

# POSITION ON EMPLOYMENT



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION  
FOR COMMUNITY LIVING

ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR  
L'INTÉGRATION COMMUNAUTAIRE

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## CONTEXT

The vast majority of adults with an intellectual disability can be competitively and inclusively employed; however, approximately only 25% are currently employed.

## GIVEN THAT:

- The Canadian unemployment rate for adults with an intellectual disability is approximately 75%.
- The workforce participation rate for people with an intellectual disability is approximately one-third of the employment rate of people without a disability.
- People with intellectual disabilities who are working earn less than half of people without a disability.
- Women with intellectual disabilities are less likely to be employed than men with intellectual disabilities.
- Many adults with an intellectual disability are living marginalized and impoverished lives.
- Sheltered workshops and segregated employment for people with disabilities are an unnecessary violation of individual rights and a drain on resources, which stream people into environments that severely limit their ability to choose real, dignified, and meaningful employment.
- Exclusion from the labour market negatively impacts individual economic security, well-being, a sense of purpose in life and belonging, and the broader economy.
- A large percentage of adults with an intellectual disability remain reliant on provincial/territorial income support systems.
- Obtaining paid employment often results in a financial loss for adults with an intellectual disability.
- Youth with an intellectual disability are often denied an inclusive education and opportunities for transition-to-work supports, thus limiting their preparedness for inclusive employment as adults.
- Access to inclusive post-secondary education is significantly limited across the country.

## AND WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT:

- People with an intellectual disability can participate in the Canadian labour market at the same rates as people without disabilities and should be doing so.
- The means to create and sustain inclusive and meaningful employment is well known and proven when governments commit to proper strategies, supports, and resourcing.
- The tens of millions of dollars that governments commit to wage subsidies do not lead to sustained employment.
- The business community and private employers have demonstrated a capacity and willingness to create meaningful employment and hire individuals with an intellectual disability.
- Canadian governments have an expressed commitment to the economic well-being of Canadians and Canada.
- Access to inclusive post-secondary education is a proven path to employment for approximately 80% of individuals with an intellectual disability who are included in university, college or poly-technic institutions.

- When people have access to an inclusive education, employment supports when needed, and transportation, the result is meaningful and sustained employment.
- Most people with an intellectual disability can be naturally supported in their jobs by co-workers and employers.
- Inclusive employment provides increased income, expanded social relationships, heightened control of decisions and activities, and a life of meaning and belonging.
- The proportion of individuals with an intellectual disability who are employed has not grown in decades. Additional resources and political will is required to change the current situation.

## **CACL IS OF THE VIEW THAT CANADIAN POLICY AND PRACTICE IN THE AREA OF EMPLOYMENT FOR PERSONS WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY MUST:**

- Commit to enabling employment rates and compensation for people with disabilities proportionate to that of people without disabilities.
- Provide working-age people with an intellectual disability, regardless of level of disability, choice and opportunity to earn a living through paid inclusive employment in the open labour market.
- Create meaningful employment opportunities with appropriate related supports and job accommodation as needed.
- Ensure the transition from existing segregated vocational programs to inclusive competitive employment, resulting in the ending of segregated day programs.
- Ensure the transition from existing segregated day programs to inclusive and meaningful community activity options, including ongoing support as needed, resulting in the ending of segregated day programs.
- Establish a new federally funded strategic initiative that specifically enables youth with an intellectual disability to be supported in inclusive community employment during their high school years and outside of school hours.
- Significantly limit the use of wage subsidies, except for temporary student jobs that apply to both youth with and without disabilities, and re-allocate these monies in known and effective strategies for securing and sustaining employment.
- Demonstrate leadership within governments at all levels in their responsibility to be leading inclusive employers, through the increased hiring of persons with an intellectual disability.
- Expand and maintain the federally funded Ready, Willing and Able national initiative, which has a proven track record of creating meaningful and inclusive employment for persons with developmental disabilities.
- Expand inclusive post-secondary education opportunities to the extent that the rate of participation in post-secondary education for people with an intellectual disability is comparable to people without disabilities.
- Ensure equitable access by persons with an intellectual disability to generic employment centers (not segregated or disability specific) where they receive appropriate and adequate counselling services to assist with training needs, issues of underemployment and career advancement, and transition between periods of employment.
- At a provincial/territorial level, expand incentives for employment for people with a disability who receive social assistance benefits, including reducing the claw-backs on earned income.
- Expand and support opportunities to pursue entrepreneurship and self-employment.