**Federal Election 2021: A Path to Inclusive Recovery**

Inclusion Canada

**Introduction**

Inclusion Canada is a national group. We are made up of smaller groups across Canada. This includes 300 local groups and 13 provincial or territorial. We work for people with intellectual disabilities. We work for their families. Our job is to protect their human rights. We also work for full inclusion. We lead the way in making Canada inclusive. Here is what we do.

* We make families stronger.
* We defend rights.
* We change communities. We make them into places where everyone belongs.

We know that COVID-19 has affected people with intellectual disabilities. It has also affected their families. The pandemic has made the problems they already had even worse. Here are some examples of the problems people face.

* They are discriminated against.
* They are isolated and lonely.
* They don’t have jobs.
* They face poverty.
* They have barriers in getting healthcare.
* They have barriers to getting an education.

People are stressed by the pandemic. Government programs are also stressed. This has let some people fall through the cracks. This usually happens to communities and people that are left out or forgotten by most of society. This includes Canadians who say they have a disability. They make up 22% of the population.

The current Canadian government dealt with the COVID-19 outbreak. The next one will plan the recovery from COVID-19. They need to make the recovery inclusive. It must include people with intellectual disabilities. It must include their families. Here are some examples of things the next government can do.

* They can end poverty.
* They can make community living real.
* They can protect and ensure human rights.

This document is for the parties running in the federal election. It is a list of things we would like them to do if elected.

**End Poverty**

**Invest in Income Security**

Many Canadians with disabilities are old enough to work. Of this group, one third lives in poverty. Some have an intellectual disability and live on their own. They face a very high poverty rate of 73%.

The pandemic affected parents of children with disabilities. They had to make sacrifices in order to raise their children. They had to turn down jobs. Some had to work fewer hours. Some had to refuse promotions. Parents also saw their expenses rise.

**Each party must ensure income insecurity**

* Make a federal income program for working-age people with disabilities. Pass laws to make sure this happens. These laws must make sure people can live with dignity. They need to encourage and boost employment. The program needs to be accessible and easy to use. People need an income of at least $2200 a month to be able to live. Federal and provincial or territorial benefits combined should equal this amount.
* Improve the Child Disability Benefit. Increase the amount of the benefit. Raise the amount allowed before the benefit starts to be reduced. Work with provinces and territories to stop benefits from being taken back. (This is called a ‘clawback.’)
* Keep investing in childcare that is inclusive and accessible.
* Fill gaps in retirement savings. Sometimes parents and other people take time off from their job to support a person with a disability. These breaks add up over time. This makes it harder for them to save money and retire.

**Update Federal Disability Programs and make them easy to access**

People with disabilities have added costs because of their disability. Federal benefits are supposed to cover these costs. But these programs are hard to access. An example is the Disability Tax Credit (DTC). It is a first step to getting access to other government programs. It is very hard to access. It can also cost money to get the application done.

**Each party must commit to action on Federal Disability Programs**

* Allow more people to apply the DTC and other programs. Use the Accessible Canada Act definition of disability for these programs. It should be easy to apply for programs. Barriers to these programs need to be removed and reduced.
* People should not have to file a tax return to get access to benefits and programs.

**Make a National Disability Employment Plan**

There are around 500,000 working age people with intellectual or developmental disabilities in Canada. But only one in four has a job. Many often work part-time hours. They usually earn minimum wage or a little more.

**Each party must promote employment and help people find jobs**

* Make a National Disability Employment plan. It must help people with disabilities enter the paid workforce. It must be ‘real’ work for real pay. It must help them move up in their careers. The plan should focus on jobs for young people. It must be inclusive. It should include Indigenous people. It should include other cultures and communities.
* Provide a good amount of funding for national job programs that are proven to work. This includes the Ready Willing and Able program. This program is a partnership. It includes Inclusion Canada and the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance (CASDA).

**Make Community Living Real**

**What is an Institution?**

An institution is a place. It is where people who have been labeled as having an intellectual disability are made to live together. People in institutions have no control over their lives. They are not allowed to make their own decisions. They are isolated from the community. An institution is not defined simply by its size.

**End Institutional Living**

Almost 30,000 adults with developmental disabilities live in care residences and group homes. Many want their own home. But affordable housing is hard to find. It is also hard to find support staff for independent living.

Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is about housing and community living. It says people with disabilities have a right to the support services they need to live. They have a right to services so they can be included in the community. They need services so they are not isolated or separated from others.

**Each party must make community living a reality for all Canadians with an intellectual disability**

* Make fully inclusive housing a priority. Do not fund housing that isolates people with disabilities. A National Housing Strategy must be inclusive.
* Update Canada’s long-term care standards. People with intellectual disabilities should not be put in nursing homes. They should not be in rehabilitation centers. They should not be in long-term care homes. Do not allow people with intellectual disabilities to be admitted to these places.

In Ontario, around 3,000 young people with developmental disabilities live in places made for elderly people. The United Nations says this is wrong. Young people with disabilities need a place to live. It should not be in places made for the elderly.

**Ensure inclusive and affordable housing**

People with intellectual disabilities want the same housing choices as everyone else. Renters with intellectual disabilities must pay hidden costs. They have less housing choices. They often pay higher rent. Many people with disabilities cannot afford to buy a home of their own.

**Each party must make sure there is affordable and adequate housing**

* Give people with disabilities funds to help with housing. Make sure they can use it across the country. Add a disability section to the Canada Housing Benefit. Make it available through different government agreements.
* Let people take money from their Registered Disability Savings Plans for housing. They can use this as a down payment on a home.

**Achieve Human Rights**

**Fund Disability Rights Organizations**

Many people with disabilities live in poverty. They do not have the time or energy to solve social problems. Disability rights groups can help. They can empower people. They can advocate for people with disabilities. They can help them gain full participation.

**Each party must support the important work of disability rights organizations**

* Follow Comment 7 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Give advocacy groups and disability rights groups enough funding. Make sure there are no strings attached to the funding.

**Work with Provincial and Territorial Governments to Advance Human Rights**

Government needs to follow the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It says that different levels of government need to work together to protect human rights.

The Canadian Government has a responsibility to work with others. They must work with the provinces and territories. They must work with community groups. Together, they need to make sure the rights in the Convention are protected. This includes rights under provincial responsibility.

Government needs to recognize and promote these rights. Here are some examples of these rights.

* The right to the supports needed to live.
* The right to inclusion in the community.
* The right to inclusive education.
* The right to legal capacity of people with intellectual disabilities needs to be recognized.

**Each party must commit to action on human rights**

* Make the rights promoted and protected in the Convention a reality. Make a bold plan with big goals. Work with other groups to do this.

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People with disabilities are not well represented in Parliament. Policy and programs should be seen from the point of view of people with disabilities. Barriers will stay in place until this happens.

Canada’s path to recovery must be in inclusive. It needs to engage people who have been left out because of disability or other factors. This includes people and groups who are left out or forgotten by society. The quote below shows how to listen to people with disabilities. It was said by Gerard Quinn. He is the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

“Listen closely to those most directly affected. Their antennae are highly attuned to ableism – when they ‘see’ it, you should pause to reflect before proceeding”

We ask your party to think about being inclusive. Keep it in mind when you make your plans and platform. Keep it in mind if you form the next government. Think about the effects policies have on people with disabilities. Attention needs to be given to disability equality and inclusion. People with disabilities need to be equally valued. They need to thrive after the pandemic – like everyone else.

To do this, we need a big plan. We need equality. We need action.

Your party can and must help. You can lay the path for inclusive pandemic recovery.

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