

Ableism: the unspoken social injustice in Canada

Canada. The country that holds astonishing stories, of different people and different backgrounds. It's a glorious land that is the bearer of incredible outdoor wonders and gratifying accomplishments. However, what makes Canada so remarkable isn't the fact that it has many riches nor green lands, but it's the potential that can essentially lead to a better future for our people. Of course, for Canada to reach its full potential, it must set its priorities straight. Which is why, as citizens, we should ask ourselves: what issues must we shed some light on? In my opinion, there are many things that our country can improve on. Except, in order for us to move forward in anything, we must start with the base, meaning our citizens. We must talk about the social injustices our people are silently battling. One battle I know many individuals are facing is ableism. Countless of disabled citizens in Canada have to suffer for things they shouldn't be suffering for. That is why, in the following essay, I'll be naming social injustices that the public policy and administration should consider changing when it comes to disabled people, as well as naming ways we can terminate ableism among our citizens.

Firstly, though many people think of discrimination as a direct threat to a certain group, I mostly perceive it as considering the feelings of those who are different, invalid. In the world of disabled citizens in Canada, this is a very common occurrence. According to *Statistics Canada*, in 2017, about 6.2 million individuals over the age of 15 were deemed disabled. Meaning about 6.2 million might have to face quotidian difficulties that people with no disabilities won't ever have to face in their routine activities. For instance, many schools in Canada don't fulfill the necessary needs a physically disabled student desires in order to have a proper education. Examples of these lack of accommodations are: absence of ramps or

elevators, inaccessible washrooms, as well as inaccessible transportation to and from school. These inadequacies ultimately result in poor education and a difficult school-life. This injustice is causing a great waste of knowledge that disabled students possess. For us to obtain a future where everyone is contributing to Canada's growth, we must allow these eager minds to have access to all the necessary accommodations, so that they could have the best education and future.

Secondly, not only do disabled citizens get poor education, but they also face an unstable financial future. According to *Statistics Canada* data, nearly 30% of those who are disabled and are Canadian citizens are living in poverty. Most can't get jobs due to their conditions, and even if they do end up with a job, it's most likely that it doesn't pay well. Considering how hard it could be for any average person without any physical or mental difficulties to make ends meet, imagine how arduous it is for one who does face those problems. Not to mention they also have to pay for extra costs, like high medical expenses (for wheelchairs, examinations, hearing aids etc..) and/or a personal assistant that can aid them. I believe that disabled people should have more financial aid, which includes: coupons that permit them to have cost deductions (on groceries or regular items), loans given and lower medical expenses. Furthermore, this is especially important to do now mostly since this community has been one of the hardest communities hit from COVID-19. *Global Citizen* stated that the virus caused more than a third of Canadians with disabilities to lose their jobs, and 54% claimed they had less disposable income to satisfy some of their most basic needs, which I find completely unacceptable. The government has made it clear that every person should feel a sense of security when it comes to money. If this is the case, why are we excluding those who practically have none?

Lastly, and what I feel is the most important, is to allow the disabled community to voice their concerns. Their conditions, whether it's physical or mental, can take quite a toll on their mental health. Most have suffered trauma from accidents, and others have suffered from depression because of their inabilities. According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, adults with impairments are nearly 5 times more likely than adults without disabilities to experience frequent mental anguish. We must find a way so that our fellow citizens can unleash their worries, and we, as a community, can find a solution to their problems. To ensure that they know they're being heard, I believe that we should execute and put into action various programs that are specifically made for the disabled community, as well as a program that gives them a say about their education and financial funds. We need to let them know that they are not alone, and we can find ways to accommodate their needs.

In summary, ableism in Canada should definitely be a subject civilians should enlighten themselves on. Whether we're talking about the educational difficulties they face, financial or mental issues, they're all very significant. As I stated earlier, there is so much potential our country has. It'd be such a shame to waste all of that knowledge, knowing that we could do incredible things. My vision of Canada might not be clear, but one thing I know for sure, is that I want us to determine our future together, as a community.

Bibliography

International Day of People with Disabilities. Accessed October 21, 2021. <https://idpwd.org/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed October 21, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/features/mental-health-for-all.html>

Global Citizen. Canadians With Disabilities Are Under Increased Financial Stress Due to COVID-19. Accessed October 23, 2021.

<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/canada-disabilities-financial-stress-covid-19/>

Statistics Canada. Accessed October 24 2021. <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/start>