

## Citizen Advocacy Ottawa

### Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2020 Budget

#### **Recommendations**

That the government:

1. Introduce a federal basic income for all individuals including our most vulnerable.
2. Standardize the way that the Disability Tax Credit is applied and when an individual needs to reapply, particularly those who have a life-time disability
3. Implement measures so that people with disabilities can gain much needed employment experience through subsidized internships
4. Recognize that there is an emerging population of people over the age of 55 years who live with a disability and need services and support

#### **Body of Submission**

##### **1. Federal basic income for all individuals including our most vulnerable.**

Canadians living with severe disabilities have several needs to go about their everyday lives. They require support services daily. Unfortunately, the income they are getting from the welfare system does not cover those expenses that are vital for their existence. In such a context, it's becoming more and more important for the Federal Government to introduce a basic income for those who are most vulnerable as a result of their disabilities.

The increase of the cost of living in the country is another factor that aggravates the situation of our most vulnerable population. Those individuals face serious challenges that prevent them from meeting their needs. They become poorer and poorer with time. The government at all levels have the responsibility to take measures that will improve life conditions of those individuals.

Caledon Institute of Social Policy (2010) has pointed out the situation of Canadians with disabilities in a report to the Canadian Association of Community Living. This report recommends among others the establishment of a new federal plan that aims to provide

important assistance to individuals with severe disabilities in the form of refundable Disability Tax Credit and a good system of support and services. This plan will require a good partnership between all levels of governments and the disability sector that works to support the daily living of individuals with severe disabilities.

## **2. Disability Tax Credit**

The goal of the Federal Government in establishing the Disability Tax Credit (DTC) is to provide a tax relief to Canadians who are dealing with severe and prolonged impairments that tend to restrict their ability to perform in their everyday lives. This tax is supposed to help reduce the burden of the expenses those individuals are continuously facing. However, it can become an object of stress if the process for applying is too much complicated. In fact, that process needs to be standardized in a certain way to reduce the level of stress of those individuals when they must apply for it. Since their impairments tend to be permanent, there should be no need for them to re-apply to the DTC after a certain time. However, according to the needs of the bureaucracy, it's important to re-apply. The process should consider the situation of individuals who live with permanent impairments. Needing to reapply for an individual who is already known by the tax system as they have already been accepted is stressful and can contribute to the individual being further incapacitated. In cases where there is a change in their condition, their family doctor should have the responsibility to inform the government.

## **3. Employment experience through subsidized internships**

People with disabilities have the rights like any other Canadian to participate in the marketplace. However, they are facing several challenges because of their personal abilities. This situation may have profound impacts on the quality of their life. A few of them may be able to work or get professional experience but this work is usually short-term at best or at worst meaningless.

All levels of government need to take concrete measures to help individuals with disabilities access the marketplace or have significant internship. One of those measures consists of encouraging employers and providing them with financial supports, especially to those employers who are open to offer professional experience, through internships, to people with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities should not feel penalized by the welfare system for the fact that they are receiving an income from a job.

## **4. Emerging population over 55 years who live with a disability and need services and support**

With the progress being made in science and technology, the Canadian population is living longer. This situation includes people with disability - a good number of this population has now reached the age of 55. Therefore, their needs are starting to become much more significant, especially considering that aging also brings its own incapacities. There is also a need to note the situation of people who develop disabilities related to the aging process.

All those Canadians living with a disability who have reached the age of 55 require services and support to function in their community. And this is the role of political decision-makers not only to recognize this fact but also to create the conditions that improve the lives of those who live with a disability in our society.