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Better Support for People with Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis in Canada: Perspectives on Episodic Disability

**Brief submitted to the *Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities*' study of Bill C-22
November 2, 2022**

The [Canadian Psoriasis Network](#) (CPN), the [Canadian Association of Psoriasis Patients](#) (CAPP), and [Unmasking Psoriasis](#) support legislative proposals that will enhance the financial security of persons with disabilities.

People living with psoriatic disease and the disabilities that it causes are often excluded from disability support programs.

Psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis (psoriatic disease) are episodic and chronic diseases that can cause disability and prevent people from participating fully in social and economic life, including in the workplace. Unlike some conditions that may be predictable and permanent, psoriatic disease symptoms tend to ebb and flow, with recurring periods of disease worsening and periods of disease stability that can result in fluctuating degrees of disability throughout the course of one's life. People with psoriatic disease often live with comorbidities, including depression, anxiety, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and metabolic diseases. Many people report experiencing stigma and discrimination including at work where the experiences and needs of people with psoriatic disease can be overlooked or misunderstood.

The proposed Canada Disability Benefit should include **episodic and invisible disabilities, such as psoriasis**, in the definition and assessment of disability.

People with psoriatic disease may experience ongoing threats to their financial security due to the potential impact of their disease on their ability to work and because of growing healthcare-related costs, such as treatments, devices, and other uninsured healthcare services. Many people worry about how the condition will affect their ability to stay employed.¹

To be reflective of the true costs of living with a disability, the proposed Canada Disability Benefit should be **indexed to the disability cost of living** and **eligibility should be simple and consistent** across the country. The Canada Disability Benefit should also include a **generous earnings exemption** and support people to keep or find employment. The development of the Canada Disability Benefit should also be **integrated with the national pharmacare discussion** to ensure that these programs work in concert to increase the supports available to people with disabilities and do not cancel each other out.

¹ CPN, CAPP, Unmasking Psoriasis. (October 2021). *Working it Out: A report on the experiences of people with psoriatic disease in the Canadian workplace*. Retrieved from <https://workingitout.ca/en/2021/report>

Moreover, **people should not lose access to disability benefits they currently have.** The federal government should work with provinces and territories to ensure that the Canada Disability Benefit would align with and complement existing provincial and territorial services, benefits, and supports. Provincial and territorial support should not be clawed back because of the creation of a new Canada Disability Benefit.

To guide the development of the Canada Disability Benefit, we **support the principles developed by the disability advocacy group, Disability without Poverty.** Moreover, **people with episodic disabilities must be included** in the development of the Canada Disability Benefit, including eligibility details, determined by regulations and policy. We **support amendments to the proposed legislation to ensure that episodic disabilities will be included** in the Canada Disability Benefit, e.g., as part of the Preamble in the text of the legislation to direct regulation-making.

Though there is yet no cure for psoriatic disease, access to appropriate care, treatment, and support, including access to income supports and disability benefits, helps to ensure that people with these conditions can achieve optimal health outcomes and quality of life, and social and economic security.

CPN, CAPP, and Unmasking Psoriasis are committed to advancing the needs of people with psoriatic disease in Canada. We appreciate the opportunity to jointly submit this brief on Bill C-22, *An Act to reduce poverty and to support the financial security of persons with disabilities by establishing the Canada disability benefit and making a consequential amendment to the Income Tax Act*. If any additional resources are needed about how people with psoriatic disease experience disabilities, episodic disabilities, or anything else related to your study, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

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Encl. [Working it Out: A report on the experiences of people with psoriatic disease in the Canadian workplace](#) and accompanying [infographic](#)