

**High-Level Statement**

**by**

**The Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and  
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Government of Canada**

**for the**

**Sixteenth Session of the Conference of State Parties to the UN  
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

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As Canada's Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, and as a person with a disability, it is an honour to represent the Government of Canada at the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of State Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Last year's COSP was an exciting time for Canada, as Dr. Laverne Jacobs was elected as Canada's first-ever member of the CRPD Committee. Canada is proud of the work the CRPD Committee has accomplished this year, and recognizes Dr. Jacobs for her service to the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities around the world.

The past year was historic for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Canada. Canada believes everyone deserves to live a meaningful and fulfilling life without barriers, and has a right to fully participate in and be included in all aspects of society. Canada has made significant progress towards this goal this year.

Last October, the Government of Canada introduced its Disability Inclusion Action Plan. It is a blueprint for change in four key areas identified as priorities by the disability community: financial security, employment, accessible and inclusive communities, and a modern approach to disability. It is a whole-of-government, human rights-based approach to disability inclusion. Work is underway across each pillar.

Under the financial security pillar, Canada continues to make progress on the creation of the Canada Disability Benefit. The *Canada Disability Benefit Act*, Bill C-22, is currently before Canada's Parliament. It was unanimously approved by the House of Commons in February and has recently been adopted with amendments in the Senate. Through collaboration, Canada looks forward to this Bill becoming law, and beginning regulatory development. Once implemented, this Benefit will provide a monthly income supplement to working-age, low-income persons with disabilities. It will reduce poverty and improve the financial security of hundreds of thousands of Canadians with disabilities. It will also drive progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically SDG 1, to reduce poverty, and SDG 10, to reduce inequality.

Employment is a priority for Canada under the Action Plan. Canada is investing \$272.6 million over five years to improve employment opportunities and outcomes for persons with disabilities through the Opportunities Fund. In December, Canada launched its Disability Inclusions Business Council, which is made up of business leaders dedicated to helping improve the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Canadian businesses and workplaces. The Council will provide the Government with advice and recommendations on workplace inclusivity and will set up an independent disability business network.

To create accessible and inclusive communities, Canada is investing in the Enabling Accessibility Fund, which supports workplaces and community spaces to make accessibility improvements such as installing a ramp. To advance commitments under the Marrakesh Treaty, Canada is supporting the production of alternate format reading materials, and will create a new Equitable Access to Reading Program.

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan is guided by the principles laid out in the Accessible Canada Act (ACA), which came into force in 2019. Due to the ACA, this year Accessibility Standards Canada published a Roadmap to 2040 and continued its work on standards development to help achieve the goal of a barrier-free Canada by 2040. Earlier this year, three new standards were published, including a standard for the built environment. Work is also underway on communication technology accessibility standards.

Also under the ACA, Canada recently hosted its second annual Canadian Congress on Disability Inclusion. This is a platform that brings together members of the disability community, accessibility advocates, academics, businesses and innovators, to discuss how accessibility and disability inclusion can be mainstreamed in Canada. The Congress was followed by Canada's seventh annual National AccessAbility Week, which focussed on translating possibilities of disability inclusion into practice.

Creating a barrier-free Canada by 2040 is an important part of fulfilling our international obligations. These goals align with Canada's commitments under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Fifteen percent of the world's population – approximately 1 billion people – have a disability. This percentage is higher in areas where armed conflicts rage, such as in Ukraine. Canada continues to condemn Russia's illegal and unjustified invasion. Canada remains resolute that Ukrainians with disabilities must not be forgotten in this conflict or during post-war reconstruction.

Through international assistance, Canada funds initiatives to help reduce poverty and promote the rights of persons with disabilities in partner countries. Children with disabilities are more likely to be denied access to education. Persons with disabilities are less likely to have access to social protection, employment opportunities, and health care, including reproductive and sexual health services. Women with disabilities are more likely to experience sexual and gender-based violence. Through Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy and its 10-Year Commitment to Global Health and Rights, Canada is investing in the health of women, children, and adolescents with disabilities around the world. A disability-inclusive approach is critical to achieving global access to these rights and in ending all forms of sexual and gender-based violence.

Canada continues to advance disability inclusion in all international forums. Canada is also encouraged by the prioritization of disability inclusion by our G7 partners Germany and Japan. Canada is a proud partner in continuing to build on this momentum and collaborating with other countries to increase disability inclusion.

The global community has made progress towards disability inclusion, but a great deal of work remains. Canada offers its steadfast support to the collective global effort to improve disability inclusion. Canada wants to be a country, and help create a world, where persons with disabilities are truly and meaningfully included. Canada looks forward to exchanges with distinguished panelists and international partners on how it can continue to do so.