disentitle individuals to benefits, such as volunteering or taking credit courses, could be removed. Most recently, jurisdictions agreed to introduce rapid reinstatement of income support for persons with disabilities should employment efforts fail. Jurisdictions also agreed to explore taking the health costs into account when determining cut-off points for income assistance. These efforts reflect the broad recognition of the need to support persons with disabilities in the labour force as well as the need to provide adequate supports for the costs of disability.

The consolidation of income support/ replacement involves many complex issues that require further study. The broader range of potential strategies under consideration, while not precluding work on the integration of income support, provides the opportunity to make more immediate progress on a number of important fronts, including the need to offset disability-related costs.

One possible direction for major reform could be to review the role of disability insurance. Reform could involve, for example, the consolidation of government-mandated programs that require employer contributions and protect employee income in the event of temporary or permanent work interruptions as a result of disability. Welfare would continue to provide last-resort assistance. There are

potential advantages to such an approach — e.g., removing the need to establish cause of disability in order to qualify and reducing ‘offloading’ between programs. Among the disadvantages of such a scheme are the exclusion of persons with little or no attachment to the labour market and the difficulty of determining an appropriate earnings replacement level.

## □ ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

Governments recognize the growing public demand for greater democratic engagement in the form of transparency and public participation — key dimensions of the social union. They consult with consumers and disability stakeholders on an ongoing basis on a range of issues. Governments are moving away from an approach where they are accountable largely to each other to an approach in which they are more accountable to the public. This shift means that jurisdictions will need to measure outcomes that are important to the public. In adopting this approach, it will be equally important for jurisdictions to focus on the processes of developing an accountability framework.

As the agenda for action evolves, governments are committed to evolving the approach to accountability. Some specific accountability actions are already in place; the EAPD agreements have a built-in accountability framework. In focusing on *In Unison*, the federal and provincial/territorial governments could, for example, produce an annual report on the status of persons with disabilities which documents key performance measures and progress around efforts to remove barriers and promote inclusion. Jurisdictions could explore using this annual report as a basis for engaging the public at the local level on the progress of the disability agenda.



## □ NEXT STEPS

*In Unison* advances a new approach to disability issues which reconfigures programs and services to reflect the changing needs of persons with disabilities and new societal attitudes. This evolution of societal views and approaches in the disability area are already setting directions for future reform. The chart on the next page serves as an illustration of the fundamental change that has been under way in terms of the approach adopted by governments to disability issues. It serves to identify important trends that will continue to guide longer-term reform. These evolving perspectives and approaches to disability issues will allow governments to achieve the vision of full participation of persons with disabilities.

Federal, provincial and territorial governments already have taken significant first steps in advancing this new approach. The replacement program for VRDP and the collective commitment to a strategy on the harmonization of income programs go a long way toward promoting the employment of persons with disabilities and ensuring that disability benefits and services are better integrated and client-centered.

To ensure a holistic and multisectoral approach to reform, Social Services Ministers are currently involving and will need to continue to involve other Ministers such as those responsible for the issues of health, labour, employment, education, training, learning, finance, aboriginal

affairs, women, justice, housing, transportation, Workers' Compensation, and citizenship. Broad government support is integral for the achievement of the vision and policy objectives. As part of the intersectoral process, jurisdictions will identify new disability priorities and explore where potential actions, in particular joint federal/provincial/territorial actions, can be undertaken over the next number of years. Support at the multisectoral level provides a unique opportunity to further a collective disability agenda that addresses the needs of Canadians with disabilities. In setting out this new disability agenda, governments agree that their initial efforts should focus on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of programs and the coordination between programs. At the same time, jurisdictions also recognize that this new disability agenda may require new investments. Governments agree that opportunities for new investment or reinvestment would be explored as fiscal resources permit.

In addition, jurisdictions agree that it is important to continue the dialogue with the disability community. To complement the ongoing intersectoral discussions, governments will engage the disability community in this agenda. Each jurisdiction already has its own processes for information sharing and dialogue; however, a collective approach is required in which federal, provincial and territorial



governments work together to engage Canadians and in which all sectors work in partnership to achieve a common approach to reform.

By building on years of consultation and government study, *In Unison* offers a viable approach to reform. It provides a

significant opportunity for governments to advance collectively a new approach to disability issues with all segments of society.



**APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A. INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF IMPAIRMENTS,  
DISABILITIES AND HANDICAPS: WORLD HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION**

**APPENDIX B. PROFILE OF CANADIANS WITH DISABILITIES**

**APPENDIX C. PROFILE OF ABORIGINAL CANADIANS WITH DISABILITIES**

**APPENDIX D. PREVIOUS INITIATIVES**

**APPENDIX E. THE SOCIAL UNION**

**APPENDIX F. SOCIAL POLICY RENEWAL**

## APPENDIX A

# INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF IMPAIRMENTS, DISABILITIES AND HANDICAPS\*: WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

In 1980, the World Health Organization issued the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps (ICIDH) in accordance with Resolution (WHA29.35) of the World Health Assembly. This has appeared in 15 languages and further versions are in preparation. ICIDH terminology refers to three concepts: impairments, disabilities, and handicaps defined as follows:

**Impairment:** “any loss or abnormality of a psychological, or anatomical structure or function”. Impairments are disturbances at the level of the organ.

**Disability:** “any restriction or inability (resulting from an impairment) to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being”. This describes a functional limitation or activity restriction caused by an impairment. Disabilities are descriptions of disturbances in function at the level of the person.

**Handicap:** “any disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or a disability, that limits or prevents the fulfillment of a role that is normal for that individual”. The classification of handicap is a classification of circumstances that place individuals “at a disadvantage relative to their peers when viewed from the norms of society”. The classification of handicap deals with the relationship that evolves between society, culture and people who have impairments or disabilities, as reflected in people’s life roles.

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\*The ICIDH is currently under review. Many countries, including Canada and the United States, are contributing to the development of the second official version of the ICIDH.

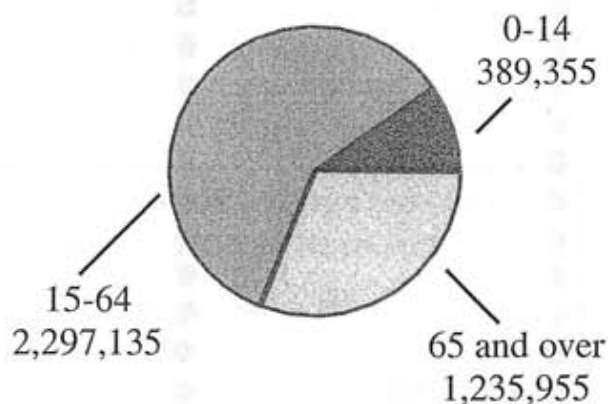
## APPENDIX B

# PROFILE OF CANADIANS WITH DISABILITIES\*

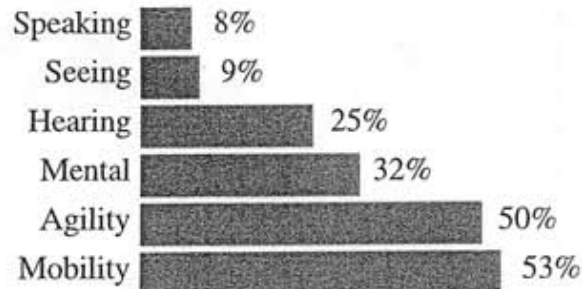
### DEMOGRAPHICS

- ❖ In 1991, 4.2 million Canadians, 16% of the population, reported some level of disability. Of the 4.2 million Canadians with disabilities, 3.9 million live in households and 300,000 live in institutions.
- ❖ Disability rates increase regularly with age, from 7% of children under the age of 14, to 50% of those over age 65. As the Canadian population ages, the prevalence of disabilities among the population rise.

**DISTRIBUTION OF ALL PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING IN HOUSEHOLDS BY AGE GROUPS**



**DISTRIBUTION OF ALL PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES BY DISABILITY TYPE**

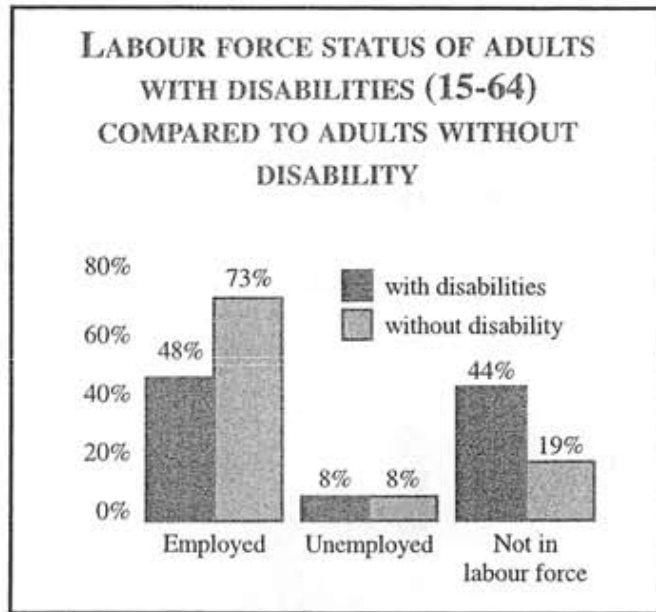


\*Source: Health and Activity Limitations Survey (HALS), Statistics Canada, 1991.

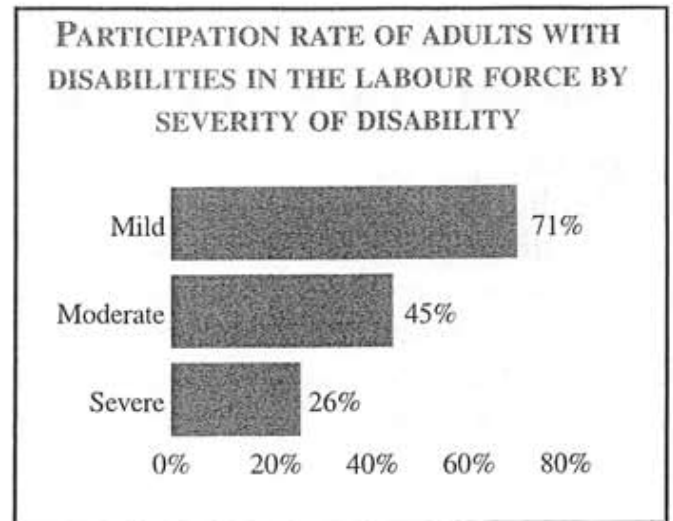


## EMPLOYMENT

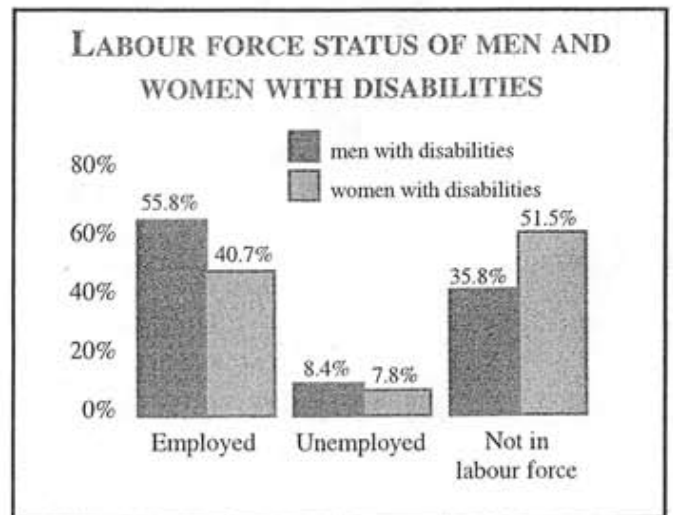
- ❖ Persons with disabilities have a lower rate of employment as well as a lower participation rate in the labour force than those without disabilities. Limited employment opportunities for persons with disabilities may discourage many from actively searching for work.



- ❖ The majority of persons with disabilities have mild disabilities. This group has a very high participation rate in the labour force. Persons with severe disabilities are least likely to be in the labour force. Yet, despite severe disabilities, 26 percent of this group do participate.
- ❖ The participation rate of men and women with disabilities differs considerably. Women with disabilities are less likely to be employed than men



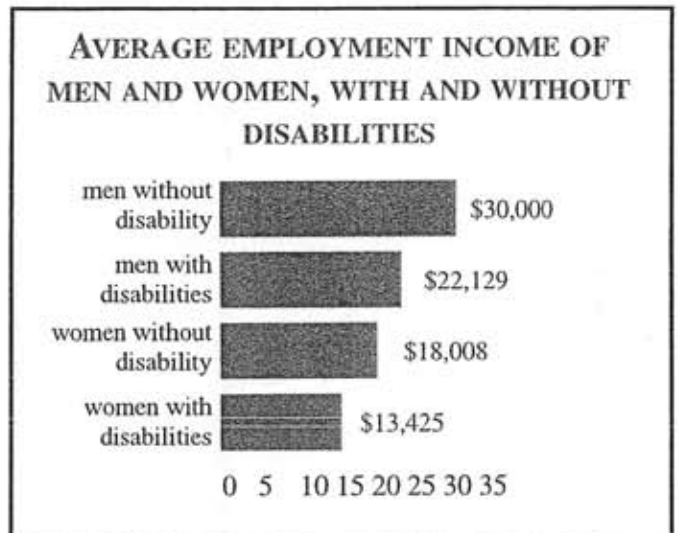
with disabilities. The disproportionate share of domestic responsibilities assumed by women with disabilities has presented significant barriers to their labour force participation and has contributed to increased poverty for many of these women.



- ❖ A number of factors discourage persons with disabilities from seeking work. The reasons for not joining the labour force most often cited by persons with disabilities are: losing their current income (21%); problems with training (16%); no jobs available (15%); fear they would lose additional supports (13%); family responsibilities (10%); discrimination (7%); and lack of accessible transportation (7%).
  
- ❖ The accessibility of the workplace largely determines whether or not people with disabilities can work. The three accommodations most often identified by people with disabilities not in the labour force as required for them to work are: modified/ reduced hours (33%); job redesign (27%); and accessible transportation (14%).

## INCOME

- ❖ Persons with disabilities are more likely than others to have low employment income, particularly women with disabilities, who are concentrated at the bottom end of the scale.



### OTHER SOCIAL INDICATORS

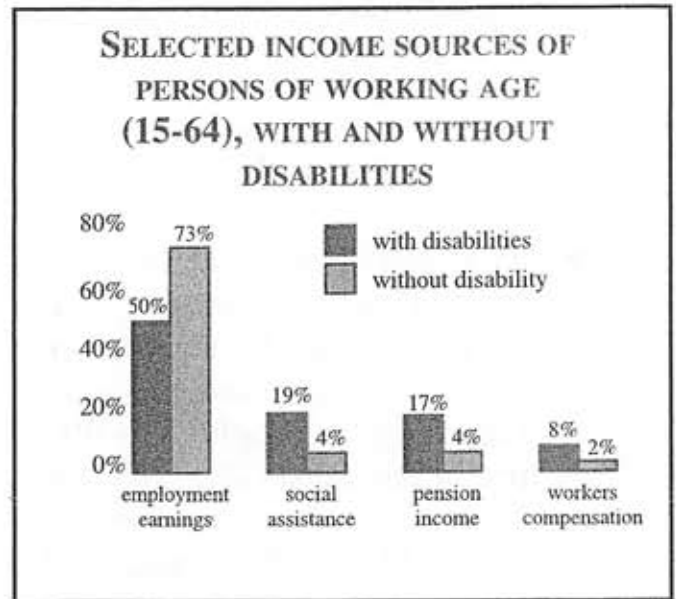
- ❖ The majority (94%) of persons with disabilities reside in households, not institutions.
- ❖ 91% of children with disabilities attend school; 62% attend regular classes.
- ❖ Education level of adults with disabilities (15-64) compared to adults without disability:

	with disabilities	without disability
high school or less	65%	50%
university degree	6%	14%

- ❖ Persons with disabilities who have participated in work-related training, by labour force status:

employed	54%
unemployed	43%
not in the labour force	26%

- ❖ About one third of persons with disabilities aged 15 to 64 receive disability-related income. Half of them have employment earnings.



## APPENDIX C

# PROFILE OF ABORIGINAL CANADIANS WITH DISABILITIES

### FACTS

- 30 percent of Aboriginal adults report a disability – almost twice the national rate.
- Among Aboriginal people, the 15-34 age group has a disability rate three times the national average.

### PROBLEMS

- As the Federal Task Force on Disability Issues highlighted, Aboriginal persons with disabilities share the same problems as other Canadians with disabilities, but these are worsened by jurisdictional issues:
  - the lack of disability-related services available on-reserve often forces Aboriginal people to abandon their communities in search of these supports;
  - however, once off-reserve, Aboriginal persons with disabilities face jurisdictional barriers in accessing these supports and services.

principles for the Social Union from an Aboriginal perspective.

- In a follow-up to Minister Pettigrew's commitment to the Council, the Aboriginal Round Table on Disability Issues was held 9-10 April 1997 which led to 15 recommendations including the creation of an on-going federal Aboriginal Reference Group on Disability Issues.
- The federal Aboriginal Reference Group on Disabilities Issues:
  - selected a site for a National Clearing House on Aboriginal Disability Issues;
  - decided to commission a paper to complement *In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues*.

### ACTIONS TAKEN

- Federal/Provincial/Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal:
  - created federal Aboriginal Technical Committee on Social Policy;
  - this Committee set its own priorities
  - children, persons with disabilities and the establishment of objectives and



## APPENDIX D

### PREVIOUS INITIATIVES

A number of studies have been conducted in Canada on disability issues. Some highlights of the major federal/provincial/territorial studies are presented below. Provinces and territories also have undertaken major studies and initiatives over the last 20 years which have made a positive and valuable contribution to our understanding of disability-related issues and to the implementation of disability programs.

#### OBSTACLES REPORT

The International Year of Disabled Persons – 1981 – is often cited as the landmark date for tracing the history of disability studies in Canada. In respect of the International Year, the Government of Canada appointed an all-party Special Committee on the Disabled and the Handicapped to undertake a comprehensive review of federal legislation pertaining to persons with disabilities.

The Committee produced the *Obstacles Report* which put forward 130 recommendations on all aspects of public policy including human rights, income security, assistive devices, transportation and communications. The major accomplishment of the Committee was to ensure the inclusion of persons with physical and mental disabilities in the equality rights section of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The work of the Committee also sparked attitudinal change

which set a new climate and framework for ensuring that persons with disabilities are treated as full citizens rather than passive recipients of services.

#### INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF DISABLED PERSONS

Canada continued its work in this area in respect of the United Nations Declaration of the International Decade of Disabled Persons (1982-1993). In 1982, a major federal-provincial effort was initiated to propose options for disability income reform. In response to recommendations in the *Obstacles Report*, Social Services Ministers established a Federal-Provincial Working Group. It conducted an exhaustive study which developed several costed options for the reform of current earnings replacement and income support programs. These proposals were published in a Joint Federal-Provincial Study issued in 1985.

Another major initiative was the appointment of a Royal Commission on Equality in Employment. The 1984 *Report of the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment* explored the duty to accommodate persons with disabilities and the elimination of overt and systemic barriers to equality. The report pointed out that equality does not mean treating everyone the same way. In fact, in order to achieve equality, it actually may be necessary to treat people quite differently. In 1985, the Parliamentary Committee on

Equality Rights issued *Equality for All*, which established an equality framework for meeting the needs of persons with disabilities. That same year saw the establishment of the Status of Disabled Persons Secretariat whose mandate was to raise awareness and support the full participation of persons with disabilities.

### MAINSTREAM REVIEW

In 1992, the Conference of Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers of Social Services announced a Mainstream Review to develop a collective strategic framework for the full integration of Canadians with disabilities. Ministers also directed that the Review explore whether governments and individuals with disabilities could agree upon a vision and statement of principles. The report of the Mainstream Review proposed a conceptual framework to support the shift from segregation to mainstreaming, or from 'warehouse' to 'open house'.

The open house concept emphasized the importance of persons with disabilities enjoying the same rights and benefits as

other Canadians and participating fully in all aspects of life including school, work and recreation. This participation is made possible by the removal of social, economic and physical barriers and the provision of supports which accommodate and respect differences. The report also explored the need to make generic programs, such as child care, training and education, more open and inclusive.

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE STATUS OF DISABLED PERSONS

Over the past two decades, the Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons has actively promoted the equality rights of persons with disabilities. In its 1990 report, *A Consensus for Action: The Economic Integration of Disabled Persons*, the Committee recommended that all federal departments, Crown corporations and agencies be required to review and reform legislation and regulations in order to promote the integration of persons with

WAREHOUSE	GREENHOUSE	OPEN HOUSE
Caring for	Enabling	Accommodating
Protection	Support	Autonomy/Empowerment
Labelled Permanently Incapacitated	Adaptation of Individual	Adaptation of Social and Physical Environment
Deemed Incompetent	Recognition of Capacity	Rights/Responsibilities

disabilities. The report called for an effective mechanism to ensure ongoing and consistent monitoring of all policy, legislation and regulations pertaining to persons with disabilities. In its 1992 report, *Paying Too Dearly*, the Committee highlighted the costs of the continued marginalization of persons with disabilities.

In the following year, the Committee produced *As True As Taxes: Disability and the Income Tax System*. The report explored various improvements to the tax system. That same year, the Committee produced the report *Completing the Circle*, which highlighted the needs of Aboriginal Canadians with disabilities. In 1995, *The Grand Design: Achieving the Open House Vision* further developed the open house vision put forward in the Mainstream Review.

## **TASK FORCE ON DISABILITY ISSUES**

The most recent national initiative, the Federal Task Force on Disability Issues (also known as 'the Scott Task Force') was established in June 1996 by the Ministers of Human Resources Development, Finance, Revenue and Justice. Its mandate was to define and make recommendations on the role of the Government of Canada as it relates to persons with disabilities. The Task Force organized public consultations throughout the country and commissioned research papers focussed upon five key issues: national civil infrastructure/citizenship, legislative review, labour market integration, income support and the tax system. In October 1996, the Task Force issued its report entitled *Equal Citizenship for Canadians with Disabilities: The Will to Act*.

## APPENDIX E

### THE SOCIAL UNION

*In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues* is one example of the work of the social union, which is based on a commitment by jurisdictions to cooperative policy-making in the social policy area and which builds on the principles inherent in the concept of flexible and efficient federalism.

*In Unison* is consistent with the partnership approach advanced by the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal (Council) whose ground rules include: cooperation, transparency, partnership, discretion and a 'whole of government' perspective. In their February 17, 1997 letter to First Ministers, the federal and provincial co-chairs of the Council, Pierre Pettigrew and Stockwell Day (Alberta), emphasized that goodwill, trust and mutual respect should guide governments' search for better collaboration in the design and delivery of social programs. The Council also has made a commitment to focus on Canadians' needs in developing policies, directions and programs that respond to these needs.

The key ingredients of this new approach include: having an agreed and well-articulated set of principles and objectives; identifying a common agenda in recognition of roles and responsibilities and the need to manage interdependence; being willing to conduct business in a cooperative and open manner; and recognizing the need for public accountability. Accordingly, this document sets out an approach for how

governments could cast such a new relationship in the area of persons with disabilities.

*In Unison* responds specifically to the Council's agreement to pursue a seamless and coordinated system of benefits and services for persons with disabilities. *In Unison* seeks to develop a more coherent and integrated approach by taking into consideration current roles and responsibilities and by identifying priority areas for governments to work together for the benefit of Canadians with disabilities.

Continued success of this initiative for persons with disabilities will depend on the collective will and ability of governments to collaborate fully on all aspects of policy-making. Such success can demonstrate to Canadians the ability of governments to work together to maintain and modernize social programs, and the tangible benefits of our federation.



## APPENDIX F

### SOCIAL POLICY RENEWAL

In 1996, the provinces and territories put forward a number of principles in the *Report to Premiers* by the Provincial/Territorial Ministerial Council on Social Policy Reform and Renewal (see below).

Discussions are continuing among federal and provincial/territorial governments on a mutually agreed set of principles in the context of the broader negotiation on a social union framework agreement initiated at the request of First Ministers in December 1997.

First Ministers also agreed that these negotiations would include collaborative approaches to the use of the federal spending power, appropriate dispute settlement mechanisms, clarifying ground rules for intergovernmental cooperation and identifying processes for clarifying roles and responsibilities within social policy sectors.

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Principles put forward in the 1996 *Report to Premiers* by the Provincial/Territorial Ministerial Council on Social Policy Reform and Renewal:

#### **SOCIAL PROGRAMS MUST BE ACCESSIBLE AND SERVE THE BASIC NEEDS OF ALL CANADIANS**

1) Social policy must assure reasonable access to health, education and training, income support and social services that meet Canadians' basic needs.

- 2) Social policy must support and protect Canadians most in need.
- 3) Social policy must promote social and economic conditions which enhance self-sufficiency and well-being, to assist all Canadians to actively participate in economic and social life.
- 4) Social policy must promote active development of individuals' skills and capabilities as the foundation for social and economic development.
- 5) Social policy must promote the well-being of children and families, as children are our future. It must ensure the protection and development of children and youth in a healthy, safe and nurturing environment.

#### **SOCIAL PROGRAMS MUST REFLECT OUR INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY**

- 6) Social policy must reflect our individual and collective responsibility for health, education and social security, and reinforce the commitment of Canadians to the dignity and independence of the individual.
- 7) Partnerships among governments, communities, social organizations, business, labour, families and individuals are essential to the

continued strength of our social system.

- 8) There is a continuing and important role, to be defined, for both orders of government in the establishment, maintenance and interpretation of national principles for social programs.

**SOCIAL PROGRAMS MUST BE AFFORDABLE, EFFECTIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE**

- 9) The ability to fund social programs must be protected. Social programs must be affordable, sustainable, and designed to achieve intended and measurable results.
- 10) The long-term benefits of prevention and early intervention must be reflected in the design of social programs.
- 11) Federal constitutional, fiduciary, treaty and other historic responsibilities for assurance of Aboriginal health, income support, social services, housing, training and educational opportunities must be fulfilled. The federal government must recognize its financial responsibilities for Aboriginal Canadians, both on and off reserve.
- 12) Governments must coordinate and integrate social programming and funding in order to ensure efficient and effective program delivery, and to reduce waste and duplication.

**SOCIAL PROGRAMS MUST BE FLEXIBLE, RESPONSIVE AND REASONABLY COMPARABLE ACROSS CANADA**

- 13) Social policy must be flexible and responsive to changing social and economic conditions, regional/local priorities and individual circumstances.
- 14) Governments must ensure that all Canadians have access to reasonably comparable basic social programming throughout Canada, and ensure that Canadians are treated with fairness and equity.
- 15) Social policy must recognize and take into account the differential impact social programming can have on men and women.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Social Services would like to thank Sherri Torjman, Vice-President of the Caledon Institute for Social Policy, for her contribution in developing *In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues*. Her professionalism and expert advice were greatly valued. It was a pleasure and a privilege to work with her.

