**Barrier-Free Canada/Canada Sans Barrière**

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A Non-Partisan Campaign for a Barrier-Free Canada for All Persons with Disabilities

# What Should the Promised New Federal Disability Accessibility Law Include? – At a Glance

The Federal Government promised a new law to create accessibility for people with disabilities. It is now consulting Canadians on what this law should include. Here are ideas we hope you like.

\* This law's goal should be for Canada to become fully accessible to people with any kind of disabilities, by a deadline the law sets. The goal should not just be to "improve accessibility." That weak goal would just require one new ramp to be installed somewhere in Canada. After that, accessibility would have been "improved."

\* This law should require organizations to remove accessibility barriers, and to be sure not to create any new ones. The law should cover the accessibility of *all* goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment and buildings, that the Federal Government can reach. "Disability" and "barrier" should be defined broadly.

\* This law should create a new federal office, the Canada Accessibility Commissioner. It would recommend accessibility rules to the Government and enforce those rules once the Federal Government passes them. It would also be Canada's independent accessibility watchdog.

\* This law should require the Federal Government to do whatever it can to lead Canada to full accessibility.

\* This law should require the Federal Government to create a series of regulations or rules, called "accessibility standards." These will tell organizations what steps they must take to become accessible. They would set the deadlines for organizations to take action on accessibility. People with disabilities should have an equal seat at the table when the Canada Accessibility Commissioner proposes these rules and when the Government decides whether to adopt them.

\* Any organization that the Federal Government can reach should have to obey this new law. This includes organizations that the Federal Government regulates (like the Federal Government itself, banks, airlines, the post office, Crown corporations, TV and radio stations, and companies that provide phone, cell phone and cable TV services). Any organization that gets money from the Federal Government should also have to obey this law.

\* The law should be effectively enforced, without people with disabilities having to privately take organizations to court under the Charter of Rights or the Canada Human Rights Act , to fight each barrier they face. One federal office, the new Canada Accessibility Commissioner, should enforce this law. It should audit and inspect organizations, issue orders to obey, and impose monetary penalties where the law is disobeyed. People with disabilities should not have to run back and forth between different federal agencies to get this new law implemented and enforced.

\* This new law should make sure that no one uses public money to create new barriers against people with disabilities, or to perpetuate existing barriers.

\* The Federal Government should have to check each federal law on the books to see if there are any accessibility barriers that block people with disabilities from getting the full benefit of those laws. Any of these barriers should be removed from those laws.

\* This law should say what the Federal Government must do to make sure federal elections are accessible to voters and candidates with disabilities. All polling stations must be in accessible locations. Voters with vision loss, dyslexia or other disabilities should have a way to independently and privately mark their ballot and to check to make sure it was correctly marked.

\* This law should ensure that the Federal Government takes needed steps to make sure its workplaces and services are fully accessible to people with disabilities. For example, the Federal Government should be audited periodically for accessibility.

\*The Federal Government should encourage all provinces to pass accessibility laws. The federal government should also create model national accessibility standards for areas like education, health, employment, transportation, housing, information and communications, customer service, and the built environment. A provincial or territorial government would be free to adopt, as law, a model national standard, if it wishes, or to modify it for that province or territory.

\* This law should ensure that the Federal Government works with Canadian businesses to create accessible products and services to sell on the international market to the one billion people with disabilities around the world.

\* Whichever law guarantees the most accessibility to people with disabilities always should prevail. Nothing in this new law or anything done under it should be able to cut back on the rights people with disabilities enjoy under the Charter of rights, the Canada Human Rights Act, or any other law.

\* The best way to raise awareness and change attitudes about accessibility is to pass and effectively enforce a strong federal accessibility law. The Federal Government should set up a centre and a hotline to give organizations free advice on what exactly to do to remove and prevent accessibility barriers. It should send out periodic guidelines giving more details on how to remove and prevent barriers. This makes it easier for organizations and reduces their cost.

\* The Federal Government should report each year on what specifically it will do in the next years to implement the federal accessibility law, and to remove and prevent accessibility barriers. The Auditor General should audit these reports. The new Canada Accessibility Commissioner should report to the public annually on progress. The law's effectiveness should be independently reviewed after four years, and every three years after that.