



QUEBEC INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY SOCIETY

Presentation by the Quebec Intellectual Disability Society
to the Standing Committee on Health, Social Affairs,
Science and Technology,
Senate of Canada

*Bill C-22, An Act to reduce poverty and to support the
financial security of persons with disabilities by
establishing the Canada disability benefit and making a
consequential amendment to the Income Tax Act*

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About Us

The Quebec Intellectual Disability Society brings together, informs and equips all those who wish to make Quebec a more inclusive society, where everyone can find their place and flourish. More than 90 organizations and associations, over 150 employers and thousands of families across the province are already part of the movement.

Basing its actions on the fundamental principles set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the Quebec and Canadian Charters, the Quebec Intellectual Disability Society strives to

- promote the interests and defend the rights of people with intellectual disabilities and their families, either by acting proactively, notably by lobbying on various policy issues affecting people with intellectual disabilities and their families, or by intervening in situations of crisis, discrimination or exploitation of these people.
- inform and sensitize members, partners, professionals and stakeholders, as well as decision-makers and the general public, on issues and new developments in the field of intellectual disabilities. It does this through publications and media relations as well as by organizing events such as theme days, conferences and awareness campaigns.
- act as a spokesperson for the individuals, families, associations and organizations it represents with the various political and public authorities or social actors, particularly with regard to the various bills and regulations in the fields of education, work, health, social services, income security or any programme that directly or indirectly affects the social inclusion of the people whose cause it supports.
- encourage and support any initiative that prioritizes services and support for natural families or facilitates the autonomy of people with intellectual disabilities, and therefore promotes their full inclusion in their respective communities.
- Promote the sharing of expertise and the creation of solidarity networks.

Passing Bill C-22 quickly: a priority for people with intellectual disabilities and their families across the country

Introduction

Members of the committee, Madam Chair,

Thank you for your invitation. My name is Amélie Duranleau, I am the Executive Director of the Quebec Intellectual Disability Society. I am accompanied by my colleague Samuel Ragot, a Senior Policy Analyst at the Society, and a doctoral student at McGill University's School of Social Work. He is working on the issue of financial security for persons with disabilities. We are pleased to be here to speak to you about our position on Bill C-22, especially in the immediate aftermath of Quebec's Intellectual Disability Week, which included issues related to financial security and dignity.

First, as we have done in the other place and as hundreds of other organizations have called for, we must emphasize the urgency of moving forward with the rapid passage of Bill C-22. This bill could play a key role in lifting persons with disabilities out of poverty across the country. In this sense, it is an opportunity that has not presented itself in decades.

Of course, we realize that voting on a framework legislation, which contains few details, is uncomfortable. However, with the benefit of the amendments made in the other place, we believe this is the right thing to do.

On the one hand, there is an urgent need for action to ensure the financial security of persons with disabilities across the country. On the other hand, we have experience with the successful development of regulations related to framework legislation in the context of the Basic Income Program in Quebec. Like Bill C-22, Quebec's Basic Income Program is the result of a framework legislation aimed at lifting persons out of poverty. As we intend to do with Bill C-22, we worked with the provincial government to reach a final regulation that satisfied most of the parties involved. In the case of the Canada Benefit, we believe that the regulatory process could be expedited since the other place has already adopted

several major amendments, numerous consultations have already taken place and the dialogue with the provinces and territories is ongoing. Additionally, the sums reserved in yesterday's federal budget point towards a robust consultation process. We are satisfied with this important signal.

Quebec's financial security programs for persons with disabilities

(Samuel Ragot speaks) Good evening, madam chair, members of the committee, I would like to discuss the importance of working with the provinces and territories. As you know, provinces and territories all have financial assistance programs for persons with disabilities or some of welfare for persons that cannot work. As you know, the provinces and territories all have financial assistance programs for persons with disabilities. This is important to remember, Madam Chair and members of the Committee, because the Bill does not attempt to address the problems of these programs. However, it is crucial that these programs be coordinated with the new benefit so as not to penalize persons with disabilities or encourage local governments to withdraw from social protection and financial security for persons with disabilities.

For example, in Quebec, as of January 1, 2023, we now have a Basic Income Program, a first in Canada and probably in the world. While this program is not perfect and we continue to make representations to the provincial government, we must ensure that the Canadian benefit will interact positively and consistently with it. To date, the Quebec government has indicated an interest in seeing a federal benefit complement its programs, as long as it is truly helping the persons who need it. We are pleased with this collaborative approach and will support all such efforts.

We are confident that such negotiations will be successful.

Some basic parameters for the Canadian benefit

In addition to working with the provinces and territories, we think it will also be important that the Canada benefit be fully individualized, that it not be based on spousal earnings to limit issues of financial dependency, that it provide a real pathway out of poverty, and that it allow people to work without clawbacks. It is a question of dignity.

In this sense, it is remarkable that Bill C-22 proposes the creation of a universal benefit for persons with disabilities of working age, based on the definition of the Accessibility Canada Act, breaking away from the punitive vision of social assistance and the "welfarization" of disability.¹ Hopefully, such a bill will encourage provincial and territorial governments to reform their own programs.

Next Steps

(Amélie Duranleau speaks) Since several amendments were adopted in the other place, we believe that it is time for the Senate to proceed with the speedy adoption, without amendments, of Bill C-22. In our view, the amendments adopted are sufficient to ensure that the regulatory process will be inclusive and that it will have clear and relatively binding guidelines for the federal government. The fact that the federal government has already set aside funding for conduct consultation is also an important signal. As for Quebec, we are confident that the governments will negotiate in good faith and ensure that all persons in need of the benefit will receive it. Many persons with disabilities can no longer wait. It is time for action.

Finally, madam chair, members of the Committee, rest assured that we will be available to participate in the regulatory process, including by offering our extensive experience in Quebec on these issues.

Once again, thank you. And above all, thank you for passing this very important bill. This is an opportunity that should not be missed. Too many people depend on it.

¹ **What is welfarization?**

"Welfarization: from the English word "welfare" and the suffix "-ization", meaning an act, process or result of an action.

Welfarization is the practice of tying financial assistance programs for persons with disabilities who have limitations to employment with welfare programs created for persons who have no other source of income or who have temporary limitations to employment.

The use of programs that were not designed to meet the needs of persons with disabilities creates more problems than it solves and makes them more vulnerable.