

# Community Dispatch

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## Canada Votes! – Accessibility & Inclusion in Employment

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VOTES!

“Just one question...”

This publication is intended to help you engage with local candidates in the federal election on October 14, 2008. It's all about social issues that impact your community; questions that matter to you; and the role that the federal government can choose to take in addressing them.

Questions raise issues. Questions require candidates to develop a clear position on where they stand. In this document, we cover thirteen social issues affecting communities nationwide today, provide sample questions you can ask your candidates, and include links to more information. By getting involved, you help shape the kind of community in which you live – all it takes is just **one question**.

### Accessibility & Inclusion in Employment

The skills and abilities of people with disabilities are underutilized in today's labour market. Both the labour market participation rate and unemployment rate indicate that people with disabilities have more barriers to securing employment than people without disabilities. With labour shortages across the country, and the looming mass exodus of baby boomers from the labour market, there

is no reason why the federal government should not aggressively lead policies that can help bring more people with disabilities into meaningful employment. The federal government can choose to fund programs that work on educating employers and increase incentives to further encourage employers to modify their workplaces to include people with disabilities. Equally important is committed funding to improve the infrastructure that helps people with disabilities access workplaces, such as accessible transit for all communities.

People with disabilities saw the unemployment gap narrow between 2001 and 2006, when it was at 13.2% for people with disabilities as opposed to 7.4% for the non-disabled population. This increase in employment may be partly due to the current efforts of the federal government which support the hiring of people with disabilities. Some programs include Opportunities Fund for People with Disabilities, which helps people prepare for and obtain employment and self employment; Social Development Partnerships Program that works with organizations and research, educational institutions to address disability issues; and Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities that assists in preparing for, sustaining, and maintaining employment.

These programs continue to have a positive impact on the employment rate for participation of people with disabilities, but further action would enhance program effectiveness. The federal government could choose to create an accessibility training fund to increase disability awareness among employers; develop an employer mentorship program that would allow companies to share

ideas and learn from one another's experience in hiring people with disabilities; and introduce flexible employment supports that suit individual needs.

The federal government can make policy choices that make it easier for people with disabilities to enter the labour market, and we can choose to elect a government that recognizes the need to further develop programs and build a more inclusive society.

**For More Information:**

Canadian Council on Social Development  
[www.ccsd.ca/drip](http://www.ccsd.ca/drip)

Canadian Association for Community Living  
[www.cacl.ca](http://www.cacl.ca)

End Exclusion  
[www.endexclusion.ca](http://www.endexclusion.ca)

**Sources**

Statistics Canada. 2006. *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey of 2006: Labor Force Experience of People with Disabilities*  
<http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-628-XIE/89-628-XIE2008007.htm#a1>.

## Accessibility & Inclusion in Employment: Key Points & Questions

In 2006, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities was 10.4%, compared to 6.8% of the non-disabled population.

Canadian employers, people with disabilities, and the economy could benefit from more

federal programs aimed at increasing participation of persons with disabilities within the Canadian labour market.

**What kind of changes will you enact to make it easier for people with disabilities to enter the labour market?**

**What actions would you take to encourage the business sector to hire people with disabilities?**

**How will you work toward changing workplaces and communities to better accommodate persons with disabilities?**

*Canada Votes Papers 2008 is a pan-Canadian collaboration between SPARC BC, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, Community Development Halton, Human Development Council St. John, and Canadian Council on Social Development. Social planning organizations across the country are helping to strengthen communities and work on social justice issues. We also recognize the need to work together around key issues affecting our communities. We have come together to provide this publication on the federal election because we believe that democracy works best when citizens engage in dialogue on important issues.*

*Canada Votes papers outline key social issues and related questions that are important in this election. Asking questions is a way to make sure these issues are on the public agenda. By reading this publication and passing it on, by asking questions and talking about the issues, and especially by voting on October 14, 2008, you can help shape the kind of community in which you want to live.*

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