

Talking Points: Priority – Income Security

LINE- Background

“Make Ends...Meet!”

- Lack of secure, adequate income intensifies the hardship caused by MS and keeps people affected by the disease from participating fully in their communities.
- This situation is amplified for women with disability. In Canada, MS affects women three times as often as men. They also have on average lower incomes and earnings thus making them most susceptible to poverty.
- Canadians living with MS face the challenges of paying for medication, services, equipment, treatment, and transportation – and these can be a significant economic burden.
- Qualifying for income and disability supports is challenging for people with MS due to the episodic nature of the disease. Complicated application processes, requirements for numerous verified medical forms, and strict eligibility criteria pose significant problems.

We commend the development of a national poverty reduction strategy, which we participated through its consultation, as many of the issues encompassing poverty are unfortunately everyday experiences for people living with MS and their families.

It’s time to make income security for people with MS a priority to enable them to make ends meet! This is in alignment with the Conference Board of Canada’s newly released report “[MS in the Workplace: Making the Case for Enhancing Employment and Income Supports](#)”, the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP)’s report “[Leaving Some Behind: What Happens When Workers Get Sick](#)” and the Caledon Institute’s report “[A Basic Income Plan for Canadians with Severe Disabilities.](#)”

SINKER—Our Request:

Federal policy should help “Make Ends Meet” by:

- ✓ **Making disability tax credits fully refundable and increase them** to put much needed income directly in the hands of low-income people with MS and other disabilities;
- ✓ **Changing eligibility criteria** (e.g. Canada Pension Plan – Disability, Disability Tax Credit) to include those individuals living with episodic disabilities to have access to public insurance and tax credit systems for those unable to work or who can only work on an intermittent basis;
- ✓ **Harmonizing the EI sickness benefits duration of 15 weeks to match the 26 weeks duration of compassionate care benefits;**
- ✓ Ensuring the **national poverty reduction strategy** includes all Canadians including those with episodic and progressive disabilities to have adequate income;