



**Victoria Disability
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Promoting a new perspective on disability

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Canada Disability Benefits Act

Disability organizations across Canada are urging the federal government to pass Bill-C-35, the Canada Disability Benefit Act.

The act is currently in the committee stage after having passed second reading on October 18, 2022. It was introduced in the House of Commons in Ottawa on June 2. But over 80 disability related organizations sent a letter to each of the federal house leaders on June 13 urging all parliamentarians not to forget the pledge they made on advancing the act as the House went into summer break.

“The urgent income insecurity and affordability crisis facing millions of people with disabilities in Canada coupled with the high inflation especially affecting basic goods makes bringing this legislation back for second reading a critical and time-sensitive priority,” wrote Disability Without Poverty, in collaboration with 80 other disability organizations, on June 13. “The bill’s second reading will be a milestone event that will enable C-22 (the Canada Disability Benefit Act) to quickly move forward to its assigned Standing Committee and the remainder of the legislative process that follows.”

The coalition of disability groups said in their letter that they were waiting anxiously for almost a year when the legislation was first introduced in May following previous disability legislation that died on the order paper when Parliament was dissolved in anticipation of the federal election in 2021.

“Our community simply cannot wait as another season passes by, not knowing whether our federal representatives will deliver on their support for the dignity and financial security of all people living with disabilities in Canada. We would appreciate the favour of your reply without haste.” the coalition wrote in its June letter.

In a news release announcing the introduction of the legislation, the federal government said that working-age Canadians with disabilities are twice as likely to live in poverty as their able-bodied peers – and that the pandemic made matters even worse.

“The Canada Disability Benefit is ... the cornerstone of the government’s Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) – a plan that was promised in the 2020 Speech from the Throne,” the release stated. “The DIAP is a blueprint for change to make Canada more inclusive for persons with disabilities. It is based on the understanding that disability inclusion benefits everyone. The DIAP will evolve over time . . . and make targeted investments to create lasting change.”

The DIAP is over-arching legislation also introduced by the federal government. It contains five objectives, one of which is reducing poverty among people with disabilities across Canada. The other four objectives of the DIAP are to improve the social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities; achieve a barrier-free Canada by 2040; develop a



consistent approach to disability inclusion throughout the federal government, making it easier for people with disabilities to access federal programs and services; and to foster a culture of disability inclusion.

The benefit would work in conjunction with each province's disability benefit. Discussions on the amount would form part of the work with provinces and the Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities Committee. "The Minister's number 1 concern with this benefit is to ensure that everyone who receives it is better off," said Tara Beauport, press secretary for the Office of the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion," in an e-mail. "This is an income supplement, not an income replacement. We're working closely with the provinces and territories to ensure harmonization on the design of this benefit."

The federal government does not have a targeted timeline for implementation of the benefit. The standing committee is working diligently on its study and the federal government will work closely with the provinces to get the benefit to those who qualify as quickly as possible, Beauport said.