

Advocates are welcoming a federal government proposal to create a disability benefit program, which could be a first step to improving access to federal support programs and solving some of the existing regime's problems. Current federal programs like the Disability Tax Credit (DTC) pose too many barriers to access and leave too many Canadians with disabilities unsupported. Taking a more inclusive approach would understandably be welcomed by many.



Changing requirements from being based on eligibility and enforcement to access and support would be generally beneficial. Towards this end, Employment Minister Carla Qualtrough introduced Bill C-35 (known as the Canada Disability Benefit Act) to establish a framework for the newly proposed Canada Disability Benefit (CDB). The CDB would be directed to working-age Canadians with the goal of lifting hundreds of thousands of persons with disabilities out of poverty, and would supplement not replace existing federal and provincial territorial supports.

Also in June, the government launched the Disability Inclusion Action Plan, a public engagement process to help the government develop a robust employment strategy for Canadians with disabilities. In a news release, March of Dimes Canada applauded the government's CDB initiative, commenting that it had the potential to increase financial security and enable economic empowerment, quality work, independence and equality for many Canadians.

Bill C-25 was tabled a day before MPs left Ottawa for the summer recess and a fall election would mean the legislation would have to be reintroduced in a new Parliament. Notably the Bill was not included in the government's budget implementation bills, which received Royal assent in June.

We elect governments to help those most in need. Programs like those proposed in Bill C-35 are designed to do just that. As election talk inevitably turns to an election call, let's speak up in favour of the Canada Disability Benefit Act and let our members of Parliament know that the well-being of all Canadians is our national priority.

Be safe, be well!

Martin

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