

# Canada Ratifies UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

(No. 99 - March 11, 2010 - 11:15 a.m. ET) The Honourable Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, today announced that, with the support of all provinces and territories, the Government of Canada has ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at United Nations headquarters in New York City.

“Canada is committed to promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities and enabling their full participation in society,” said Minister Cannon. “Ratification of this convention underscores the Government of Canada’s strong commitment to this goal.”

“Canada is proud to have been one of the first countries to originally sign the Convention in 2007,” said Minister Finley. “The ratification of this agreement is just further acknowledgement that Canada is a world leader in providing persons with disabilities the same opportunities in life as all Canadians.”

“Today is a momentous day for Canadians with disabilities and their families,” said Bendina Miller, President of the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL). “CACL is thrilled that Canada has ratified the Convention. Canada has been an international leader on disability and human rights, and through ratification can continue to play this important role. CACL looks forward to working with the Government of Canada on implementing and monitoring compliance with the Convention.”

“The Government of Canada’s ratification today of the Convention is a historic event for Canadians with disabilities,” said Marie White, National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities. “It signals the end of an era where people with disabilities were seen as objects of charity. Ratification of the Convention makes real our goal of recognition as full and equal citizens of Canada.

“Ratification of the Convention puts an end to the medical model and opens exciting new opportunities for building a more inclusive and accessible Canada. Canadians with disabilities applaud the Government of Canada for this historic action.”

“As the Government of Canada continues to play a leading role with respect to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in sport, we wish our paralympic athletes the best of luck at the upcoming Paralympic Games in Vancouver,” said Minister Cannon.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an international human rights instrument of the United Nations intended to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. Parties to the Convention are required to promote, protect and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities, and to ensure that they enjoy full equality under the law.

There are approximately 4.4 million persons with disabilities in Canada—about 14.3 percent of the population.

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## **Backgrounder - UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on December 13, 2006, after several years of negotiation in which Canada took an active role.

Canada was among the first countries to sign the Convention when it was opened for signature on March 30, 2007.

The purpose of the Convention is “to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.” It reaffirms for persons with disabilities existing civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights set out in international law.

The Convention’s core obligations relate to non-discrimination and reasonable accommodation. These core obligations are then elaborated in specific provisions that address such issues as freedom of expression, political rights, liberty and security of the person, legal capacity, education, health and employment. The Convention also contains provisions on issues unique to people with disabilities, such as accessibility, independent living and inclusion in the community, as well as the processes of rehabilitation and habilitation, through which those with disabilities learn to function fully in society.

The Government of Canada consulted provincial and territorial governments throughout the Convention’s negotiation, signature and ratification processes. The Canadian government also consulted civil society through a national round table with stakeholders, and an online consultation open to the public. It also sought the views of self-governing Aboriginal groups on how ratification of the Convention might affect their communities.

Available online at: <http://www.international.gc.ca/media/aff/news-communiqués/2010/99.aspx>.