



Introducing the CDPA ...

The **Canadian Disability Policy Alliance (CDPA)** is a national collaboration of 14 researchers in disability studies from 4 Canadian universities, 5 disability advocacy organizations, and consultants from federal and provincial governments. Since July 2009, the Alliance has conducted 27 research projects, aimed at evaluating and improving disability policy in Canada. (To learn more about the Alliance, see: www.disabilitypolicyalliance.ca)

As of July 2013, the CDPA has completed 4 years of its five-year research agenda. In partnerships between researchers and disability advocates, we have undertaken projects covering a wide variety of issues affecting people with disabilities, including education, employment, health care, and civic engagement.

Over the coming year, we propose to disseminate these research findings to individuals and organizations involved in disability issues, such as yourself. We hope some of this information may help you to continue to achieve meaningful change for people with disabilities in Canada. Please feel free to share or use anything we send you.

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The Learning Collaborative

The **Canadian Disability Policy Alliance (CDPA)** employs a unique methodology for emancipatory research and knowledge mobilization, known as the **Learning Collaborative**. Derived from research on health system improvement, the Learning Collaborative focuses on small but meaningful increments of change that can be readily achieved and studied, and then expanded to effect broader outcomes.

The Learning Collaborative approach has the advantage of effectively using the skills and aptitudes of researchers and consumers to achieve the following steps:

For more information,
[Click here.](#)

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Step 1

Form the team

identify the people, groups, skills needed to ensure representation by all stakeholders

Step 2

Ask / answer 3 questions

1. What are you trying to accomplish? What change are you seeking?
2. How will you know if the desired improvement has occurred?
3. What changes can we make immediately toward this improvement?

Step 3

The PLAN – DO – STUDY – ACT Cycle

PLAN – assemble the evidence, learn from other jurisdictions, identify the key factors leading to change

DO – implement a small-scale change that can be accomplished readily without undue delays

STUDY – evaluate the impact of that change, learn from the experience

ACT – standardize the intervention and sustain the gains achieved

Step 4

Spread successful solutions

to other organizations, problems, regions/jurisdictions and implement more far-reaching, broader scale change



The disability lens

Last month, we told you about an emancipatory research approach used by the CDPA, called the Learning Collaborative. There are also two additional “signature methodologies” used in the work of the Alliance, that will be the focus for this month’s and next month’s postings.

In an effort to assist policy makers and policy analysts to reflect on the adequacy of policy for disabled Canadians, we developed the Disability Lens, a series of questions derived from “*Tips for policy analysis*” (in McColl & Jongbloed, 2006. *Disability and social policy in Canada (2nd ed.)*). These questions are intended to provide a quick, easy guide to assessing the important implications of policy decisions for people with disabilities.

For more information about the Disability Lens, [click here](#).





Disability policy scan (2nd ed.)

On behalf of the Canadian Disability Policy Alliance, I offer the 2nd edition of the **REVIEW OF DISABILITY POLICY IN CANADA**. We invite you to download it, copy it, distribute it, use and share it as you wish. It is offered as a resource to disability scholars and spokespersons, with our compliments and our best wishes ([click here](#)). The first edition of the policy scan was one of the earliest research activities of the Canadian Disability Policy Alliance. It was disseminated through the website of the CDPA, and has been one of the most frequently consulted resources on that site.

Several noteworthy changes have occurred in a number of jurisdictions since the first edition was completed. We hope that this document will provide a catalyst for researchers, advocates and analysts to compare changes over the five-year period; compare policy between jurisdictions; examine the impact of policy changes; and, further explore specific policy areas and sectors.

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Wage subsidies for disabled workers in Ontario

The CDPA is made up of five research teams –
Federal disability policy, Employment issues, Inclusive education,
Health services and Culture & recreation.

In 2010, the Employment team conducted a detailed literature search and environmental scan on the issue of wage subsidies for disabled workers, and their effectiveness in facilitating paid employment. They recommended to the Minister of Training, Colleges & Universities, that in order to coincide with best practices, the Ontario Targeted Wage Subsidy program should include comprehensive on-the-job training programs, and should lead to employment for those who had successfully completed the program. In March 2011, the Employment team received a letter from Laurie LeBlanc, Assistant Deputy Minister, stating that employment services in Ontario were being reformed. The job matching, placement and incentive components of Employment Services would henceforth require employers to commit to developing a training plan to help the individual achieve his/her employment goal, hopefully leading to full employment. For more information about this initiative, [click here](#).



Inclusive education in New Brunswick

The CDPA is made up of five research teams –
Federal disability policy, Employment issues, Inclusive education, Health services, and Culture & recreation.

CDPA's Education team has focused its research on discovering variances in inclusive education policy across the country, and on the potential for disconnect between policy and practice. The team conducted a comprehensive policy scan, as well as consultations with government and labour leaders. In July 2012, the government of New Brunswick released a report by Dr. Gordon Porter (Community co-lead of the Education team), entitled *Strengthening Inclusion, Strengthening Schools*. In response to recommendations in that report, New Brunswick Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, Hon. Jody Carr, launched a new policy ensuring individualized, universal, flexible education for all students in the province. For more information about this initiative, [click here](#).



Making primary care more accessible in Ontario

The CDPA is made up of five research teams – Federal disability policy, Employment issues, Inclusive education, Health services, and Culture & recreation.

An example of the Learning Collaborative methodology in action was the CDPA's Health services team's initiative to enhance accessibility in Ontario's Family Health Teams.

Working with our partners at Spinal Cord Injury Ontario, we reached out to 186 Family Health Teams and 25 Nurse Practitioner-led clinics to ensure that they were meeting their obligations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. We provided FHTs/NPLCs with a voluntary accessibility self-audit tool and information about adjustable examining tables and ceiling track-lifts, to assist their disabled patients to transfer onto an examining table. We secured a commitment from the Ontario Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care to support this initiative, and to share the cost of this equipment with the Family Health Team and its physicians.

Upon follow-up in May 2013, 88 (42%) of sites had obtained approval to acquire and install the equipment. For more information about this initiative, [click here](#).



The CDPA website

In addition to these monthly emails, the CDPA's primary means of communicating with those interested in disability policy is the website: www.disabilitypolicyalliance.ca.

Since it launched in 2013, our website has attracted about 6700 visitors. Not surprisingly the map behind this text shows that most of our traffic comes from Canada (about 15,000 hits so far); while most popular in Canada it has also been accessed by USA, Australia and Great Britain (2200 hits), and in India, Western Europe and South Africa (230 hits).

We currently reach about 600 visitors per month. Our most commonly viewed documents are: A paper we did on the need for a “Canadians with Disabilities Act”, and the two editions (2008 and 2013) of our federal/provincial disability policy scan. To visit the website yourself, [click here](#).



Assistive devices in BC

The CDPA is made up of five research teams –
Federal disability policy, Employment issues, Inclusive education, Health services, and Culture & recreation.

CDPA's Employment team was contracted by the British Columbia Ministry of Social Development to evaluate of a pilot program to provide assistive devices to assist people with disabilities to enter the workforce. Over the one and a half years of the study, the most common devices provided by the Equipment and Assistive Technology Initiative (EATI) were computers (105), mobility devices (100), and communication devices (84). The evaluation found that these devices assisted people to take initial steps toward employment, although a longer-term evaluation is required to determine if they actually resulted in sustained employment. Participants were highly satisfied with the program, and further funding is now being considered. For more information about this initiative and access to the full report, [click here](#).

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New Veteran's Charter

In 2010, the CDPA collaborated with the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research (CIMVHR) to undertake an economic analysis of the New Veteran's Charter to see how it affected veterans with disabilities. The analysis revealed that seriously disabled veterans were significantly worse off under the new charter than under the old Pension Act. The lead investigator, Dr. Alice Aiken, with support from a summer student, Amy Buitenhuis, and our partner Bill Adair from the Canadian Paraplegic Association Ontario, made representation to the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and succeeded in promoting significant changes to the Charter. For the full analysis and subsequent reports and activities, [click here](#).



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Main street accessibility



The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* was enacted in 2005 to ensure an accessible society for people with disabilities by 2025. What difference does it make in communities in Ontario? This question motivated a small group of citizens in Thornbury, ON to seek support of the Canadian Disability Policy Alliance (CDPA) to examine accessibility and make recommendations. During the summer of 2012, researchers from Queen’s University collaborated with Spinal Cord Injury Ontario (SCIO) to evaluate physical accessibility and attitudes towards disability among “main street” businesses. Based on an accessibility audit of 41 business over 3 blocks, we found that more than 50% of Main Street businesses were at least minimally wheelchair accessible – about 25% were ideally accessible, and 25% had compromised accessibility.

For more information on the findings and for a link with the *Main Street Accessibility Audit* tool, [click here](#).

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Access to Entertainment

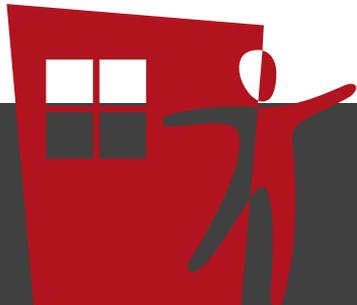
In December 2004, Easter Seals Canada launched the **Access 2 Entertainment (A2E)** program. The program enables disabled members to take a companion to numerous entertainment venues across the country for free or substantially reduced admission. Venues include movie theatres, museums, sports events and other entertainment outlets. In almost ten years, the program has attracted more than 40,000 cardholders.

In 2011, the Citizenship Team of CDPA conducted an evaluation of the program. 14,235 surveys were emailed to A2E cardholders, and 3069 (22%) were returned. Cards were most frequently used at movie theatres, to bring along family (50%), attendants (22%), and friends (20%). One-third (31.7%) reported that the program had substantially increased their participation in leisure events, and half (51.5%) said it had increased their participation to some degree.

“It’s a wonderful service that encourages individuals to socialize, be happy and have fun more often with others, and go places that they wouldn’t necessarily go on their own. A great emotional booster!” For more information, [click here](#).

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The next phase ...

We are delighted to report that the CDPA will continue its work on disability policy over the next 7 years (2014-22), as part of a Partnership Grant led by Dr. Kathleen Martin Ginis of McMaster University. This ambitious project will focus on three community participation domains that people with physical disabilities consistently identify as the most restrictive, as well as the areas in which they desire greater participation: employment, mobility, and sports/recreation. The goal of this 7-year program is to enhance the quantity and quality of community participation among Canadians living with physical disabilities by developing, mobilizing and evaluating strategies to enhance community participation. In addition to addressing the number of people who participate, our efforts will also focus on understanding and enhancing the psychosocial quality of participation (e.g., feelings of meaningful engagement, autonomy, responsibility, and social connectedness).

For more information, [click here](#).

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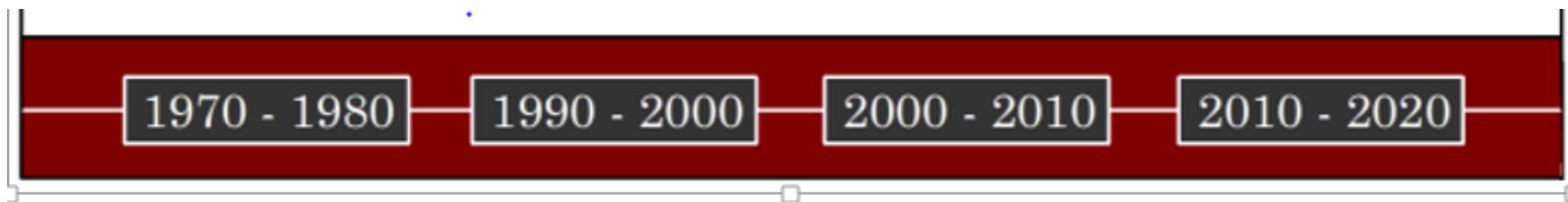


Timeline of disability policy

One of the most frequently consulted reports on the CDPA website is entitled, “A Canadians With Disabilities Act?” In this report, we characterized the development of disability policy in Canada in three phases:

- 1980 - 1995 – International Pull
- 1996 - 2005 – Provincial Push
- 2006 - present – Federal Monitoring

Accompanying this report is an interactive timeline of disability policy that was constructed by several research associates that we supported over the past 5 years¹. The timeline covers more than four decades of progress in disability policy. [Click here](#) and explore!



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CDPA Scholarships

One of the goals of the CDPA was to cultivate a cadre of researchers interested and engaged in research on disability policy. Among several ways we achieved this was providing personnel support to students working in the area of disability policy. Between 2009 & 2014, the CDPA provided 10 scholarships to graduate students studying disability-related topics across the country. We supported 4 Masters students and 6 Doctoral students, studying topics as diverse as assistive technology, philosophical conceptualizations of disability, inclusive education, disability savings plan. For more detailed information about the research conducted by our scholarship recipients, and to learn more about where their studies have taken them, [click here](#) ...





Accessible meetings

Fully accessible meetings are a micro-level expression of the CDPA's vision of inclusion for people with disabilities. They are also a feature of our commitment to involving all of our partners in all aspects of the Alliance's work. To that end, we allocated approximately 10% of our annual budget to bringing partners together semi-annually to review progress, monitor accountability and make plans. Thanks to Mike Schaub, the original Project Coordinator for the CDPA, we developed a detailed protocol for organizing and conducting fully accessible meetings, learning from our consumer partners about physical, visual and auditory accessibility. We are pleased to share our detailed guidelines for meeting planning, and the **Hotel Meeting Room Accessibility Checklist**. For more information and for a link with the tool, [click here](#).





Inclusive education

Rarely are teacher associations a topic of investigation in inclusive education research, and yet they play a critical role in its implementation and efficacy.

A study was conducted by members of the CDPA Education Team that explored the extent to which leaders of Canadian teacher associations were aware of inclusive education policy. Although every jurisdiction in Canada (federal and provincial) has legislation ensuring equal access to inclusive education for disabled students, this study showed that teacher associations have a complex response to the issue. Teacher association leaders reported that while teachers are well aware of inclusive education policy and generally endorsed it, the practice of inclusive education is contingent upon adequate resourcing. The relationship of awareness-endorsement-resources is key to ensuring that inclusive education happens in individual educational settings.

For more information, [click here](#).



A Canadians with Disabilities Act?

The most commonly viewed page on the CDPA website contains a report co-written by investigators, staff & students in the Summer of 2010, entitled, “A *Canadians with Disabilities Act?*” To date, this report has been accessed over 13,000 times.

No clear consensus emerges from this analysis of national disability policy in Canada and other developed nations (US, UK, Australia) about the need for a *Canadians with Disabilities Act*, especially given the current suite of human rights protections (provincial & federal Human Rights Acts, Charter of Rights and Freedoms, UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, emerging disability legislation in some provinces). While a federal disability act would have significant symbolic appeal, our analysis suggests it would do little to change the real situation of disabled Canadians. Instead, this report suggests what is needed are more robust, harmonized economic measures, to ensure education, training, employment, income replacement and appropriate taxation for disabled Canadians. For more information, [click here](#).



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More than voting booths ...

Research has shown that people with disabilities are 20% less likely to vote than those without a disability. Voting booths are not the only impediments -- meeting venues, campaign facilities and constituency offices are also central to the effective functioning of Canadian democracy. A study was conducted by members of the Alliance that examined the extent to which the Ontario election of 2011 “opened doors” to electoral participation by people with disabilities. Party leaders were polled, and 30 individual candidates were surveyed from the 3 official parties in 10 ridings across Ontario. The *Campaign Accessibility Checklist* was offered to candidates to self-assess their campaign office, information and meetings. The findings from this survey suggest that while candidates were receptive to the needs of disabled constituents, there was a general lack of understanding of the imperative to meet accessibility standards, despite funding and time constraints on campaigns. *For more information, [click here](#).*

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