

## Our agenda

We must actively pursue a progressive disability rights agenda within our Union and the broader community that includes lobbying all levels of government to focus on:

- increasing access to employment, support, and decent wages;
- a national income security program that recognizes the costs of disability as a collective cost to society;
- a national comprehensive public system of disability support services (such as self-directed attendant care, home support services, sign language interpretation, communication supports, and support workers);
- a national children's agenda including a family supports policy strategy to meet the needs of all children with disability; and
- making accessibility design an important element of any infrastructure development.

For more information on how you can advance a disability rights agenda in your union local get in touch with the National Union – 1-877-687-4322 or email [national@nupge.ca](mailto:national@nupge.ca) Also check the Equality and Human Rights section on the National Union's web site – [www.nupge.ca](http://www.nupge.ca) (On our home page click on **Sectors** and then click on **Equality and Human Rights**).



### NATIONAL UNION OF PUBLIC AND GENERAL EMPLOYEES

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Health Sciences Association of Alberta  
Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union  
Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union  
Ontario Public Service Employees Union  
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# Disability Rights



an **Integral Part** of our Union's Agenda

The National Union of Public and General Employees is an affiliate of the Canadian Labour Congress and a member of the Public Services International



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## A proud history of advancing disability rights

The National Union of Public and General Employees and its Components have a proud history of advancing disability rights. We are committed to doing whatever we can to bring down the barriers to full participation and equality that often face people with disabilities. We view this as an integral part of our day-to-day work.

## Charity is not the answer

The National Union rejects the charity approach to meeting the needs of people with disabilities. Such a model does little to promote independence and fails to recognize that the costs associated with disabilities is a collective cost to society. That's why we believe that the best way to promote the full participation and equality of people with disabilities is through a comprehensive national public system of disability support services and income support.

## The struggle for full participation and equality

It's hard to fathom, but Canadians with disabilities have been forced to take a step backward in their struggle to gain full participation and equality in Canadian society.

Let's look at the labour market participation rate of persons with disabilities! Only 53% of people with disabilities have jobs compared to 80% of all Canadians.

## Public disability supports in decline

The reality is that the public support systems necessary to improve the labour market participation and integration of persons with disabilities are declining. There's no end to the cutbacks to such support services as attendant care, independent living arrangements, provision of technical aids, accessible job training and accessible public transportation. Quality home care and home support services necessary for independent living are being privatized and are unaffordable to most people with disabilities.

## Attack on Disability Income Programs

At a time when governments are deciding how to allocate surpluses, it is amazing that we continue to see greater eligibility restrictions for income support and more restrictive definitions of 'disability' for the purposes of eligibility. Under the federal Disability Tax Credit and provincial disability benefit programs in British Columbia and Ontario people with life long disabilities are being forced to reapply for benefits based on much more restrictive eligibility requirements.

## Health and safety legislation and standards

There are more on-the-job illnesses, injuries and deaths. On average, one Canadian worker out of 13 is injured at work. Approximately 800 work related deaths occur every year, or approximately two per day. Close to 17,000 workers between the ages of 15 and 19 are injured each year. We are confronted with deregulation of workplace safety in most jurisdictions. There are less Ministry of Labour staff to monitor workplace safety; instead there's a trend to allow employers to monitor their own workplaces.

## Workers' Compensation systems

We are witnessing a trend towards a tightening of eligibility requirements and benefit reductions for WCB claims. Recognition of new workplace illnesses and injuries is strongly being challenged and, in some jurisdictions, rehabilitation services have been privatized.

Progress toward the goal of full and equal participation has all but ground to a halt in our country.

## Why are disability rights a union issue?

Many of our members and their families already have disabilities; all of us are subject to becoming disabled at some point in our lives.

But besides this obvious reason let's not forget our longstanding history of supporting social justice and equality for all members of society. Support for the collective struggles of persons striving to gain greater control of their lives has always been the cornerstone of our union.

People with disabilities have been for the most part excluded from political, economic and social structures of Canadian society. They have a long way to go in their struggle for social justice and equality. We must do more to ensure that people with disabilities are able to fully participate in all aspects of our union and the broader society.

The National Union and its Components can, and should be important vehicles for bringing down barriers to full participation and equality. We're committed to ensuring that we are!

## Making disability rights a key part of our public policy agenda

The National Union and its Components are committed to working with our activists with disabilities and the broader disability rights movement to improve this situation. We need to lobby all levels of government to address the need for greater social investment in individuals with disabilities, along with their families and communities.

