



For immediate release

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Canada moving in the wrong direction - again Labour calls for reinstatement of Court Challenges Program

OTTAWA – Canada’s federal government should mark December 3, the International Day of Disabled Persons, by reversing one of its biggest mistakes and reinstating the Court Challenges Program.

One of the most significant cutbacks to equality rights for Canadians with disabilities came this year when the government cancelled the Court Challenges Program, snatching away from ordinary Canadians their best tools to take the government to court to assert their rights.

“People with disabilities are largely poor and marginalized. Work remains largely inaccessible, although progress has been made with support from unions and with changes to the law. Like employers, governments only change the rules if challenged – and that takes resources and money,” says Barbara Byers, executive vice-president of the Canadian Labour Congress.

Byers says the Court Challenges Program has played a critical role in assisting Canadians with disabilities to promote their right to equality and to clarify for governments their obligation to protect human rights.

“Asking the most disadvantaged people to fend for themselves or to beg for charity to defend their rights before the courts, takes Canada in the opposite direction from the global community,” says Byers.

Twenty-five years ago, the United Nations recognized the International Year of Disabled Persons and later, in 1992, designated December 3 as the International Day of Disabled Persons. Since then, that day has become a day when people around the world come together to celebrate advances, victories and to strengthen determination to fight for the economic, cultural, political and social rights of people with disabilities.

“This year saw another step forward when the United Nations adopted a Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the first new convention of the 21st century. The world is moving forward on the greater inclusion of people living with disabilities – but Canada went the other way this year,” Byers says in conclusion.

The Canadian Labour Congress, the national voice of the labour movement, represents 3.2 million Canadian workers. The CLC brings together Canada’s national and international unions along with the provincial and territorial federations of labour and 135 district labour councils. Web site:

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