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Every Canadian Counts

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Outline

Every Canadian Counts hopes these trying times will soon pass before too long and that through it you and yours remain healthy and up-beat as much as circumstances allow.

This newsletter we offer:

- An Op Ed that offers our perspective on the disability support system in Canada.

Our initiatives including the:

- Stories Project
- Partnerships Plan
- Rising Youth and,
- Political mobilization
- ECC on the National Scene

Every Canadian Counts continues to be an active participant in the:

- Disability and Work Conference
- Disability Inclusion Plan with its focus on the Disability Benefit and the,
- Disability Confidence in Finance initiative, a product of the Canada Accessibility Act.

We also appeal for your financial support. We are growing and we need your help.

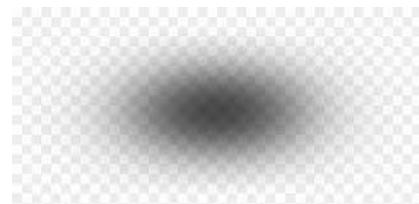
Op Ed

Fighting the Shadows of Disability

Introduction

Having a disability casts many shadows. A shadow is defined as ‘a dark area or shape produced by a body coming between rays of light and a surface.’ It is the product of consequence, of a light being cast on an object that is not the object itself. The shadows of disability include poverty, underemployment and underpaid work, poor and inadequate housing, isolation and even an inability, born of seen and unseen barriers and exclusion, to participate fully in society.

For decades now, much of the activism and energy to improve the living circumstances of persons with disabilities had been in the arena of fighting the shadows. Employment strategies, housing strategies, anti-poverty strategies, accessibility legislation have been among the major areas of focused attention. It has been about ameliorating those shadows, the consequences of disability, but often without, or only in part, addressing the needs of the person at the centre, the person with a disability. There is a myriad of disability organizations that deal with these shadows and millions, if not billions, of dollars are spent to address them with all these funds having little or no change in overall results over the past few decades.



At heart there is nothing wrong with this focus. Programs and resources committed to deal with these shadow effects are legitimate. Indeed, much of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCPRD) seek to address these issues.

However, there is one problem. The images and data they are working with are very often distorted, only a partial outline of themselves. This is also a focus of the UNCPRD.

How? Simply, the shadows reflect persons who have not been given the chance to be the best they can be. Their disabilities are more debilitating, are more restrictive, are more challenging and onerous for themselves and the people around them than they need to be because they – in their hundreds of thousands - lack the supports and services that can ameliorate and moderate and even overcome their disability.

What does it all mean?

The implications of this lack of services and supports has a profound effect on the shadows, and consequently on shadow focused interventions.

It begins early. A child is born with a disability that gets immediate diagnosis. Therapies are known but there is no immediate access to their provision, except for those who have the money and networks to draw on. This is unfair. Consequently, for those without private resources and very, very few have the resources, the disability gets unaddressed, making it chronic or long term. But even when services and supports are available for the young (with the quality of those often never subject to performance outcomes) they disappear. After an individual turns the age of 18, services and support begin to disappear. They end up in a whole new world of bureaucratic navigation for supports that makes the outcome, in the words of the Ombudsman for Ontario, “a crap shoot.” The result is that many thousands of persons with disabilities engage in wider society with an unnecessary disability. The one born of the supports they should have but cannot get.

The shadow of someone with the disability services and supports they need is a quite different shadow. This is important because it would make all the shadow programming and efforts much more efficient and effective because they would now be dealing with what is possible and not what is given. There is a huge pool of talent available amongst people with disability, or willing to participate and contribute to society, including work. They just need support and recognition of need. And even for those who cannot work, the benefit of timely and appropriate supports and services reduces family breakdown and offers freedom of choice to caregivers. A person with a disability needs to be addressed as the object of focus, not as the shadow of themselves.

The Shadow of Poverty... and More

Of all the shadows that are manifest the level of poverty among persons with disabilities is the most evident and degrading. The recent efforts to implement a Disability Benefit are to be applauded. It has the potential to reduce and even eliminate that shadow.

But the other shadows, the shadows of low employment, isolation, marginalization will remain in their distorted form until the essential, tailored, individualized disability services and supports are made available in a timely and efficient manner.

That is the task at hand and for ECC, the End Game for any Disability Inclusion Plan.

Join Us

The Goal

Every Canadian Counts continues its campaign for a better service and supports system for Canadian with disabilities: a system that meets need, is reliable and adequately funded, is available when needed and performance based. A National Disability Insurance Plan can provide the funding mechanism and framework to meet those objectives.

How would this work? Go to: <https://everycanadiancounts.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Moving-Forward.pdf>

How You Can Help: Actions and Engagements

Every Canadian Counts is Eying 2024. In that year we hope to see a commitment by the government of the day to funding a Public Inquiry into the feasibility, viability, and desirability (cost/benefit analysis) of a national disability insurance plan. It is our most important task and we – together with you - are working to that end through our following actions.

Stories Project

It is a sad reality that the bulk of Canadians think those with disabilities are 'looked after.' It is also a sad reality that persons with disabilities are either tired or afraid to tell their stories. Both these realities need to change.

Our **Stories Project** has officially been launched. As noted in the last Newsletter the stories are about the challenges persons with disabilities face in their day to day lives because they simply do not have the supports they need and/or what life could be like if essential supports were available both for persons with disabilities and/or their care givers.

Why are these stories important? In Australia such a Report was instrumental in getting the Australian public behind the creation of national disability insurance. It can be found here:

<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/publications-articles/policy-research/shut-out-the-experience-of-people-with-disabilities-and-their-families-in-australia>

Please consider giving us your story. For guidance, please go to our website at: <https://everycanadiancounts.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Every-Canadian-Counts-Stories-Project-1.pdf>

Or contact us at info@everycanadiancounts.com

Partnership Project

The overwhelming number of our national politicians – our MP's, have little awareness of the situation that many hundreds of thousands of persons with disabilities face. We want to change that.

Working through our Stories Project but looking more widely, we hope to link up every MP in Canada with families that will convey the challenges those families face when trying to support a family member with a disability.

If you are part of such a family and want to send a message to your MP, please contact us at info@everycanadiancounts.com or call us at 613-447-8894.

Rising Youth

ECC continues its engagement with the Rising Youth program. We held two information sessions over the fall and look to hold another in this new year. If you have someone aged 15-29 looking for small grants, visit our website at https://everycanadiancounts.com/?page_id=174

Political Mobilization

Every Canadian Counts has been engaging national representatives across Parties and with the Senate of Canada. ECC has also harnessed the various political party policy processes with the objective of getting a budgetary commitment for a Public Inquiry into the feasibility, desirability, and viability of a national disability insurance plan. For ECC, this is the End Game for the Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

You can help by contacting your MP and telling your friends about us and telling them to do the same.

ECC on the National Scene

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan



Currently the focus of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan, led by March of Dimes and Independent Living Canada is on the Disability Benefit. This will be unfolding over the next year (drafting legislation) with implementation happening in 2023. In the longer run ECC believes that until the issues of supports and services is addressed the plan is not done.



Disability and Work Conference December 2021. Under the theme ‘Reforming Government Programs,’ Every Canadian Counts lead a panel entitled “*End the Wait: Addressing the Shortfall in Disability Services and Supports in Canada.*” Chaired by Jonathan Marchand, disability activist and ECC Board Director, there were presentations from Brain Injury Canada (BIC), Neurological Health Charities Canada (NHCC) and Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Alliance. The event was well attended, and all indications are it was very well received.

The Coalition continues to work with the **DCIF Project (Disability Confidence in Finance)**, an initiative administered through the Canadian Council of Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW). The purpose of the project is to produce a tool kit to help Canada’s banks in the recruitment and retention of employees with disabilities. ECC is the lead on the Recruitment tool, and as Supporter on the Corporate Strategic Framework Toolkit.

Canada Needs a National Hidden Disability Symbol

Millions of Canadians live with hidden disabilities. They are often marginalized, misunderstood, and ignored. There is a need to not only understand the complexities associated with hidden disabilities, but to share those experiences so that Canadians in the hidden disability community can access the support they need. Please join with ECC's Partner Brain Injury Canada for this important initiative.



To learn more about the Hidden Disability Symbol Canada movement, please visit: <https://hdscanada.wordpress.com>

Please also sign the petition with the House of Commons:

<https://petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-370>

An Appeal

We have been lousy fund raisers. We have been sustained by a small group of dedicated volunteers, with the occasional summer student thanks to our good friends at OCAPDD and its Executive Director Dave Ferguson. But as is evident here, and as we noted last time, we are growing and spreading, and with that, is the need for more resources.



Also, and more importantly, disability insurance, as a public policy option, is gaining more traction and the need to engage the broader public becomes more imperative. That too requires resources.

ECCC is looking for donations to help us do all this. Please visit our website at www.everycanadiancounts.com and hit the DONATE button on the top right. Let us know if Paypal does not work for you.

Thank you for your time, attention, and continued support in our efforts to 'End the Wait.'

Addendum

Some Changes at Every Canadian Counts

At the last Board meeting a couple of name change were approved.

First, the Position of **Strategic Manager** was changed to **Executive Director** a position held by Dr William Cowie.

Second, the **Every Canadian Counts Coalition** is now just **Every Canadian Counts** to reflect its politically neutral stance.

Finally, the Board welcomed two new members:

Penny LeClair, president of Barrier Free Canada and winner of the United Way community builder (2000); Peggy Alen award (2001) Canadian Council of Disabilities National (2003)

Max Brault Vice-President People and Change BDO Canada Inc. Most recently, Max guided the federal government towards their most ambitious legislation towards persons with disabilities, The Accessible Canada Act.

Every Canadian Counts is very pleased to welcome such experience to the Board.