

*Plain Language Summary*

May 2023

# A Benefit without Barriers

## Principles and Recommendations for Canada Disability Benefit Administration

### Background

- The Canada Disability Benefit's goal is to improve the lives of people with disabilities living in poverty.
- The law and rules that will shape the Canada Disability Benefit are being created right now.
- March of Dimes Canada and Prosper Canada worked together to explore how people with disabilities will access this benefit.
- We are advocating for the Canada Disability Benefit to be fully accessible. We want to make sure that there are no barriers to accessing this new benefit.
- Our report gives our advice to the federal government as they design the Canada Disability Benefit.
- The findings in this report include feedback from people with disabilities, family members and caregivers, disability advocates, and frontline staff who collaborate with people with disabilities.

## Feedback Themes

We heard about many challenges people with disabilities face when accessing existing government programs, benefits, and services.

These challenges include:

- People with disabilities feel judged by government staff until they prove they are eligible.
- People with disabilities feel like they need to “beg for dollars” instead of feeling entitled to benefits.
- Application processes are complicated and take a lot of time.
- Many people with disabilities do not have the help they need to complete a benefit application.
- People with disabilities often have to pay healthcare providers to fill out forms to prove their disability.
- Many people with disabilities have a hard time filling out digital application forms because they do not have internet access, computers or mobile devices, or computer skills.
- Some people with disabilities experience added barriers because they live in rural or remote areas, they have unsafe housing or are unhoused, or they do not have identification documents.
- Many people with disabilities are unaware of the government benefits or supports available to them.

## Principles and Recommendations

Based on the feedback we received, we created recommendations for the federal government about how people with disabilities should be able to access the Canada Disability Benefit.

We want the government to consider this advice as they design the new benefit.

### 1. “Nothing About Us Without Us”

- People with disabilities are experts about their own lives and experiences, so they should have a say in decisions that are made about the Canada Disability Benefit.
- People with disabilities should be involved each step of the way as the Canada Disability Benefit is created.

### 2. Do No Harm

- When people with disabilities apply for the Canada Disability Benefit, they should not experience any harm.

### 3. Offer Equal Access

- The Canada Disability Benefit must be designed for people who are hard-to-reach.
- There must be multiple ways to apply for the Canada Disability Benefit and to communicate with government staff about the benefit.

### 4. Support Dignity

- The federal government should show how the Canada Disability Benefit helps people with disabilities contribute to their communities.
- The government should use language that shows that people with disabilities are valuable members of society.

### 5. Reduce Difficulty

- The process to apply for the Canada Disability Benefit should be as easy as possible. There should be support available to help people apply.
- For example, a person who has qualified for other disability income support programs should be automatically eligible for the Canada Disability Benefit.

## **6. Build Trust and Agency**

- The process to apply for the Canada Disability Benefit should be fully accessible.
- All government staff who help applicants should be trained to offer accessible communication and support.

## **7. Act quickly and Respond to Needs**

- The Canada Disability Benefit is urgently needed and must be launched as soon as possible.
- The Canada Disability Benefit must respond to changes in people with disabilities' lives.

## Next Steps

- To build a fully accessible Canada Disability Benefit, the federal government must consider the needs of people with disabilities at each stage – from learning about the benefit, to applying for it, receiving it, and keeping it over time.
- The federal government needs to make many choices about the design of the Canada Disability Benefit.
- There are many community organizations who want to be part of the success of the Canada Disability Benefit.
- Prosper Canada and March of Dimes Canada want to collaborate with the federal government as the Canada Disability Benefit is created and introduced.
- We want to ensure the Canada Disability Benefit meets the goal of ending poverty for people with disabilities in Canada.