

November 17, 2021

Right Honourable, Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of the pan-Canadian Disability Coalition, we offer our congratulations to you on your recent reelection, and applaud your selection of many diverse and experienced individuals to your new Cabinet. People with disabilities living in Canada are eager to see your government create bold and progressive policies, programs and laws that seek to remove continued barriers to inclusion in society that moves everyone forward.

In the spirit of collaboration, the pan-Canadian Disability Coalition has provided recommendations below on how your Ministers can work to create a Canada without barriers. We strongly believe that this work should not be the sole responsibility of one minister to ensure the inclusion of people with disabilities, rather, it is the collective responsibility of all Ministers to ensure a disability lens is applied to the work they undertake on behalf of all people in Canada, including those living with a disability.

Your leadership over the last five years and the ambitious agenda of hope and change you set for our country is taking shape. We urge you and your cabinet to take up the powerful instruments you have, the national housing strategy, the national action plan to address gender-based violence, the national affordable and accessible childcare initiative together with the Disability Inclusion Action Plan and the creation of the Canada Disability Benefit and leave a legacy of lasting change. Appendix A highlights key items that we consider elemental to the Mandate Letters of your Cabinet. If deemed helpful, we would welcome discussion on the topic with your staff.

We wish you every continued success in ensuring that Canada continues to become a more equitable and accessible country for all.

Sincerely,

Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW)  
Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)  
Inclusion Canada  
Rick Hansen Foundation  
Spinal Cord Injury Canada (SCI Canada)  
Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility  
DisAbled Women's Network of Canada

**1. Hon. Omar Alhabra, Minister of Transport**

- Direct the Canadian Transportation Agency to ensure compliance of the Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations within federally regulated transportation entities.

**2. Hon. Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health**

- Ensure that any plans or programs to aid Canadians with mental health and addiction issues take into consideration the unique needs of Canadians with disabilities, and that any such plan or program is developed in consultation with the disability community.
- Build a comprehensive plan for mental health care across Canada in consultation with, and incorporating, the directions of marginalized groups and their civil society representatives. The plan will include trauma informed supports and therapy so that all people living in Canada can readily receive mental health care.
- Work with Minister Qualtrough and the disability community where intersecting identities and oppressions have resulted in a ‘pandemic’ of dual diagnosis and a mental health crisis in the disability community
- Work in partnership with Minister Duclos to provide a disability lens to the approval of medical devices and drug treatments, to ensure that no further barriers are created. These two Ministers’ collaboration across the national housing strategy needs to reflect the urgent need for low-barrier, accessible housing and in the fight to stem the terrible impact of the OPIOID crisis.

**3. Hon. Bill Blair, President of the Queen’s Privy Council and Minister of Emergency Preparedness**

- In working to address the climate crisis Government will put in place frameworks to manage future emergency scenarios that are inclusive and attentive to the needs of people with disabilities.
- The government will learn from the COVID-19 pandemic and will ensure that hospital triage protocols and guidelines are inclusive, equitable, transparent, and grounded in an ethical process that is based on human rights and informed by lived experience. Health care providers involved in the critical care triage process will also receive training to reduce the risk of discriminatory bias.

**4. Hon. Randy Boissonnault, Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance**

- Work in consultation with the disability community to ensure that the tourism industry removes barriers to inclusion for individuals with disabilities. We have [world class experts](#) right here in Canada.

**5. Hon. François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry**

- In partnership with the Minister of Rural Economic Development, ensure that access to the internet is prioritized for those with disabilities.
- Enhance existing ISED programs to provide affordable internet and mobile access for those living with disabilities.
- Direct the CRTC to mandate affordable and accessible telecommunication – such as telephone captioning services - and internet services.
- Ensure a disability lens approach to the work of your department.

**6. Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Health**

- Work in partnership with Minister Bennett to provide a disability lens to the approval of medical devices and drug treatments, to ensure that no further barriers are created for people with disabilities
- Radically reconceptualize long term care with a focus on ensuring people with a disability can live in their own homes with the support required.
- Work with provinces and territories and all interested parties to respond to claims that our medical system has an over-reliance on seclusion, restraints, and involuntary hospitalizations.
- Repeal Bill C-7 and in doing so acknowledge that disability is not a fate worse than death, nor deserving of death. Also ensure that an array of services and supports are available and accessible to persons living with disabilities.
- Collect better data from those living in “collective dwellings” such as hospitals, long-term care homes, group homes, penal institutions, and homeless shelters. Existing gaps make it difficult to understand the nature of support and its nexus with disability and long-term care, and the general gaps in support across Canada.
- Hire 50,000 personal support workers and raise their current wages.

**7. Hon. Mona Fortier, President of the Treasury Board**

- Implement the ongoing commitment to hiring 5,000 people with disabilities in the federal public service and enhance this commitment.
- Ensure that the federal public service is the most accessible employer of choice for employees with disabilities.

**8. Hon. Sean Fraser, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship**

- Introduce changes to the Citizenship Guide, in consultation with people with disabilities, to explain barriers to accessibility in society.
- Ensure that immigration policies do not hinder the arrival of refugees or immigrants with disabilities, due to their disability or result in their incarceration while waiting.
- Work closely with Global Affairs Canada to ensure women with disabilities and families of children with disabilities in Afghanistan are given priority entry to Canada.

**9. Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance**

- Ensure that people with disabilities are a priority group for Government spending in the budgeting process.
- Set aside reserve and cross-sectoral funding that will allow the Government to fully develop their 'hope and change' investments (in housing, in child care and in preventing discrimination and harm). Start to develop sites/pilot projects where people in Canada can see, what an accessible family care centre looks like.
- Work with Minister Qualtrough to establish a new Canada Disability Benefit for persons with disabilities.

**10. Hon. Karina Gould, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development**

- Ensure that the government's national \$10/day daycare initiative, is inclusive and accessible for children and youth with disabilities as well as parents with disabilities.
- Ensure that the standards for training for child care workers includes a strong focus on preventing ableism and promoting inclusion.
- Ensure that the growth and employment opportunities that come with this commitment are invested in our community.
- Develop national policy and programs to remove Canadians from poverty, with a special consideration for those with disabilities.
- Enhance the Child Disability Benefit by increasing the benefit amount, raising the threshold at which the benefit starts to be reduced, and working with provinces and territories to prevent clawbacks.
- Continue to invest in inclusive and accessible childcare and fill gaps in retirement savings that build up over time to help address the financial repercussions caused when people leave the workforce to provide care to a person with a disability.
- Make the Canada Caregiver Credit refundable and tax-free.

**11. Hon. Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change**

- Prepare for worst case scenarios created by climate change by working to ensure that people with disabilities are never left behind.

**12. Hon. Patty Hajdu, Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario**

- Consult with Indigenous Peoples on the introduction of accessibility legislation for Indigenous People.
- Consult with Indigenous People with disabilities on gaps in services and supports and provide further remedies to address these gaps.
- Government recognizes Indigenous Disability Month.

**13. Hon. Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion**

- Implement the “better home for everyone” plan that is inclusive of people with disabilities.
- Require all infrastructure investments in housing to have an accessibility lens.
- Purposefully build accessible spaces and communities.
- Raise the number of mandatory affordable housing projects that are fully accessible and inclusive, in consultation with the disability community.
- Permit people with disabilities to withdraw funds from their Registered Disability Savings Plans to use as a down payment when buying a home.
- Provide many more Canadians with more portable rental supplements. A disability component will be added to the Canada Housing Benefit and made available through federal / provincial / Indigenous agreements.
- Continue down the path to deinstitutionalization as outlined in Article 19 of the CRPD.
- Address ableism and other forms of systemic discrimination in part by implementing Article 8 of the CRPD which tasks countries with raising awareness about people with disabilities, their rights, capabilities, and contributions, and with combating stereotypes, prejudices, and harmful behaviours, all in an intersectional manner.

#### **14. Hon. Gudie Hutchings, Minister of Rural Economic Development**

- In partnership with the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, ensure that access to, and affordability of, the internet is prioritized for those with disabilities.

#### **15. Hon. Marci Ien, Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Youth**

- Ensure that women, girls and non-binary people with disabilities are centered in the National Action Plan to End Gender Based Violence, particularly racialized, Indigenous, rural and Deaf women.
- Minister Ien to take the lead with Minister Qualtrough to work with cabinet to create a change movement across Government to no longer accept that 24% of women in Canada living with a disability experience the highest rates of systemic discrimination, violence, poverty and unemployment.
- Ensure that an intersectional approach to the department’s work, actively consults with women with disabilities and their unique identifies.

#### **16. Hon. Melanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs**

- Work with members of the disability community to better report and implement Canada’s obligations to the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Follow through on commitments to increase supports to women and girls with disabilities through the FIAP (Feminist international assistance program).
- Work the members of the disability community to ensure that Canada’s foreign policy and presence represents the unique situation of people with disabilities, globally.
- Consider the creation of a special advisor on International disability rights, as we have seen other states party to the CRPD do.

**17. Hon. Kamal Khera, Minister of Seniors**

- Ensure that seniors living with disabilities do not lose any provincial supports when they become eligible for GIS and OAS.

**18. Hon. Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities**

- Work with Provincial and Territorial governments to remove claw backs terms that negatively affect people with disabilities who are in receipt of both federal and provincial support programs.
- Work with the provinces, territories and municipalities to ensure that accessibility retrofits and upgrades are included in infrastructure funding, to remove barriers in the built environment for people with disabilities.

**19. Hon. David Lametti, Minister of Justice and Attorney General**

- Review the Criminal Code and all legislation to remove any elements that perpetuate barriers to inclusion, or criminalize the lived experience of Canadians with disabilities.
- Re-introduce Bill C-35 the Canada Disability Benefit Act, as one of the first pieces of legislation of the new Parliament.
- Work quickly with the disability community on the Disability Inclusion Action Plan consultation and use that feedback to develop a strong nation-wide program that supports all people with disabilities, and which includes an employment strategy for people with disabilities.
- Appoint an Accessibility Commissioner and Chief Accessibility Officer.
- Within ESDC, create an ongoing fund for employment programs for people with disabilities.
- Work to entrench intentional conventions into Canadian law including the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and resource an ambitious and collaborative agenda for realizing disability rights.
- The Government will apply a disability and inclusion framework to all decision making. By placing persons with disabilities and their families, in all of their diversity, at the centre of decision making, the Government will identify and rectify systemic barriers that will prove to be beneficial for all people living in Canada.

**20. Hon. Diane Lebouthillier, Minister of National Revenue**

- Modernize the Disability Tax Credit (DTC) and Registered Disability Savings Plan so that more individuals with disabilities are eligible for these programs, especially those who do not fit the definition of having “severe and prolonged impairment”.
- Ensure that access to federal programs and benefits will not be dependent on filing an annual tax return, and all application fees to access federal benefits will be paid by the government.

**21. Hon. Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Veteran Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence**

- Ensure veterans with disabilities are provided the best services and supports, while removing ableist proof of disability for ongoing application renewal.

**22. Hon. Marc Miller, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations**

- In partnership with Minister Hajdu, consult with Indigenous Peoples on the introduction of accessibility legislation for Indigenous People.

**23. Hon. Mary Ng, Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development**

- Create opportunities for training of small and medium size businesses to become disability confident in their hiring and employment practices.
- Work closely with the GTAG (Gender Trade Advisory Group) to support the increased participation of women and people with disabilities in international development, trade and export opportunities.

**24. Hon. Seamus O'Regan Jr., Minister of Labour**

- Ensure the new Employment Equity Act is built on a framework of intersectional disability.

**25. Hon. Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion**

- Re-introduce Bill C-35 the Canada Disability Benefit Act, as one of the first pieces of legislation of the new Parliament. Ensure that the benefit prioritizes dignity and ease of access, that it includes all persons receiving provincial and territorial disability benefits and that it will not interfere with, nor create barriers to, meaningful and equitable employment. Ensure it combines provincial and territorial benefits so that people with a disability don't have to live in poverty.
- Work quickly with the disability community on the Disability Inclusion Action Plan consultation and use that feedback to develop a strong nation-wide program that supports all people with disabilities.
- Develop and implement an employment strategy for persons with disabilities focused on supports for workers and employers, creating inclusive and welcoming workplaces. This strategy will include a significant investment in the Opportunities Fund and Workforce Development Agreements to substantially increase the employment rate of persons with disabilities.
- Apply a disability and inclusion framework to all decision making. By placing persons with disabilities and their families, in all of their diversity, at the centre of decision making, the Government will identify and rectify systemic barriers that will prove to be beneficial for all people living in Canada.
- Appoint an Accessibility Commissioner and Chief Accessibility Officer.
- Within ESDC, create an ongoing fund for employment programs for people with disabilities

**26. Hon. Pablo Rodriguez, Minister of Canadian Heritage**

- In partnership with Minister Champagne direct the CRTC to mandate affordable and accessible telecommunication – such as telephone captioning services - and internet services.

- Fully implement the spirit of the Marrakesh Treaty to significantly raise the quantity of accessible literature in Canada and abroad, for those living with a print disability.
- Work with CHRC to fully develop & implement domestic monitoring of the CRPD.
- Ensure that transparent and clear information is provided to all people in Canada in accessible formats including but not limited to plain language, ASL, LSQ, and ISL, Cart/Captioning, and braille.

**27. Hon. Harjit Sajjan, Minister of International Development and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada**

- Work in partnership with Minister Joly, to ensure that Canada's foreign policy and presence represents the unique situation of people with disabilities.
- Encourage active participation in 2022 Global Disability Summit to be held in Oslo in February, 2022.

**28. Hon. Filomena Tassi, Minister of Public Services and Procurement**

- Enhance the Government of Canada's procurement system to ensure that accessibility is a criterion for all procurement activities.