



# COVID-19 DISABILITY ADVISORY GROUP REPORT



**COVID-19 Disability Advisory Group Report**

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## Message from the Minister

The COVID-19 pandemic has deeply affected the lives and health of all Canadians and disproportionately affected Canadians with disabilities. From the onset, our Government has been committed to taking a disability inclusive approach to our pandemic response. In the spirit of “Nothing Without Us”, I approached leaders from the disability community to form the COVID-19 Disability Advisory Group. I asked them to advise me, as the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, on how we could put a disability lens on our Government’s emergency response. I wanted to ensure that we considered the real-time lived experience of Canadians with disabilities and to make sure that Canadians with disabilities received the support they needed.

The members of the Advisory Group have made a significant and meaningful difference in our Government’s pandemic response. They remind us regularly of what is at stake. We have discussed important issues such as:

- long-term health care in assisted living facilities
- visitor policies for hospitals
- providing personal protective equipment (PPE) to personal support workers
- financial support to cover extraordinary expenses incurred by persons with disabilities

Notable among the Advisory Group’s contributions and achievements are:

- providing input to disability inclusive medical and public health guidelines, and ensuring that the Government procured accessible PPE
- advising on broadening the reach of the one-time payment of \$600 for persons with disabilities
  - The Government expanded the payment to include recipients of Canada Pension Plan Disability, Quebec Pension Plan Disability Pension and Disability supports provided by Veterans Affairs Canada
- ensuring communications from the Government of Canada are accessible
- ensuring that the Government applied a disability lens to other key government measures like:
  - the Canada Emergency Student Benefit
  - the doubling of the Canada Student Grants for students with disabilities

These, along with our Government's other measures and investments, will greatly benefit Canadians with disabilities across the country.

The Advisory Group regularly highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated longstanding challenges and systemic gaps in support systems for persons with disabilities across Canada. They challenged me and our Government to take a human rights-based intersectional approach to the development and implementation of our systems, programs and processes. They gave examples of poverty, precarious employment, and discrimination.

Our Government recognizes that we need to do better. We need to improve access to and remove the barriers within our federal government systems. We need to be able to directly engage with our citizens with disabilities.

In our Speech from the Throne on September 23, 2020, we recognized that COVID-19 has disproportionately affected Canadians with disabilities. We also noted long-standing systemic challenges. In answer to this, we announced that we will bring forward a Disability Inclusion Plan. This plan will include:

- a new Canadian Disability Benefit modelled after the Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors
- a robust employment strategy for Canadians with disabilities
- a better process to determine eligibility for Government disability programs and benefits

I look forward to receiving ongoing advice from the Advisory Group as we further develop and implement this plan.

This report shares an overview of the work of the Advisory Group. However it cannot entirely capture the significant number of issues they addressed. Members provided high-quality advice in a short amount of time, and under challenging conditions. I am grateful to have had these experts to turn to in a "nothing without us" approach to the pandemic. I thank them for their continued work and advocacy.

*The Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion,*  
**Carla Qualtrough**

## Message from the Advisory Group

When Minister Qualtrough asked us to be members of the COVID-19 Disability Advisory Group, we all knew the disability community would have significant expectations, and rightly so. This pandemic continues to affect all of us. For many living with disabilities, COVID-19 has amplified existing barriers, inequities and has created further marginalization, isolation and frustration.

The Advisory Group was tasked to apply a disability lens to the federal government's response to the pandemic. It was also tasked to incorporate Minister Qualtrough's genuine dedication to furthering the cause of inclusion for all Canadians, using a "Nothing Without Us" approach.

The COVID-19 crisis has forced a public reckoning with the structural inequalities that prevent persons with disabilities from fully and fairly participating in society. These inequalities include both financial and social barriers. The Advisory Group understood that all levels of government, federal, provincial and territorial have major responsibilities and obligations to the disability community. Now more than ever, it is clear that governments at all levels must apply an intersectional disability lens to policy development and implementation.

Through the course of our work as an Advisory Group, we have also encountered challenges, detailed in this report. While we all continue to believe in the purpose and work of the Advisory Group, we have taken the opportunity to highlight obstacles encountered related to:

- the Group's scope
- research, data and information gathering
- confidentiality and engagement
- workload and pace

We have also identified potential solutions to these challenges, with the hope that our experiences can inform future work in this and other areas.

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided an opportunity for societies and governments to re-think the way that we organize ourselves. We have witnessed an unprecedented pace and scale of societal change and government interventions during the past few months. This has made it clear that transformational change is possible when the will to do so exists. We cannot opt for a return to the status quo; the status quo for persons with disabilities is simply not good enough.

As an Advisory Group, we have sincerely appreciated the opportunity to provide advice and expertise on the lived experience of persons with disabilities directly to Minister Qualtrough, her Cabinet colleagues and government officials. We applaud the Minister for her willingness to seek out and listen to a diverse range of opinions. We appreciate the opportunity to provide the 21 priority recommendations outlined in this report. We believe these 21 recommendations would significantly advance accessibility and inclusion for Canadians with disabilities.

Going forward, we ask that the Minister and her government act on these recommendations. We ask that they seek bold transformational change to ensure that all Canadians with disabilities can fully participate in society.

**Neil Belanger**

*Member of and Government Liaison for the COVID-19 Disability Advisory Group*



## Executive summary

The COVID-19 pandemic created a public health and economic crisis. This crisis continues to affect the lives and health of all Canadians, and in particular, Canadians with disabilities.

The Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, the Honourable Carla Qualtrough, recognized the complex issues persons with disabilities were facing in the pandemic. On April 10, 2020, Minister Qualtrough established the COVID-19 Disability Advisory Group (Advisory Group). The Advisory Group has provided the Minister with advice on the real-time lived experiences of persons with disabilities during the COVID-19 crisis. The Advisory Group has also provided advice on:

- disability-specific issues
- challenges and systemic gaps
- strategies, measures and steps the Government could take to better support persons with disabilities during the pandemic

Throughout its work, the Advisory Group highlighted the importance of applying an intersectional, cross-disability lens to all their recommendations. The Advisory Group also advocated for a Government-wide commitment to addressing systemic discrimination, both through actions and messaging.

The Advisory Group identified 21 priority recommendations to support Canadians with disabilities during the pandemic and moving forward into recovery. The recommendations cover 5 areas of work identified by the Advisory Group:

- finances and employment
- public communications and accessibility
- support for populations at highest risk
- federal, provincial and territorial collaboration and coordination
- support for civil society and the not-for-profit sector

The report describes the actions that the Government of Canada took to address the impact of COVID-19 on Canadians with disabilities. The report also highlights lessons learned regarding the model and process the Advisory Group used for its work. Moving forward, the Government of Canada will consider how to build upon the Advisory Group's accomplishments. The Government will consider this as it shifts into the next phase of recovery.

# Introduction

## Context

The COVID-19 pandemic, a time of public health and economic crisis, has affected persons with disabilities in unique and specific ways. For some persons with disabilities, underlying medical conditions put them at greater risk of serious complications related to COVID-19. As well, the need for self-isolation and physical distancing can create additional challenges for persons requiring support from other people in close proximity.

Beyond health risks, the Advisory Group discussed the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on persons with disabilities, including:

- barriers to accessing health care, including fears about being triaged out of critical care
- social isolation and loss of access to supports, which resulted from:
  - visitation policies at hospitals and congregate care facilities
  - staff shortages, including personal support workers
  - lack of access to friends and family to aid with activities of daily living
- negative financial consequences, including loss of employment and increased expenses
- new barriers that resulted from public health guidance, including:
  - difficulty in adhering to social distancing measures for persons with certain types of disabilities (visual, developmental)
  - communications barriers because of masks
- loss of access to services crucial to well-being, including occupational therapy, mental health services, and maintenance/repairs of disability aids

The Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, the Honourable Carla Qualtrough, has a mandate to lead the Government of Canada's efforts to promote disability inclusion. On April 10, 2020, Minister Qualtrough announced the establishment of the COVID-19 Disability Advisory Group (Advisory Group), comprised of 11 experts in disability inclusion. This announcement was in keeping with:

- the spirit of "Nothing Without Us" (see Annex A for a definition)
- the *Accessible Canada Act*
- Canada's domestic and international human rights obligations

The Government of Canada committed to considering, respecting and incorporating the interests and needs of persons with disabilities into its decision-making and response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Mandate of the Advisory Group

The Advisory Group's mandate was to provide advice to the Minister on:

- the real-time lived experiences of persons with disabilities during the COVID-19 crisis
- disability-specific issues, challenges and systemic gaps
- strategies, measures and steps to take

The Group worked from April 2020 through August 2020.

## Membership

Minister Qualtrough co-chaired the Advisory Group with one of the members, Al Etmanski. Mr. Etmanski took on this role until he resigned in mid-June 2020 for personal reasons. In July 2020, the Advisory Group asked one of its members, Neil Belanger, to take on the role of government liaison.

The Minister appointed members who the community recognizes nationally for their leadership and expertise. Members had significant experience working in various sectors: not-for-profit, private, provincial government, academic, writing, research, policy as well as community

organizations and activism. Membership included persons with lived experience of disability and/or who were leaders of disability organizations and experts in disability policy. Members also reflected a diversity of disability, gender, race and language (see Annex B for a list of members and their biographies).

## **Secretariat**

Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) provided support through a Secretariat. The Secretariat organized Advisory Group meetings, provided note-taking, and helped organize meetings with government officials.

# 2

## Approach

### Process and organization

The Advisory Group met regularly from April to August 2020 via teleconferences that Minister Qualtrough chaired. The Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, and the Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health each attended 1 Advisory Group meeting. Some members of the Advisory Group also met with the Honourable Marc Miller, Minister of Indigenous Services. See Annex C for a list of meeting dates and Ministerial attendees.

During the first Advisory Group meeting, on April 9, 2020, the members identified 5 priority areas for discussion. Members suggested establishing working groups that could drill down in each area to develop recommendations to bring back to the Advisory Group for consideration. The Secretariat invited members to identify which working groups they wanted to participate on. Members then established leads among themselves to guide the work. See Annex D for working group membership and meeting dates.

Whereas the Secretariat organized the Advisory Group meetings, members themselves led the working groups. This included facilitating meetings, managing the group and writing recommendations for the Advisory Group's consideration. The Secretariat provided note-takers for the working groups, and supported logistics, accommodations, and document translation. Working groups focused on the following identified priorities:

- finances and employment
- public communications and accessibility
- support for populations at highest risk
- federal, provincial and territorial (FPT) collaboration and coordination, including health care
- support for civil society and the not-for-profit sector

Government officials from the following departments met with working groups upon request, to support their work:

- Health Canada
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Treasury Board Secretariat
- Privy Council Office
- Employment and Social Development Canada

## Disability inclusion lens and intersectionality

The Advisory Group approached their work on COVID-19 in the context of the pre-pandemic experience of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities already experience more poverty, unemployment, and gender-based violence and discrimination than persons without disabilities. The Advisory Group used a disability inclusion lens in its work. This lens connects gender, income and race (also known as intersectionality). This allows an examination of how persons with disabilities face significant barriers in the Canadian labour market, society, and health care systems. This lens highlights, in particular, barriers for women with disabilities who are Indigenous, racialized and/or live in low-income.

Statistically, women have a higher rate of disability (24%) than men (20%). These rates are even higher for Indigenous women (36%) and Indigenous men (26%). While Canadians without disabilities have an employment rate of close to 80%, persons with disabilities have an employment rate of 59%. Partially a result of low employment rates, persons with disabilities are overrepresented in low-income. 37% of persons with disabilities have an income under \$19,999, compared to 26% for the Canadian population. There is also a gender dimension: more women with disabilities live below Canada's official poverty line than men with disabilities (622,300 versus 425,030). Women with disabilities are almost twice as likely as women without disabilities to have been sexually assaulted. Disability is also the most frequent ground for complaint before human rights commissions and tribunals in Canada. Disability was the reason for 59% of the complaints to the Canadian Human Rights Commission in 2017 (the majority of which related to employment).

Throughout discussions, the Advisory Group reaffirmed the importance of applying an intersectional, cross-disability lens to all of its recommendations. The Advisory Group also advocated for a whole of Government commitment to addressing systemic discrimination, including ableism and audism. This applied to both Government actions and messaging.

# 3

## Priority recommendations

The Advisory Group has identified the following priority recommendations for consideration of the Government of Canada.

### Finances and employment

- Provide income support to persons with disabilities during the pandemic. This includes, but is not limited to, a \$350 a month financial supplement for persons with disabilities for 6 months during the pandemic. Specifically, the supplement is for individuals and their families accessing federal, provincial and territorial benefits

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### Public communications and accessibility

- Conduct an awareness campaign to enable the general public to better understand the special social distancing issues persons with vision loss are experiencing. Support the sighted community to learn how best to interact with people who are blind or low vision at this time
- Establish and implement accessible communications guidelines and practices consistently across all Government of Canada operations and by entities under federal jurisdiction



## **Support for civil society and the not-for-profit sector**

- Recognize non-profits in the Government of Canada's wage subsidy program
- Ensure access for disability organizations to the new Emergency Community Support Fund (ECSF)
  - Earmark 25% of the ECSF for disability organizations

## **Federal, provincial and territorial collaboration and coordination, including health care**

- Continue to work with federal, provincial and territorial counterparts on multiple issues affecting persons with disabilities, including:
  - triage protocols
  - hospital visitation policies
  - making personal support workers essential workers
- Develop public health guidance for congregate living, as has been done for long-term care
- Involve persons with disabilities in developing public health guidance
- Ensure universal access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including access to clear, accessible masks for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Create and be prepared to rapidly implement an emergency response plan to support persons with disabilities when emergencies arise in the future. This includes preparing for a possible second wave of COVID-19

## Support for populations at highest risk

- Provide data (cases, recovered and deaths) related to COVID-19 disaggregated by disability, gender, race and other intersecting factors
- Recognizing the increased risks of gender based-violence and the complete absence of front line services for women and girls with disabilities was already well documented before the COVID-19 pandemic, immediately commit the resources to a long-term strategy in partnership with women living with disabilities and address the unacceptable gap in services and supports. This includes the urgent need for low barrier shelters/housing, trauma informed counselling and care, ensuring community outreach, transportation, disability supports, TTY, interpreters, child care and attendant care needs and other clients' needs are always available (and fully funded independent of the financial means of the individual client or service provider/shelter)
- Ensure ongoing contact and reciprocal communication with Indigenous communities in relation to:
  - current operational status, identification and awareness of resources/supports
  - the priority needs of their membership living with disabilities

## Other priority recommendations

- Increase funding for the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Workforce Development Agreements. Ensure at least 25% of funding in these agreements goes to fund employment for persons with disabilities. In addition, ensure the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities (or other federal mechanism) has the mandate and capacity to provide sustained funding for successful national disability-focused employment programs
- Relax the Canada Pension Plan-Disability (CPP-D) parameters for maximum income and increase the maximum monthly amount to \$2,500
- Extend tax exempt status of Status First Nation persons approved or receiving provincial, territorial or federal disability assistance programs to include income earning in provincial and territorial jurisdictions
- Support the pan-Canadian disability and work strategy

- Preserve the end of life criteria as a safeguard in Bill C-7 on Medical Assistance in Dying. Re-examine Bill C-7 in light of strong evidence of medical ableism that has come to light during the pandemic
- Commit to investing in the long-term capacity of the not-for-profit sector as the Government's civil society partners
- Establish and implement a communications directive for the Government of Canada and entities subject to federal jurisdiction to apply. The directive should prescribe the use of text, language and imagery to provide a positive portrayal of people with disabilities that promotes respect, dignity and value
- Identify and support a Government of Canada Centre of Accessibility Communications Excellence. This will inspire action and drive compliance with guidelines and practices for accessible communications across all Government of Canada communications Branches and centers

# 4

## How the Government of Canada has responded to and supported persons with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic

The Government of Canada began supporting Canadians, including persons with disabilities, shortly after the COVID-19 outbreak began in Canada in mid-March 2020. For example, as part of the economic response plan announced on March 18, 2020, the Government provided a special top-up payment to individuals and families with low and modest incomes through the Goods and Services Tax (GST). Since Canadians with disabilities are overrepresented among people living in low-income, they significantly benefited from this measure. By early April 2020, Minister Qualtrough released a statement describing the Government's disability-inclusive approach to responding to the pandemic. The Advisory Group had its first meeting on April 9, 2020 and immediately began recommending actions to Minister Qualtrough. They also met with other Ministers to advise on disability-inclusive approaches to initiatives within their areas of responsibility.

This list of actions demonstrates how the Government has responded to and supported persons with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. It lists actions the Government took as of August 31, 2020.

## Finances and employment

- One-time payment of \$600 for recipients of:
  - Disability Tax Credit (DTC)
  - Canada Pension Plan – Disability (CPP-D)
  - Quebec Pension Plan – Disability (QPP-D)
  - Veteran Affairs Disability Benefit (VADB)
- This includes top-up for seniors with disabilities who previously received one-time special payment of \$300 (Old Age Security beneficiaries) or \$500 (Guaranteed Income Supplement beneficiaries)
- Creating new National Workplace Accessibility fund of \$15 million for 2020 to 2021
- New investment through the Accessible Technology Program of \$1.18 million to fund 5 projects across the country
- Flexibilities in administration of the CPP-D. These include the option to:
  - apply for benefits online using My Service Canada Account
  - access and download application and medical forms from the website
- Bank of Canada statement advocating for retailers to continue to accept cash
- Provision of Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) (up to \$2,000 per month) for up to 24 weeks. This is an important benefit for workers with disabilities because, on average, they are more likely to be precariously employed, so were:
  - more likely to face lay-offs
  - less likely to have Employment Insurance coverage
- Canada Emergency Student Benefit, which includes a top-up of \$750 per month for students with disabilities
- Canada Student Grants doubled in 2020 to 2021, including for students with permanent disabilities and students with dependants
- One-time special payment for GST Credit recipients of around \$400 for individuals and \$600 for couples. Persons with disabilities, in particular those with severe disabilities, are more likely to benefit from this measure. This is because they are more likely to live in low or modest income and be eligible for the GST credit
- Increase in Canada Child Benefit of \$300 in 2019 to 2020. Also, an increase in annual payments as of 2020 to 2021, including Child Disability Benefit maximum of \$2,886

## Public communications and accessibility

- Investment of \$1.1 million through the Social Development Partnerships Program-Disability (SDPP-D) for national disability organizations. This was to support communications and engagement activities to better address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on persons with disabilities
- New Policy Guidance on Accessible Communications During the Pandemic issued by Treasury Board Secretariat, based on feedback from Advisory Group
- Web links on the Government of Canada's website, [Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca), about COVID-19. This includes links to resources available from Provincial and Territorial governments on a page titled, Provincial and territorial resources for COVID-19
- Statements by Minister Qualtrough and the Prime Minister on supporting persons with disabilities during COVID-19 (April 10 and April 19, respectively)
- Letter from Minister Qualtrough to Accessibility Standards Canada to task work on guidelines to strengthen accessibility in future emergencies and public health crises

## Support for civil society and the not-for-profit sector

- Investment of \$350 million through the Emergency Community Support Fund (ECSF) to support charities/non-profits serving vulnerable populations. The Government identified a number of vulnerable populations, including persons with disabilities, who needed access to essential supplies and services in the community
- Inclusion of non-profits and registered charities in eligibility for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS)
- Flexibilities in administration of the SDPP-D and Opportunities Fund. This included:
  - adjusting activities and timelines for deliverables
  - reducing reporting requirements for 2020 to 2021 (for SDPP-D)
  - allowing exceptions to eligibility criteria (Opportunities Fund)

## Federal, provincial and territorial collaboration and coordination, including health care

- Minister Qualtrough called on Provincial and Territorial governments to exempt the CERB and other temporary federal supports when calculating provincial social assistance benefits
- Ministers Qualtrough and Hajdu wrote to Provincial and Territorial Disability and Health Ministers. They shared concerns about triage of health care services and other health care issues raised by the Advisory Group
- Minister Qualtrough met with provincial and territorial Ministers responsible for Social Services to discuss key issues, including issues raised by the Advisory Group
- Minister Hajdu met with provincial and territorial Ministers of Health and debriefed on issues raised by the Advisory Group
- Deputy Minister Maheu met with federal, provincial and territorial Deputy Ministers of Health to share issues raised by the Advisory Group. Deputy Minister Maheu was the ESDC Deputy Minister responsible for disability inclusion at the time
- Public Health Agency of Canada, in consultation with the Advisory Group, released public health guidance on:
  - home care providers and infection prevention and control for COVID-19
  - persons with disabilities and COVID-19
  - public health ethics framework
- Health Canada authorized access in Canada to the ClearMask (produced in the US). When used, this transparent mask makes communicating more accessible for persons who are deaf/hard of hearing
- The Government of Canada launched Wellness Together Canada, an online portal that offers free mental health services to all Canadians

## Support for populations at highest risk

- Statistics Canada undertook 2 initiatives:
  - 2 new surveys to provide disaggregated data on persons with disabilities
  - release of study on businesses run by persons with disabilities
- Canada signed a statement supporting a policy brief by the Secretary General of the United Nations on a Disability-Inclusive Response to COVID-19. Canada was one of 138 signatories to the statement
- The Government of Canada released a joint statement with other countries on Protecting Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Promoting Gender-Responsiveness in the COVID-19 Crisis. The statement acknowledged the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women and persons with disabilities in consultation with the Minister of Women and Gender Equality's Advisory Council



# 5

## Lessons learned on the Advisory Group model and process

There are many lessons learned regarding the Advisory Group's model and process that may inform future iterations of this or other advisory groups.

Specifically, members provided feedback regarding:

- research, data and information
- scope
- engagement
- workload and pace

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### Research, data and information

- To support them in developing effective advice, the Advisory Group would request:
  - more research and data on persons with disabilities
  - information and background on government policies, programs and processes.
- Advisory Group members believe it would be beneficial to have greater and more timely access to Government of Canada research and data. This would allow the Group to provide more informed advice and recommendations.

## Scope

- Members believe that it would be beneficial to set specific objectives in order to target and focus their work. As well, the Advisory Group would benefit from additional feedback from the Government on their recommendations. Such feedback would ensure their work would be as thorough and useful as possible
- The Advisory Group raised issues that fell outside the jurisdiction of the Government of Canada. As a result, the Government of Canada was not able to act beyond raising those issues with the provincial and territorial counterparts. One example was the issue of hospital visitation, which falls solely within provincial and territorial jurisdiction
- While the Advisory Group's mandate was specific to the COVID-19 pandemic, members believe there is value in expanding their work beyond emergency and recovery measures. The members believe they could support the Government in addressing pre-existing issues, challenges and systemic gaps

## Engagement

- The terms of reference of the Advisory Group required that the activities of the Advisory Group would remain confidential. This caused tension with a community expectation that Advisory Group members should communicate regularly on their work, progress and successes
- The Advisory Group noted that its members would benefit if the Government informed them of decisions prior to announcements related to persons with disabilities
- The Group would like to build on their work with the Government of Canada. The Advisory Group would like to guide and advise on a wider range of disability topics, particularly in the area of COVID-19 data collection

## Workload and pace

- Advisory Group meetings took place weekly from April to late May 2020; the frequency of working group meetings varied. The pace of work and workload was challenging. In addition to their primary work responsibilities members were part of multiple working groups and participated in weekly Advisory Group meetings
- Furthermore, the pace of the Advisory Group meetings did not always provide enough time for thoughtful deliberations and developing recommendations
- The working group format allowed the Advisory Group to examine issues in depth. However workload concerns call into question organizing work around working groups instead of the Advisory Group as a whole

Current members have expressed the need for the Advisory Group to continue beyond its current mandate of August 2020. The members have offered to continue to serve on the Advisory Group.

# 6

## Next steps

The Government was not able to address all the Advisory Group's recommendations during their mandate. Some recommendations, for example, fall mostly or partly within the jurisdiction of provincial and territorial governments. Other recommendations are complex and/or would require further consultation.

There were also important lessons learned from the Advisory Group's approach. These included, for example, the importance of ensuring a reasonable pace of work. Members have existing work responsibilities that they have to juggle with those of the Advisory Group. A reasonable pace would allow members to reflect between meetings in order to come back with thoughtful advice and informed recommendations. Lessons also included challenges of advising on an area like disability policy. Responsibilities and service delivery in this area are divided amongst federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions.

During the course of the Advisory Group's work, the public was increasingly aware of the issue of systemic racism. Members expressed interest in developing an analysis of anti-ableism and anti-racism, highlighting the need to build on the intersectional approach. Doing so would ensure that policies, programs and services meet the needs of a diverse disability community. In particular, they would meet the needs of Indigenous, Black and racialized women and men with disabilities.

Moving forward, the Government of Canada has indicated that it is looking on how to build upon the Advisory Group's accomplishments. The Government has also expressed interest in acting on the lessons learned from the approach and recommendations. This will ensure economic recovery from COVID-19 pandemic is disability-inclusive, and continues to reflect the principle of "Nothing Without Us."

# Annex A

## “Nothing Without Us”

Nothing Without Us comes from the disability rights movement slogan “Nothing About Us, Without Us.” The United Nations integrated this slogan into the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. The Government of Canada applies the principle, “Nothing Without Us,” to the policy development process. This means including the perspectives of persons with disabilities in all initiatives, regardless if the initiative targets persons with disabilities.

Putting this principle into practice means thinking about disability inclusion before stakeholder engagement begins. This ensures that engagement is both accessible and includes diverse persons with disabilities. Engagement should occur at all stages: pre-, during and post-policy development, including implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. For example, the Government of Canada engaged significantly with persons with disabilities in the lead-up to and development of the *Accessible Canada Act*. The Government is also implementing the Act in partnership with persons with disabilities and disability stakeholders.

# Annex B

## List of advisory group members

### ■ The Honorable Carla Qualtrough, co-chair

Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion.

### ■ Al Etmanski, co-chair

A writer, community organizer and social entrepreneur. He was welcomed into the world of disability in 1978 when his daughter was born. He led the closure of institutions, segregated schools, and sheltered workshops in BC. He founded Canada's first Family Support Institute, and initiated the precedent setting right-to-treatment court case for Stephen Dawson. In 1989, he co-founded Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN) with his wife Vickie Cammack. PLAN lobbied into existence the Registered Disability Savings Plan. Mr. Etmanski sparked a national conversation about 'belonging'. He was instrumental in establishing a grass roots alternative to legal guardianship and expanding the legal definition of capacity. His last book, *Impact: 6 Patterns to Spread Your Social Innovation* is a national bestseller. His latest book is *The Power of Disability: 10 Lessons for Surviving, Thriving and Changing the World*. He blogs at [aletmanski.com](http://aletmanski.com).

## ■ **Bill Adair**

Executive Director, Spinal Cord Injury Canada. Mr. Adair offers a depth of provincial and national experience in the spinal cord rehabilitation field. He has nearly 3 decades of expertise in non-profit management and strategic leadership, including as a:

- former Ontario government employee
- national task force leader
- Director of the National Patient Services Program with the Canadian Cancer Society

Prior to joining Spinal Cord Injury Ontario, he was Director of the National Patient Services Program with the Canadian Cancer Society for 13 years. His involvement in providing services to people with disabilities includes serving as:

- the Director of the International Year for Disabled Persons
- the Executive Director of a national task force that designed a system to coordinate cancer control efforts throughout Canada
- the Founding Executive Director of Wellspring

## ■ **Neil Belanger**

Executive Director of the British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (BCANDS). Mr. Belanger has over 30 years of experience working within Canada's Indigenous and non-Indigenous disability and health sectors. Since 2013, BCANDS has been the recipient of 8 provincial, national and international awards. The most recent was the Zero Project International Award presented to the Society in Vienna, in February 2019. He also serves in a variety of disability related advisory roles, some of which include:

- member of Canada Post's Accessibility Advisory Committee
- member of Minister's Advisory Forum on Poverty Reduction
- member of Minister's Council on Employment and Accessibility
- member of Minister's Registered Disability Savings Plan Action Group Board Member with Inclusion BC

He is a member of the Lax Se el (Frog Clan) of the Gitksan First Nation. He resides in Victoria with his wife and 2 children.

### ■ Diane Bergeron

President, CNIB Guide Dogs and Vice President, International Affairs. As President of CNIB Guide Dogs, Ms. Bergeron brings lived experience to the position. As a guide dog handler for more than 35 years, she raises her voice to challenge stigma and support equal rights. In addition, as vice president of International Affairs for the CNIB Foundation, she is actively engaged in regional, national and international initiatives. These initiatives enable people impacted by blindness to live the lives they choose. Before joining CNIB, Ms. Bergeron held senior roles with the Government of Alberta and the City of Edmonton.

### ■ Bonnie Brayton

Ms. Brayton is a recognized leader in both the feminist and disability movements. She has been the National Executive Director of the DisAbled Women's Network (DAWN) of Canada since May 2007. In this role, she has proven herself as a formidable advocate for women with disabilities here in Canada and internationally. During her tenure with DAWN Canada, Ms. Brayton has worked diligently to highlight key issues that impact the lives of women and girls with disabilities. Since 2016, Ms. Brayton has served as a member of the Federal Department of Women and Gender Equality Minister's Advisory Council on Gender-Based Violence. She also presents regularly to Parliamentary and Senate Committees at public consultations. She has represented women and girls with disabilities in both Canadian and international spheres.

### ■ Krista Carr

Krista Carr is a long-time advocate in the developmental disability movement. She leads Inclusion Canada, formerly the Canadian Association for Community Living, under the banner of Executive Vice President (CEO). One of Canada's 10 largest charitable organizations, Inclusion Canada is a national federation of:

- over 40,000 individual members
- 400 local associations
- 13 Provincial/Territorial Associations for Community Living working on behalf of approximately 1 million Canadians with a developmental disability



Krista has extensive experience in the not-for-profit sector. She works with people with a developmental disability, their families, governments and systems to accomplish the mission of full inclusion and citizenship for persons with a developmental disability and their families. In her current role, Krista is responsible for:

- the Inclusion Canada National organization
- the Inclusion Canada Foundation
- Inclusive Education Canada (IEC)
- Ready, Willing & Able (RWA) a national partnership of Inclusion Canada and the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance (CASDA)

Given her national role, Krista brings a perspective on disability supports and services from across Canada.

Krista is a graduate of the University of New Brunswick (UNB). She earned a Bachelors Degree in Business Administration and several diplomas in Human Resources and Management from UNB's College of Extended Learning. Before joining Inclusion Canada, Krista worked at the New Brunswick Association for Community Living (NBACL). NBACL is a leading provincial non-profit organization that works with and on behalf of children and adults with an intellectual disability and their families. Krista has worked in various roles at NBACL for over 21 years. Krista served as Executive Director for the last 16 years and was responsible for approximately 100 employees. NBACL received national recognition as a Morneau Shepell Employee Recommended Workplace Award winner in 2017 just as Krista took the helm of Inclusion Canada.

In addition to these accomplishments, Krista sits on a number of disability related boards and committees provincially and nationally. She currently sits on the COVID-19 Disability Advisory Group chaired by the honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion. She is fluently bilingual and works on behalf of Inclusion Canada's federation in both French and English. She currently resides in New Brunswick with her husband and 2 daughters.

### ■ **Maureen Haan**

Ms. Haan has been the President and CEO of the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW) since 2012. CCRW is the only national organization with the sole vision of equitable and meaningful employment for people with disabilities, in operation for over 40 years. Under her leadership, CCRW has seen an increase in direct program service throughout Canada. As well, CCRW has a more transparent, stream-lining of understanding the business case of hiring a person with a disability. She has been very active in the cross-disability sector, currently focusing on employment issues. Ms. Haan has been involved with numerous committees and groups that increase awareness of and access for the disability sector and the Deaf community. She has been involved with civil society on the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. She was also involved in the co-development and leadership of the pan-Canadian Strategy on Disability and Work.

### ■ **Hélène Hébert**

Présidente, Réseau québécois pour l'inclusion sociale des personnes sourdes et malentendantes (ReQIS). Ms. Hébert is president of the ReQIS, a provincial organization defending collective rights and promoting the interests of the deaf and hard of hearing. The organization's mission is also to contribute to the development and to influence its members through networking and knowledge sharing. In addition, Ms. Hébert is a member of *Voix dire*, a bimonthly publication servicing Quebec's deaf population since 1983. She is a long-standing activist committed to different provincial and national organizations for the deaf. Furthermore, she holds a DESS in educational administration, a bachelor's degree in education, special education section, and a certificate in children's literature. She has previously educated deaf signers.

### ■ **Dr. Heidi Janz**

Assistant Adjunct Professor with the John Dossetor Health Ethics Centre, University of Alberta. Dr. Janz specializes in the field of Disability Ethics and she was affiliated with the John Dossetor Health Ethics Centre since 2006. She was previously the Curriculum Coordinator for an emerging Certificate Program in Disability Ethics in the University of Alberta's Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine. In her "other life," Dr. Janz is a writer and playwright. Dr. Janz is also Chair of the End-of-life ethics committee for the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD).

## ■ **Rabia Khedr**

CEO, Disability Empowerment Equality Network Support Services and Executive Director, Muslim Council of Peel. Rabia is a community leader who helps others with issues of fairness and justice that affect persons with disabilities, women and diverse communities. She was recently the Commissioner for the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Ms. Khedr created the Canadian Alliance on Race and Disability, which represents persons with disabilities and organizations at local, provincial and national meetings. She is also a member of the Mississauga Accessibility Advisory Committee. She is a motivational speaker and documentary commentator and received many awards, including a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

## ■ **Dr. Michael J. Prince**

Lansdowne Professor of Social Policy at the University of Victoria. He teaches courses on public sector governance and public policy analysis in the School of Public Administration and the School of Public Health and Social Policy. As a policy consultant, Dr. Prince has been an advisor to various federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal government agencies. He was an advisor on 4 Royal commissions and to a number of parliamentary committees federally and provincially. An active volunteer, Dr. Prince has been a board member of:

- a community health clinic
- a legal aid society
- a hospital society and hospital foundation
- the BC Association for Community Living
- the social policy committee of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities

Since 2018 he has been Board Chair of Community Living British Columbia (CLBC). CLBC is a provincial crown corporation that funds supports and services to adults with developmental disabilities, as well as individuals who have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. CLBC works with individuals, families, service providers, community and government partners to help people to have lives filled with possibilities in welcoming communities.

# Annex C

## Advisory group meeting dates

### ■ Advisory Group meetings chaired by Minister Qualtrough:

- April 9, 2020

- April 17, 2020

- April 24, 2020

(Note: the Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health, attended this meeting to discuss priorities in healthcare)

- May 1, 2020

(Note: Parliamentary Secretary Irek Kusmierczyk replaced Minister Qualtrough on this teleconference. The Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development attended this meeting. Minister Hussen attended to discuss support for civil society groups and the not-for-profit sector)

- May 11, 2020

- May 22, 2020

- June 19, 2020

- August 4, 2020

- August 14, 2020

### ■ Additional meetings:

- May 25, 2020 (Al Etmanski and Neil Belanger met with Minister Miller)

- June 5, 2020 (technical briefing with the Minister's Office)

- June 17, 2020 (members internal meeting only, no Minister)

- July 8, 2020 (members internal meeting only, no Minister)

- July 10, 2020 (leads of working groups only)

# Annex D

## Working group meeting dates and membership

### Finances and employment

#### ■ Members:

- Maureen Haan (volunteered to lead)
- Al Etmanski
- Michael Prince
- Krista Carr
- Diane Bergeron
- Neil Belanger

#### ■ Meeting dates:

- May 6, 2020
- May 14, 2020
- June 1, 2020 – ESDC officials and Minister's Office in attendance
- June 9, 2020
- June 17, 2020 – members only (no Secretariat resource in attendance)

## Public communications and accessibility

### ■ Members:

- Bill Adair (volunteered to lead)
- Al Etmanski
- Maureen Haan
- Diane Bergeron
- Hélène Hébert
- Neil Belanger

### ■ Meeting dates:

- May 4, 2020
- May 7, 2020
- May 14, 2020
- May 21, 2020
- May 27, 2020
- June 4, 2020 – Government officials from ESDC, Privy Council Office and Minister’s Office in attendance
- June 22, 2020 – Government officials from Treasury Board Secretariat and Privy Council Office in attendance

## Support for populations at highest risk

### ■ Members:

- Bonnie Brayton (volunteered to lead)
- Al Etmanski
- Neil Belanger
- Heidi Janz
- Krista Carr

### ■ Meeting dates:

- May 14, 2020
- May 22, 2020
- May 30, 2020
- June 7, 2020

## Federal, provincial and territorial collaboration and coordination, including health care

### ■ Members:

- Krista Carr (volunteered to lead)
- Al Etmanski
- Neil Belanger
- Rabia Khedr
- Heidi Janz

### ■ Meeting date:

- April 29, 2020

## Support for civil society and the not-for-profit sector

### ■ Members:

- Krista Carr (volunteered to lead)
- Al Etmanski
- Rabia Khedr
- Bonnie Brayton
- Bill Adair
- Neil Belanger

### ■ Meeting date:

- April 29, 2020
- June 17, 2020 – some members met with the co-chairs of the Canada Revenue Agency Advisory Committee on the Charitable Sector. No government officials in attendance.