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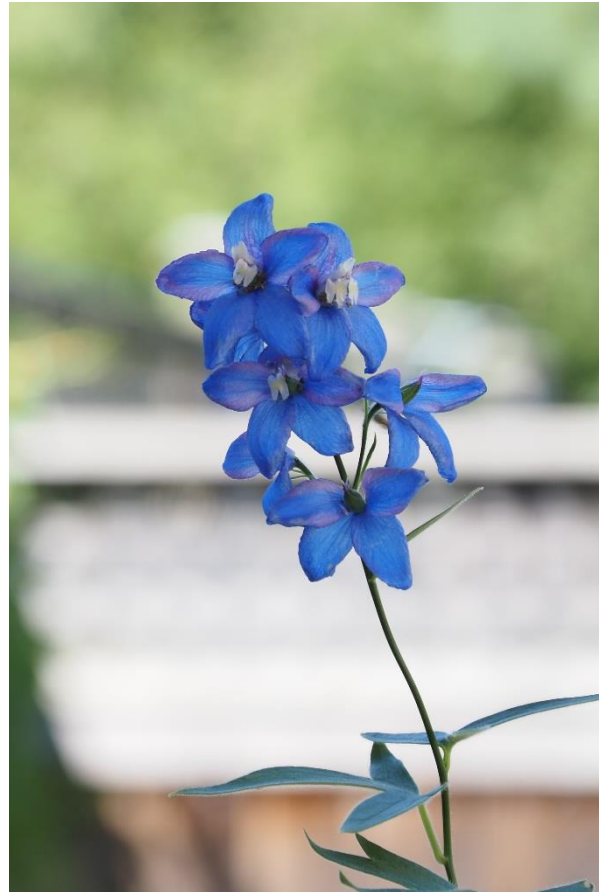
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Every Canadian Counts Coalition

229 Colonnade Road | Ottawa, Ontario K2E 7K3 | 613-447-8894 |

www.everycanadiancounts.com

Outline

The Every Canadian Counts Coalition hopes you and yours are remaining safe and well during this nervous time now that we are in the Fall season.

In this edition we examine why an income program is no substitute for a well funded essential supports program. To provide income without supports is putting the cart before the horse resulting in little or no income gains.

Following from this we are proud to announce the launch of our new web page.

Our final sections deal with more recent ECCC activities and developments, made more significant with the federal government's commitment to the building of an Inclusive Society.

Opinion

Getting to the Starting Line

The YouTube posting is highly illustrative. A Secondary School teacher is on the football playing field at the 30-yard line and faces his students standing on one goal line. In a race to WIN \$100 they are to run to the other goal line. The class is mixed, boys and girls, Whites and Latinos and Blacks and they are all on the starting goal line together. But it not the starting line for the race. The teacher says before the race begins, "If your parents are still together, take 2 steps forward". This is followed by, "If you have had private tutoring take two steps forward". And then, "If you have never had to worry about your cell phone being cut off take two steps forward". It goes on. The race is never won but the lesson is learned. It is a lesson about who and who has not had support in their young lives, and the advantage it affords them.

But there was one group missing in this video. There was no one identified with a disability. “If you have mobility issues take two steps back”. For any they would be behind the goal line at the outset.



Filling the two (or more) steps back gap that persons with disabilities face is the purpose of building specialized institutional, logistical, technical and therapeutic supports. They help to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to engage in the game of life more equitably. At a minimum it is about getting to the starting line and from there advancing beyond it. Such support services are a pre-requisite for engaging in the race to be the best of one's ability - be this the race to get a job and earn a decent income, to find housing, to partake in social and cultural events. When quality supports are available where and when needed all these engagements become easier. And until such services are available to all who need them, the other pervasive condition of persons with disabilities – poverty, high rates of unemployment, isolation and discrimination - will never be resolved.



Fortunately, one jurisdiction in the world has recognized this. Australia, with its National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), funds a program that provides essential supports for persons with chronic disabilities throughout their lifetime.

With this as the starting line, income, employment, education, and other services not only are better leveraged through this support, but meaningfully help address the issue of chronic poverty, homelessness, isolation among the community of persons with disabilities because any income earned does not have to be spent on support services.

The importance of providing essential supports first and foremost can be seen in the average cost associated with the NDIS. The average cost of supports for persons with disabilities was estimated and confirmed to be in the order of \$35,000. This is before any income effect. In other words, an income program, guaranteed or otherwise serves little anti poverty purpose if the income needs to be spent on essential supports. But there are other issues associated with an

income versus essential supports public policy approach to persons with disabilities as well.

First is the public acceptability of an income versus a disability insurance approach to providing services for the disabled. Providing income for persons with disabilities, while not providing it to others who may be struggling (unemployed, displaced, and the very low paid generally) creates a 'special interest' which can result in resentment and would be subject to political attack. It can also be a excuse for not funding other needed measures.

A universal insurance program on the other hand has a much greater change of public acceptance because it can apply to anyone – and hence to all. Similarly, as an insurance that everyone pays into it lends itself to becoming an accepted part of the social safety net (like Medicare and CPP) and can be seen to be filling a real need.

Secondly, the funding of such a support program would stimulate targeted innovation, and be less like 'stimulus' finding. Canada has been a pioneer in many assistive devices that currently have no demand curve in Canada, leaving companies to market their innovations overseas.



Third, making disability insurance a target of public policy provides the unifying focus that has recently been called for among leaders in the disability community¹. It addresses a common theme and concern - and one that never seems to be addressed specifically – chronic underfunding of disability support services.

Fourth, there is the employment effect of the NDIS. In the roll out of the program in 2018 and 2019 it was the biggest single new employer in Australia when the economy was doing well, with notable employment effects in remote and small communities.

Finally, there is the societal effect. It has transformed Australian society in a way that makes them proud to be Australian. From a laggard in disability support

¹ Al Edmanksi and Kathleen O'Grady "It's time to unify the disability movement" August 4, 2020 Globe and Mail, Every Canadian Counts, "Disability Advocacy in Canada: A Community Divided"

services in the OECD it has turned into a world leader in terms of what can – and should – be done.

It is time to get everyone in Canada to the goal line. It is time to end the poverty, the strain, the inequity, the unnecessary injustice. It is time to make what we know as possible by way of ensuring effective support, i.e. through the mechanism of a national universal and entitlement-based disability insurance program, a reality.

Moving Forward

Our New Website

Please visit our new and updated website at www.everycanadiancounts.com

Our message is a simple one. We need a new national funding formula for disability services that provides essential supports for persons with chronic disabilities throughout their lifetime regardless of income. We do it for people facing health challenges, it is time to offer the same for those who face the challenges of a disability.

Finding Common Ground

The Australian Disability Insurance Scheme, launched in 2018, provided not only an anti-poverty stimulus and needed social and other supports for persons with disabilities, but upon its roll out provided more new net jobs than any other sector in Australia in 2018-2109. It continues to provide new jobs -a much-needed initiative post-COVID.

The COVID -19 epidemic has revealed the fragility of our economies and societies. The entire system is working on tight margins in the name of efficiency. Glittering

communications technology enabled us to communicate despite lockdown, while hundreds of seniors died alone in long term care homes due to low staffing, inadequate protections and unclear protocols. Workers in the system who had historically been mistreated, exploited and taken for granted had now become indispensable. It seems we had lost sight of what mattered.

Much thought will need to go into rebuilding the post-COVID world. If nothing else is clear we cannot afford to go back. But we have been here before and have overcome the challenges through solidarity, creativity and effort. It is time to travel that road again.



Rallying around an idea that makes sense for people because it is the right thing to do creates not only hope but also a platform for building solidarity, stimulating creativity and makes effort worthwhile. Just as fighting for Medicare did it in the 1960's we believe the fight for meaningful disability insurance can do it for Canada.

ECCC Engagements and Activities

The Every Canadian Counts Coalition has been active and involved in a number of initiatives both as part of wider federally led efforts and in its own right. In the first instance it includes involvement in the CCRW's Disability Confidence Impacts Finance Program and the Disability and Work Conference Program as a member of the Design Income and Employment Benefits Working Group

ECCC and DCIF (Disability Confidence Impacts Finance) Project Spearheaded by the Canadian Council of Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW) this federally funded initiative has brought together over 40 organizations for the purpose of developing tools and resources pertaining to the Canadian financial sector and focus on the priority areas of accessible service design/delivery and accessible workplaces as they relate to the Accessible Canada Act.

The Every Canadian Counts Coalition has signed on as an Option 2 partner. Option #2 – Partner Support where we will spend an average of two hours/week on project-related activities that may include providing feedback and input, attending meetings, and promoting the overall project to the community at large.

An initial work planning meeting has been held with the recruitment process for two staff to manage the project near completion. The Every Canadian Counts Coalition’s interest in the project relates to how an insurance-based funding system would interact with work plan activities. For example, it is an objective of the project to create “communications packages for senior executives including case studies on how to utilize fresh messaging that promotes change”. Would this be something that a Disability Insurance Agency would fund as part of a support package for a person with a disability? It would depend. If the insurance program was to provide *essential* supports, would this be deemed essential? Distinguishing ‘nice to do’ from ‘need to do’ is one of the major challenges of insurance program design looking ahead.

For a detailed outline of the goals, objectives and focus of the Project please contact wcowie@everycanadiancounts.com

ECCC and the Conference of Disability and Work

The Disability and Work Conference was held in Ottawa on Dec 4,5 2019. Out of that Conference a number of thematic work groups were created one of which was the focus for Every Canadian Counts Coalition - the Design Income and Employment Benefits Work Group. A meeting of the Work Group was held in August after which the EEEEC was asked to submit a proposal for presentation at the 2020 (virtual) Conference. As of writing final details on the Conference were pending.

ECCC and the Stories Project

An important development in the creation of the Australian National Disability Insurance strategy was the production of the “Shut Out’ report in 2009². This Report was important because it outlined the experience of persons with

² For a copy of the report go to: <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/government-international/national-disability-strategy-shut-out-report>

disabilities in Australia. It told their stories and the stories highlighted the extreme marginalization and deep struggles of persons with disabilities in that country. It was instrumental in mobilizing public support for reform. The public realized, in the language of Australians that persons with disabilities were not given a 'fair go'.

Every Canadian Counts Coalition is launching its own **Stories Project**. With the support of the Ottawa Carleton Association for Persons with Development Disabilities we have a researcher at our disposal to discover and help produce the stories that give us the picture of the disability support system in Canada. That story will be about more than wait lists. It will be about insufficient funding; about services not matching need. It will be about inflexibility and bureaucracy. It will be about being forgotten, marginalized and made invisible. It will be about the need for change.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Do you have a story to tell? We'd love to hear from you. All information remains confidential.

Please contact us at info@everycanadiancounts.com

What Next for ECCC and the disability insurance agenda?

ECCC's engagements and activities are designed to align its efforts with the federal government's Inclusion agenda. ECC's advocacy for a more comprehensive and fair funding model of national reach together with its engagement with the disability community through the **Stories Project**, political engagements and other activities, all work toward the creation of a research agenda that will outline the rationale and essential features of any national strategy (See Spring Newsletter Vol. 5. 1.)

Board and Related News

Karen Keyes, a member of the Board for 3 years submitted her resignation due to other commitments and expressed her and her organization's continued support for the Every Canadian Counts Coalition. We sincerely thank Karen and Deaf Blind Ontario Services for their contributions and efforts on our behalf.

The Board also wants to note the hiring of a part-time researcher, **Daksh Aggarwall** who has assisted in website renewal and is currently engaged in fundraising. Daksh is an Environmental Engineering Student at the University of Guelph.

The Every Canadian Counts Coalition also wished to welcome **Beth Sweeney**, a student at Algonquin College to the team. Beth will be working on the Stories Project. Beth has been made available to us thanks to the David Ferguson and Ann Cole of the Ottawa Carleton Association for Persons with Developmental Disabilities.