

## **PURPOSE:**

A request to take initial steps in the creation of a publicly funded national disability insurance program that will strengthen the Canadian economy and advance the Inclusion Agenda by addressing the needs of the most marginalized group in Canada – persons with disabilities.

## **BACKGROUND:**

- Persons with disabilities are the poorest and most marginalized group in Canadian society – experiencing the highest rates of unemployment and poverty. They are the last item on the Inclusion agenda;
- Regardless of Province, support services for persons with disabilities are underfunded, inadequate to task as evident in the long waiting list for services in every Province. The support systems also suffer from inconsistent application of benefits, inflexibility in delivery and are bureaucratically nightmarish to navigate as testified in many Auditor General Reports including the most recent one from Ontario<sup>1</sup>;
- The current support systems for PWD's are also massively inefficient due to fragmentation and lack of standards and inadequate data;
- Australia, whose disability support systems were identical to Canada over a decade ago addressed the problems comprehensively through the creation of a national disability insurance program called the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS);
- The impact of this program has been profound and deep: increasing GDP, generating employment for PWD's, allowing women to re-enter the work force and fostering innovation;
- The NDIS was created after a major research study by the Productivity Commission of the Ministry of Finance a review of which can be found here <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/ndis-costs#report>

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

- The issue of inadequate supports for persons with disabilities is well understood and recognized by disabled individuals and the families that require these services but is not widely recognized by the public at large;
- The architecture and structure of the disability support systems in Canada emerged in the 1970's and has remained the modus operandi since then. This system is no longer suitable to the task;
- Canadian disability support innovations are stifled by lack of purchasing power in Canada and are forced to market overseas where better support programs exist. See Kinova <https://www.kinovarobotics.com/en>
- A new funding model is in order that meets demand and is sustainable and economically beneficial;
- Such a model exists both in Australia with the NDIS (see Bonyhady letter attached) and is outlined in the Policy Paper "Moving Forward" drafted by the Every Canadian Counts Coalition; <https://everycanadiancounts.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Moving-Forward.pdf>

- Such a strategy is fully compatible, and indeed enhances the objectives of the Inclusion Agenda when it comes to PWD's and as expressed in the Speech from the Throne in the Fall of 2020. It has significant income, employment and participation features.
- Despite this proof of concept, public support will need to be cultivated and operational issues addressed before any government can commit to such a significant program;
- Public support will occur when the costs/benefits are known and understood;
- This can be addressed through a comprehensive research effort that outlines those costs and benefits, both qualitative and qualitative.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- That the Federal Government of Canada in its upcoming budget allocate financial resources to conduct comprehensive research into the feasibility, desirability and viability of a national publicly funded disability insurance program

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<sup>i</sup> *Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, Value-for-Money Audit Supportive Services for Adults with Developmental Disabilities. //C:/Users/Bill%20Cowie/Downloads/%2313%20-%20Auditor%20Generals%20Report%20Dec%202020%20-%20value%20for%20money%20audit%20supportive%20services%20for%20adults%20with%20disabilities.pdf*