



The rights of people with disabilities.



EasyRead version of:

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities on her visit to Canada (A/HRC/43/41/Add.2)



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Hard words are in **bold**. These words are explained at the end of this report.

1. About this report



Every year the **Special Rapporteur** on the rights of people with disabilities writes reports to tell the **United Nations** about **human rights** and people with disabilities.



The Special Rapporteur is Catalina Devandas-Aguilar. She helps countries understand how to make sure people with disabilities can get their human rights.



The United Nations is a group made up of 193 countries. They work together to make the world a safer and better place for everyone.



An international agreement called the United Nations **Disability Convention** says people with disabilities have the same human rights as everyone else.



In 2010 the Canadian government signed the Disability Convention. This means they must make sure people with disabilities get their human rights in Canada.



This is an Easy Read version of the Special Rapporteur's report (A/HRC/43/41/Add.2) about her visit to Canada in April 2019.



The Canadian government invited the Special Rapporteur to visit their country. She met government officials in many parts of Canada.



She also met experts on human rights, housing, transport, social care, education, justice and employment.



In every place she visited, the Special Rapporteur spoke to people with disabilities and their organisations. This included women and young girls and **indigenous people**.



The Special Rapporteur thanks everyone who helped her understand what life is like for people with disabilities in Canada.



2. About Canada



What is Canada like?

About 37 million people live in Canada.
5 out of every 100 are indigenous people.



Canada is one of the richest countries in the world.



Most people live long and healthy lives and only a small number are very poor.

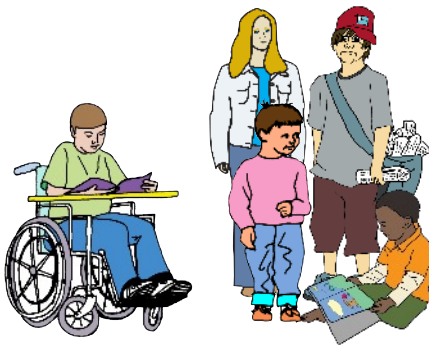


Canada is made up of 13 areas.



The Canadian government makes laws. But so do local governments. This means areas like Nova Scotia, Quebec, New Brunswick or Ontario might all have different laws about people with disabilities.

How many people with disabilities live there?



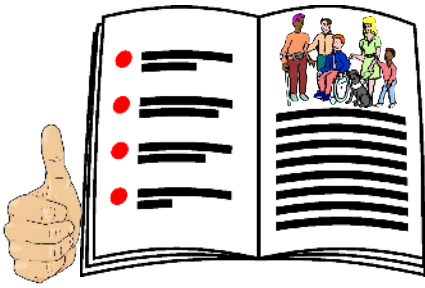
- one out of every 5 people over 15 years old has a disability



- the number of people with a disability is much higher in some areas than others



- women are more likely than men to have a disability.



The Special Rapporteur thinks the Canadian government has good information about people with a disability. Local governments should use this to help them plan services or make laws.



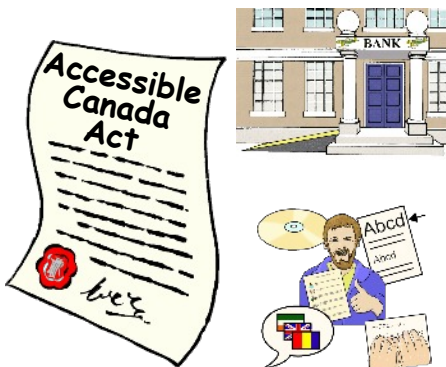
3. People with disabilities in Canada



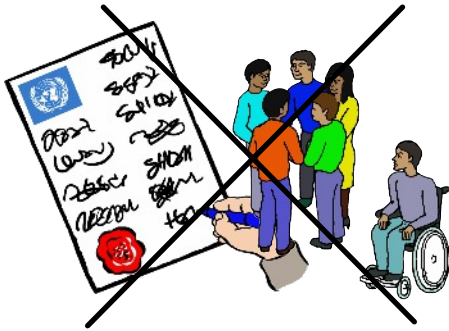
The Canadian government signed the Disability Convention in 2010. This means the government must make sure people with disabilities get their human rights in Canada.



They have also signed many international human rights agreements and few American human rights agreements, but not all of them.



And they have a law called the Accessible Canada Act about public buildings, employment, information and services being **accessible**.



Only 4 areas have specific local laws about disability **discrimination**. None of them are doing everything the Disability Convention says they should. This means people with disabilities have different rights in different parts of the country.



The Special Rapporteur thinks Canada needs a plan for national and local governments to work together to follow the Disability Convention.

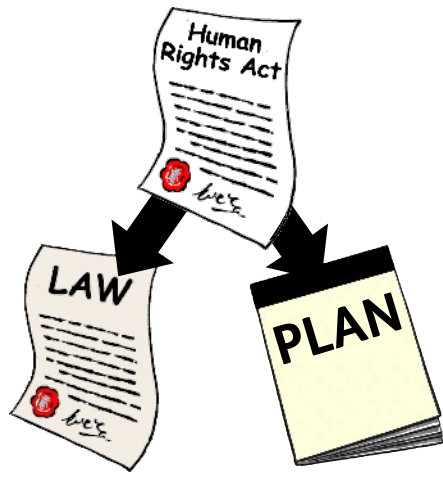


The Canadian **Human Rights Commission** checks whether people with disabilities have the rights the Disability Convention says they should. But this is difficult because local governments make their own laws about health, social care, education and **justice**.



She says it is important for an independent organisation like the Human Rights Commission to check what is happening in all parts of Canada.

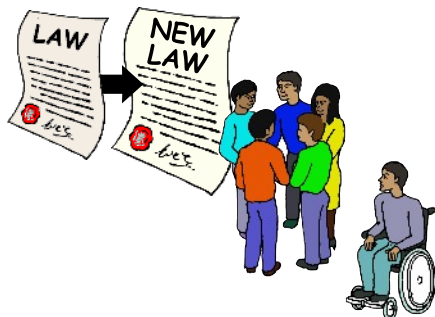
The Canadian government needs to:



- make sure all laws and plans think about the Disability Convention and human rights



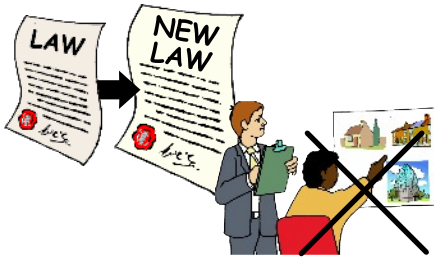
- check which national and local laws take away people with disabilities' human rights



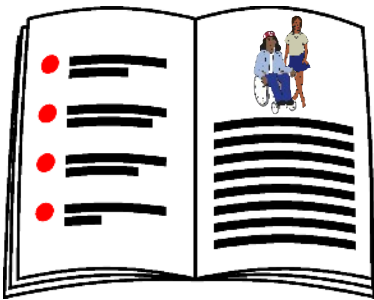
- work with local governments to change laws that discriminate against people with disabilities



- do more to protect people with disabilities from discrimination. At the moment people have to complain about this and spend a lot of time fighting for their rights



- change laws that take away a person's right to make their own decisions



- have better information about indigenous people with disabilities to plan better services for them



- work with the indigenous government to make sure the law protects all people with disabilities.

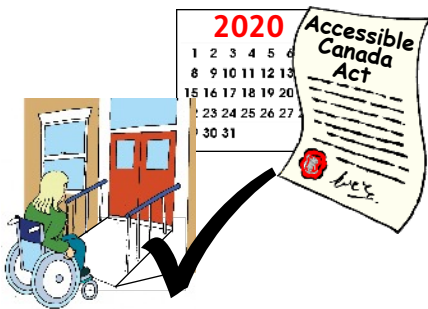


4. What makes things difficult?



Using public buildings and services

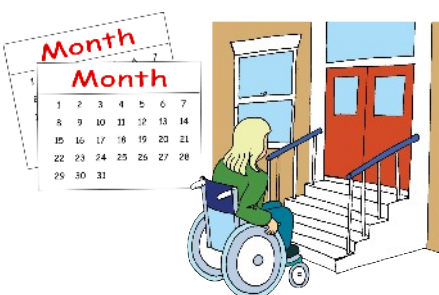
It is difficult for people with disabilities to use services like healthcare, schools and transport.



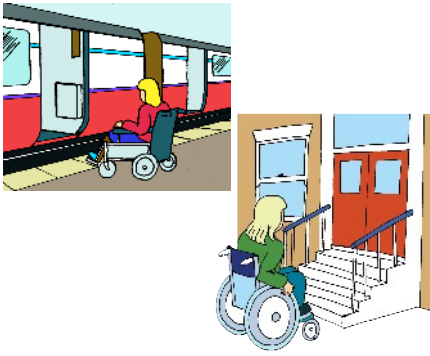
The Accessible Canada Act helps making public buildings, employment, information and services accessible for people with disabilities.



The Canadian government says that everything it buys must be accessible for people with disabilities. The Special Rapporteur thinks other countries can learn from this.

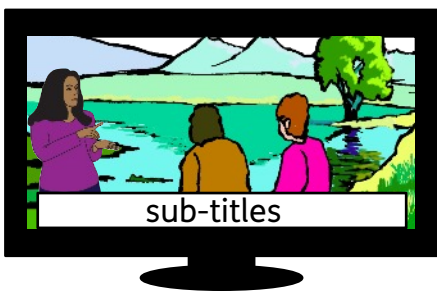


But some parts of Canada are not working as quickly as they should to make public buildings and services accessible.



Everywhere she visited the Special Rapporteur saw transport or buildings that people with disabilities could not use. Different parts of Canada work in different ways and many people with disabilities complain about discrimination.

Information and communication



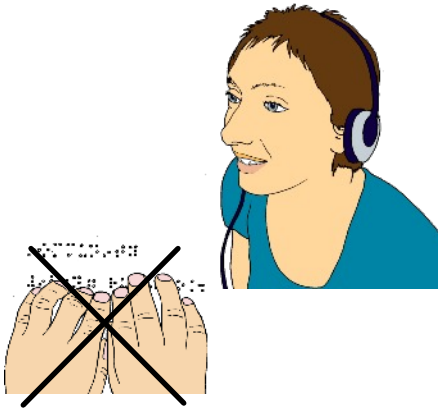
The law says American Sign Language, Quebec Sign Language and Indigenous sign language are official languages. TV programmes must have English and French **sub-titles** and **audio description**.



But there are not enough sign language interpreters in schools, health services, the courts and at public events. Some deaf students cannot learn sign language at school.



People said it is difficult to get EasyRead information or technology to help them communicate.



The Special Rapporteur was disappointed that many blind people listen to written words instead of using Braille. She thinks this might mean less people learn to read and write.

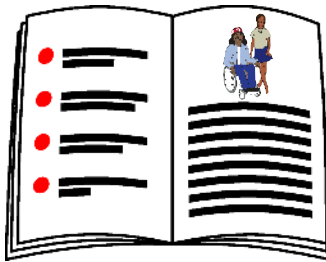


5. Human rights and people with disabilities



Indigenous people with disabilities

Indigenous people live on **reserves** or in the community.



There is not much information about people with disabilities living on reserves or from indigenous groups called Métis and Inuit.

2017						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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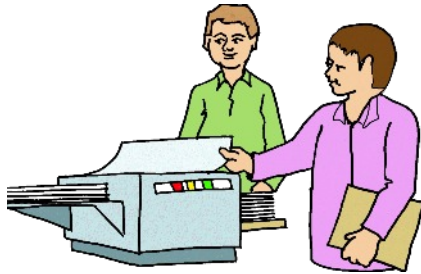
But in 2017 the government looked at indigenous people living away from the reserves and found:



- in every 100 indigenous people aged from 25 to 54 years old, more than 32 people had a disability



- indigenous women were most likely to have a disability



- indigenous people with disabilities were less likely to have a job



- indigenous people with disabilities, especially women, are often **abused** by someone at home.

The national, local and indigenous governments must make sure indigenous people get:



- health care



- transport to use health services



- community support and services



- **benefits**



- support to live on reserves in their own homes or different types of care.

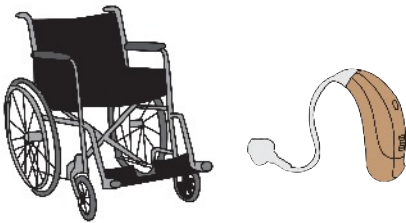


Canadian law says all indigenous children should have the services they need. This includes:

- healthcare



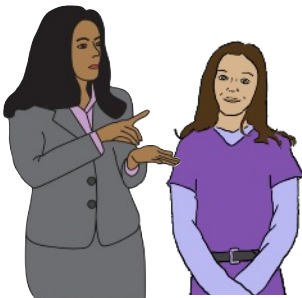
- social care



- equipment



- education



- communication support



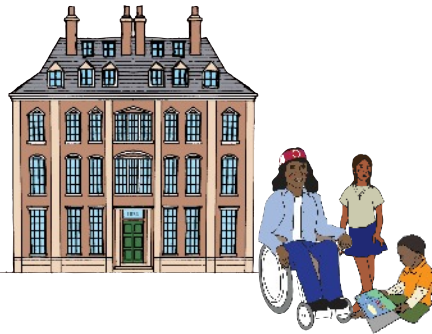
- speech therapy



- physiotherapy.



But this is not happening for many indigenous children and adults with disabilities.



They are often sent away from their homes and families to services that do not understand their culture and the way they choose to live.



Some families keep their child's disability secret so they do not get sent away.



The Special Rapporteur says national and local governments must work together to make sure all people with disabilities get the support they need.



Being involved in politics

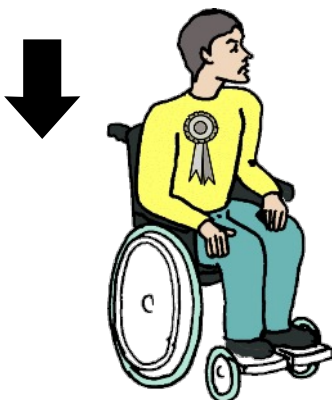
Politics means being involved in the way a country is governed. For example, voting or being part of local or national government.



The Disability Convention says people with disabilities have the right to be involved in public life and decisions that affect everyone.



In Canada everyone over 18 years old has the right to vote. Including people with mental health problems or learning disabilities.

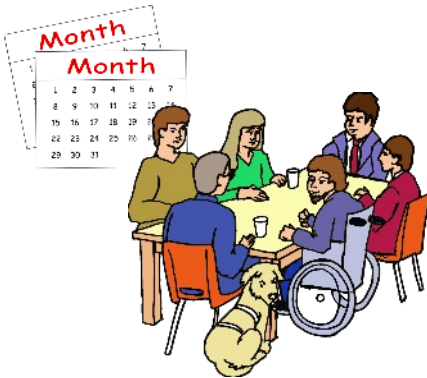


But very few people with disabilities are part of local or national government.



Being involved in decisions

In Canada, the government asks what people with disabilities and their organizations think about new laws or plans.

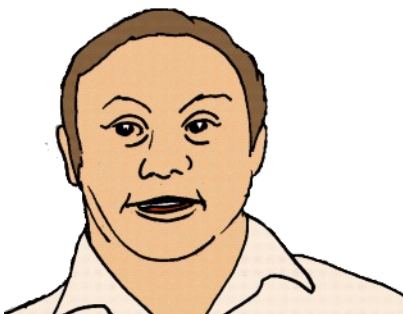


But people with disabilities want to be involved earlier in decisions that affect everyone.



The Special Rapporteur said local and national governments should do more to involve all people with disabilities. This should include:

- women and children with disabilities
- people with a learning disability

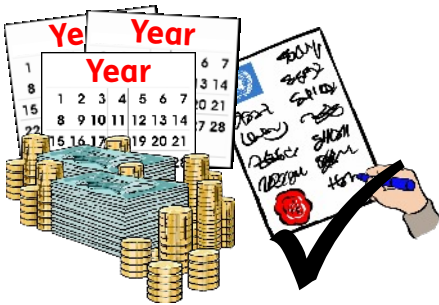




- people with mental health problems



- indigenous people with disabilities.



Over the next few years the Canadian government will give extra money to disability organisations to help make the Disability Convention work.



The Special Rapporteur thinks this is good. But she worries that money for disability organisations has not gone up in the past few years. It mostly goes to large national organisations, not smaller local groups.

Women with disabilities



Life is difficult for women with disabilities in Canada. They are twice as likely to be sexually assaulted than women without disabilities.



One in every 4 women with mental health problems or learning disabilities said they were assaulted before they were 15 years old.



Many are victims of **domestic violence**.



But there are not enough accessible **shelters** in Canada for women with disabilities to go and be safe.



The Canadian government has a system of analysing how their plans affect different people. This includes things like race, religion, age and disability.

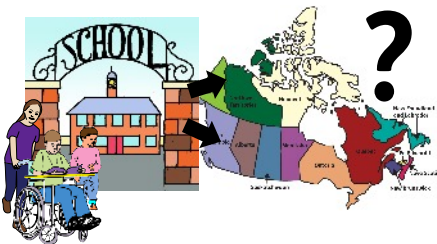


The Special Rapporteur thinks this is useful and could help the government try to stop discrimination against women with disabilities.

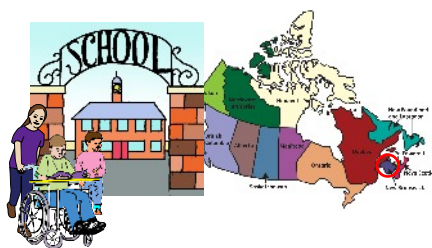


Going to school or college

The Disability Convention says people with disabilities have the right to go to the same regular school or regular college as people without disabilities.



In Canada, local governments have their own plans for education. This means whether people with disabilities have the chance to go to school or college depends on where they live.



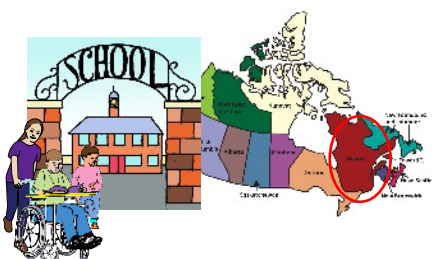
In New Brunswick all children with disabilities go to school with all the other children in town.



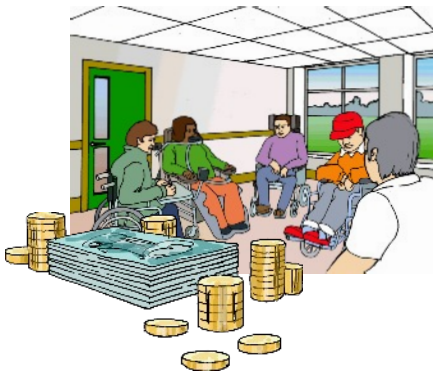
The Special Rapporteur says this is one of the best practices in the world and other parts of Canada and the world should learn from it.



Children with disabilities are going to school with children without disabilities in other parts of Canada. But most areas still have pupils in special classes or in schools just for people with disabilities.



The government of Quebec is supporting more students with disabilities to go to schools and colleges that everyone can use.



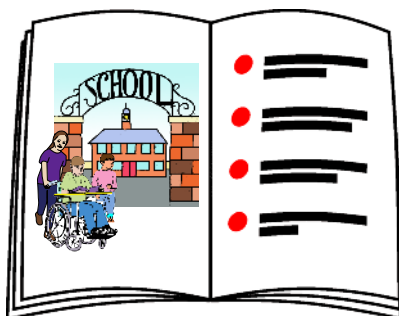
But they are also spending more money on separate classes or schools for students with disabilities.



Local and national governments should work together to support people with disabilities to go to school or college with people without disabilities.



This means looking at laws and plans and making sure students with disabilities have specially trained teachers and all the other support they need.



The Special Rapporteur said the Canadian government should have information about education services for students with disabilities in all parts of the country.



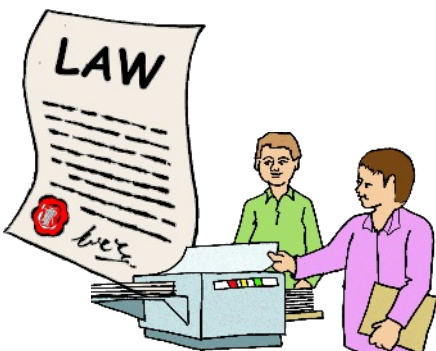
People with disabilities are less likely to finish university than people without disabilities.



In 2019 the government agreed to give students with disabilities bigger **loans** to pay for things like equipment and services.

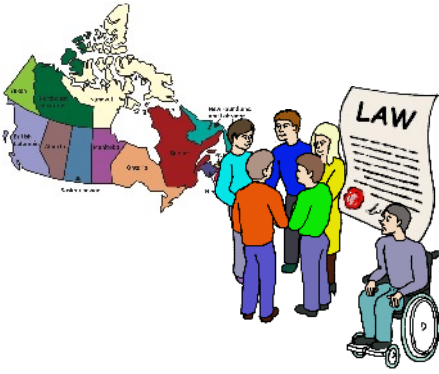


But this will only work if the government also get rid of the things that stop people with disabilities having the same chances as other people to learn. Starting from when they are very young.

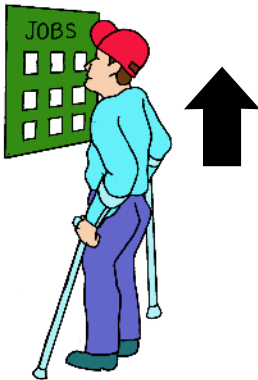


Having a job

Canadian law says people with disabilities must have the same chance as other people to work in public organisations.



Different parts of Canada have their own laws about discrimination against people with disabilities and about what employers must do to support them to work.



Nearly twice as many people with disabilities are unemployed than other people.



Many people with disabilities say they are discriminated against at work, find it hard to change jobs or cannot move into jobs that pay more money.



Some people work in special workshops for people with disabilities and do not have the chance to work anywhere else.



The government wants many more people with disabilities to work in public organisations. When the Special Rapporteur went to Canada 5 out of every 100 people working in public services were people with a disability.



They have a plan and money to give people training and support to have a job or set up their own business.



The Special Rapporteur says this is a good plan. But local governments could do more to help people with disabilities get and keep jobs in public and private organisations.



Social protection

Social protection is things that give everyone the same chances in life.

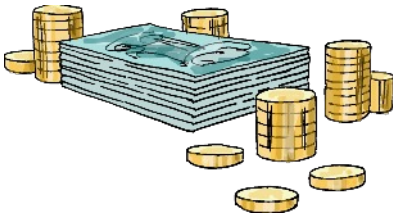


For example:

- having enough food



- basic healthcare



- money to help pay for things if you cannot work or earn enough.



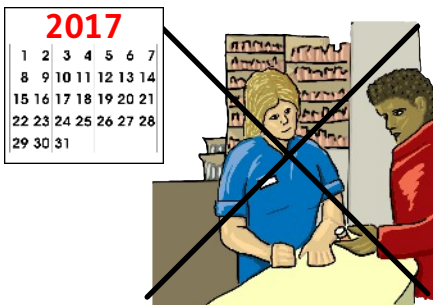
Many people with disabilities in Canada do not have enough money.



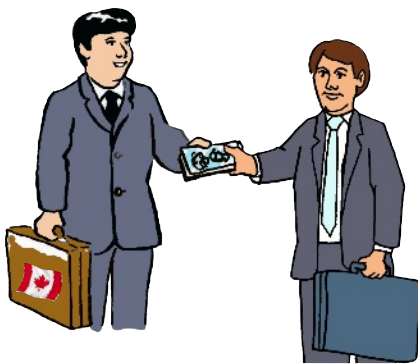
People with severe disabilities are usually much poorer than other people.



People with mental health problems or learning disabilities are also more likely to be poor and have nowhere to live.



In 2017 over a million and a half people with disabilities could not afford the equipment or medicines they needed.



The Canadian government gives local governments money for benefits and services.



This means people in different parts of the country might get different help and support.



This makes it difficult for people with disabilities to find out what help they can get.



People are **assessed** to see what help they can get. The assessment looks at:

- their disability



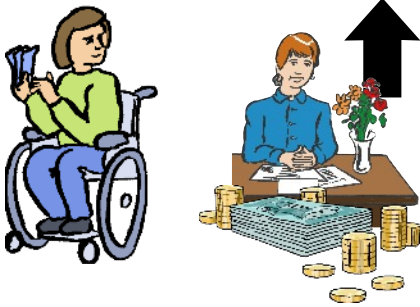
- how much money they have



- whether they could do paid work



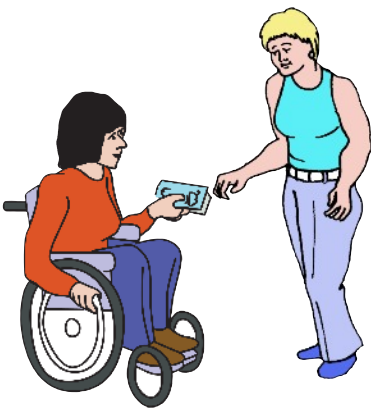
- what services and support they need.



If they do get benefits the money is only about a quarter of what most people earn each month.



The Canadian government has a plan to stop **poverty**. But it will not help people with disabilities as much as it could.



People with disabilities have to pay towards things like special transportation, medicines, or personal support.



The plan does not think about these extra costs when it says how much money people with disabilities need.



The Canadian government should look at how to make sure people with disabilities have enough money to live on.

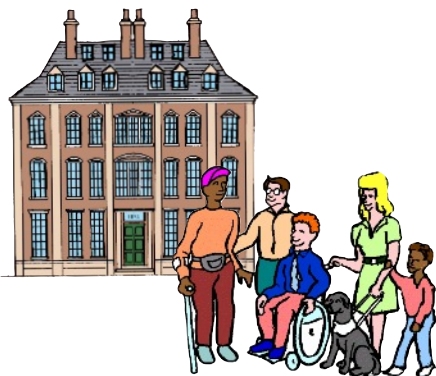


It should also look at how it decides who gets benefits and tells people about the help they can get.



Living independently in the community

The Disability Convention says people with disabilities should have support to live independently in the community.



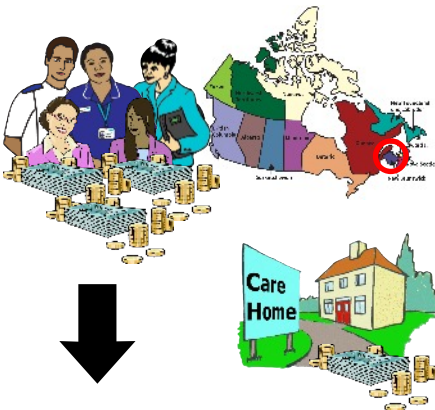
But the Special Rapporteur thinks too many adults and children with disabilities in Canada live in separate services away from other people.



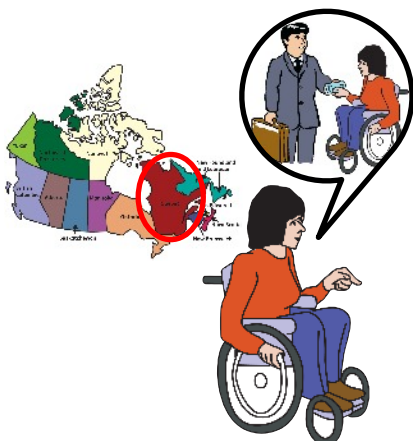
Over half a million people with disabilities live in hospitals, nursing homes or other care services.



This is because most parts of Canada do not have enough community services.



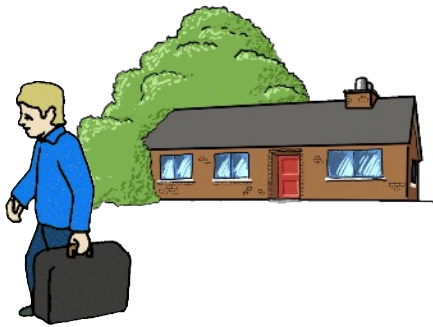
The government in Nova Scotia spends 3 times more on community services than residential care. But they still do not have enough services to support people to live independently in the community.



The same thing is happening in Quebec. But people with disabilities say the government should give them this money to buy the support they need in the community.



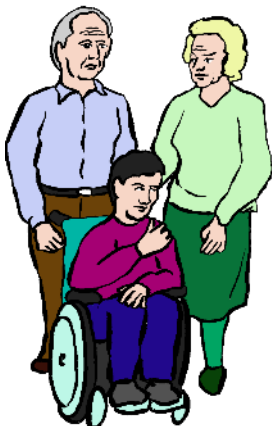
Some people in British Columbia and Ontario get money to plan and buy their own support. But there is not enough money for everyone.



People can lose this support if they move to another area.



There are not enough services for children and young people with disabilities and their families.



Often parents give up work to care for their child or they agree to the child having **foster care**.



When children reach 18 years old they might go into a nursing home for older people if their family cannot care for them at home.



The Canadian government has a new plan to build more accessible homes for people with disabilities.



The Special Rapporteur says this will only help if people have the services they need to support them to live in their own home.

The right to life



Canada has a law that says doctors, nurses and family members can help a person to die.



The law says this can only happen if a person has a medical problem that make them suffer and the person is likely to die.



The Special Rapporteur is worried about what this means for people with disabilities.



There are no rules to say people should have information about other treatment or care they could get.



She is worried that having no community services means some people choose to die because they do not want to live in a nursing home.

Health



People with disabilities have the right to good health care. They should not be **discriminated** against.



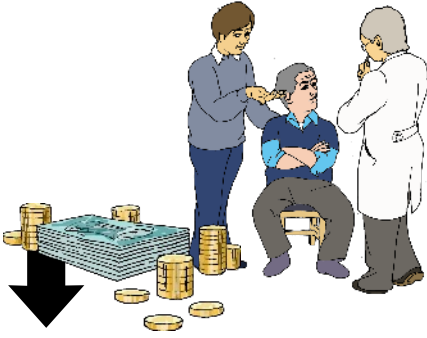
The Canadian government gives local governments the money to run healthcare services for everyone. Including indigenous people, **refugees** and people in prison.



Local areas also have their own **insurance** plans to help people get treatment or medicines that are not given by public healthcare services.



The Special Rapporteur thinks people get different health services depending on where they live.



In many areas there is not enough money for community mental health services or care for people who are dying.

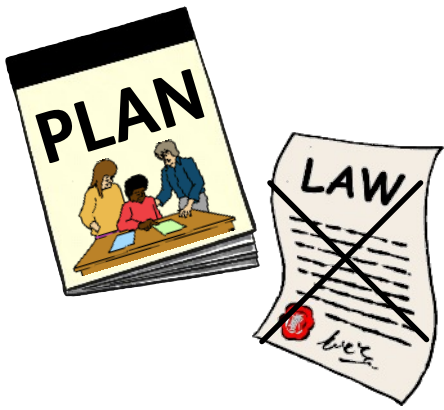


Each area has their own way of giving people **assistive technology** like wheelchairs, hearing aids, computers or doorbells and alarms. Many people with disabilities have to pay money towards these.

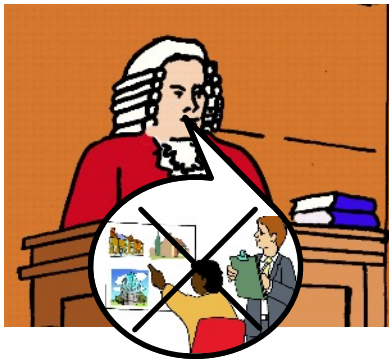
Making your own decisions



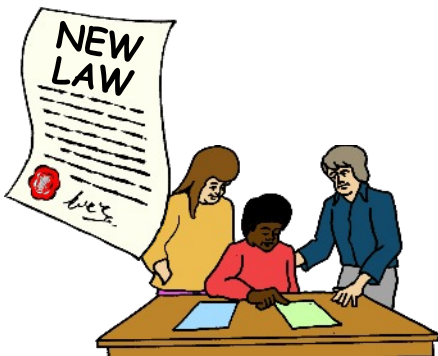
All people with a disability should be supported in making their own decision. Canada was one of the first countries to work on the idea of **supported decision-making**. This became part of the Disability Convention.



Local governments all have plans to give people with disabilities choice and control. But there is no national law to make sure that this works in the same way everywhere.



This means that the right to make decisions is taken away from many people with disabilities. This happens because a court chooses another person to make decisions with them, or for them.

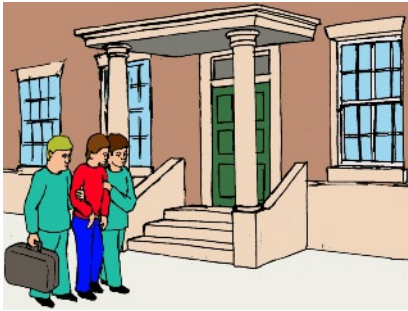


Some parts of Canada have new laws about supporting adults to make their own decisions. But many judges, lawyers and families do not understand this and still choose a **guardian** to make decisions for the person.

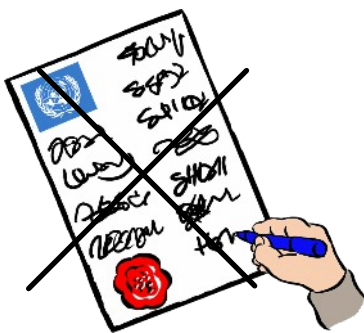


The Special Rapporteur thinks the Canadian government should agree to **Article 12** of Disability Convention. This says that all people with a disability should be supported and involved when making decisions that affect them.

Treating people without their permission



In Canada, many people with mental health problems are kept in hospital and treated when they do not agree to it.



This is against the Disability Convention.



In most areas a person can be given treatment they do not agree to, when a doctor says they need it. This can happen in hospital or in the community.



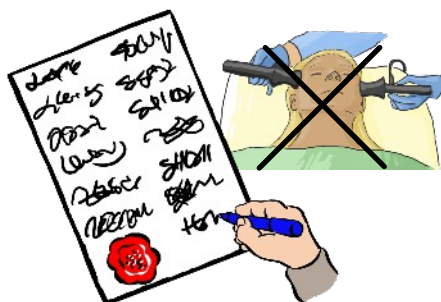
More people with mental health problems are being kept in hospital. Not because they need treatment but because there are not enough community services.



People with mental health problems told the Special Rapporteur they were not told about different treatments. They were frightened they would be forced to go to hospital if they did not agree.



Many people are kept away from other patients and given medicines to keep them quiet.



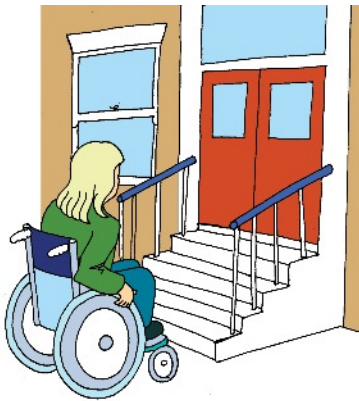
The Special Rapporteur said the Canadian government must sign the UN Optional protocol to the Convention against **Torture** and set up independent checks of mental health services.

Using the courts and other justice systems

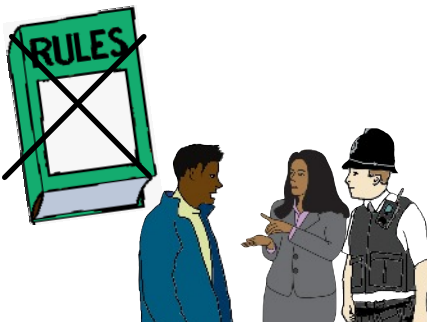


Many people with disabilities go to the police and courts in Canada because they want to complain about discrimination.

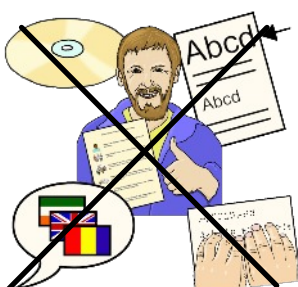
The law says that people with disabilities have the same right as everyone else to use the police or courts. But this is difficult because:



- people sometimes cannot get into police or court buildings



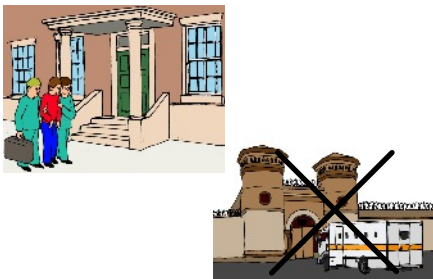
- there are no rules on how to assist people with disabilities when they go to court or to the police



- people do not get information they understand or have support to communicate.



Different parts of Canada have their own rules about who can get money to help them take a case to court. This is complicated and confusing.



Some people with disabilities are kept in hospital instead of being sent to prison if the court decides they have a mental health problem or learning disability.



They can stay in hospital for longer than they would in prison.



There are too many people with mental health problems and learning disabilities in prison. This can be because people do not have jobs, a place to live or enough money.



The Special Rapporteur thinks Canada needs better rules to protect people with disabilities who are **accused** of a crime. She wants to know how the government could support people with disabilities who should not be in hospital or prison.

Working with the UN and other countries



The Canadian government gives money to other countries to help get rid of poverty and protect the human rights of people with disabilities.



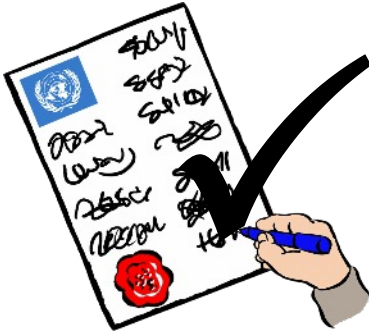
They should only give money to projects that include people with disabilities and treat them fairly. They should also involve people with disabilities in planning these projects and agreeing which countries it helps.



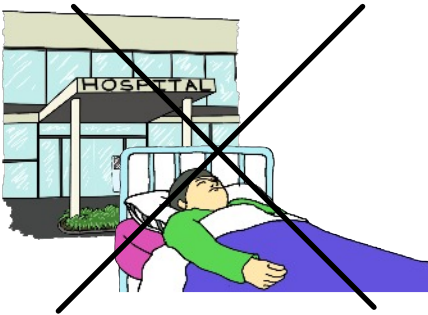
The government should help other countries understand why this is important. They should also collect good information about how the money they give helps and involves people with disabilities.



6. What happens next?



Canada should be able to make the Disability Convention work.



But the government must do more to support people's human rights and stop treating people with disabilities as if they are ill.

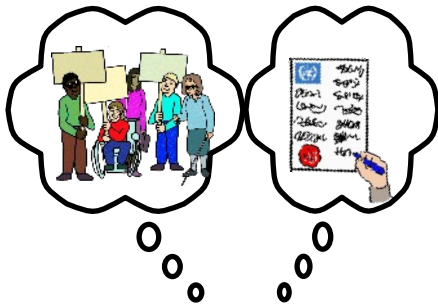


This is difficult because each local government makes its own rules. This means people with disabilities get different services and support in different areas and it is hard to get their human rights.



Now Canada must:

- have better laws that give people with disabilities the same rights as everyone else



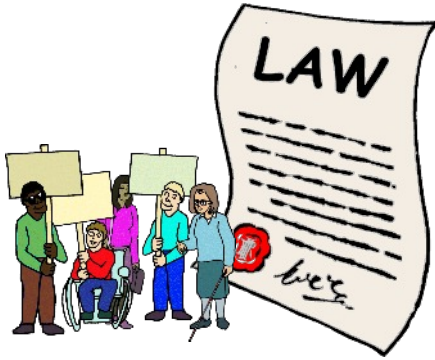
- think about human rights and the Disability Convention in all their plans and laws.



The Special Rapporteur will work with the government on this. She wants Canada to be a place where people with disabilities are included and treated fairly.

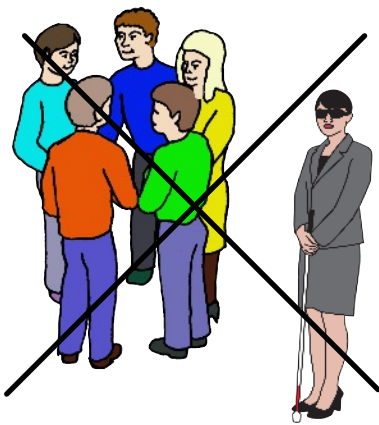


7. Canada should work on these things

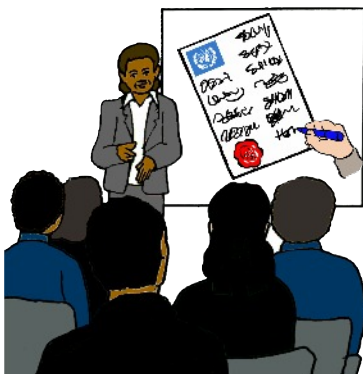


The Special Rapporteur thinks the Canadian government should:

- make sure all laws and plans include the human rights of people with disabilities



- get rid of things that stop people with disabilities from being involved and included



- make sure everyone who works in national or local government understands the Disability Convention and human rights for people with disabilities.

Better laws

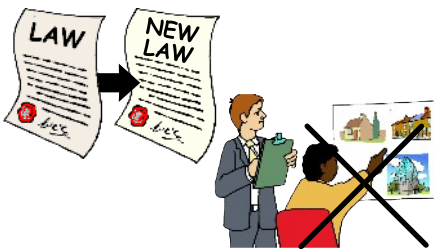
The government should:



- sign all the international human rights agreements, including those on **migrant** workers, older people, children and stopping torture



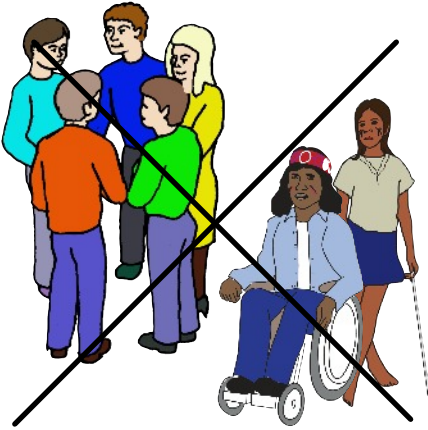
- check whether laws about mental health take away people's human rights



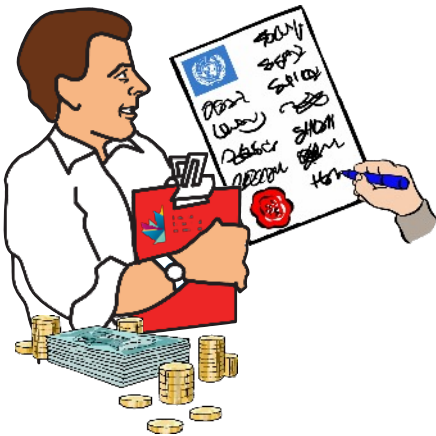
- change laws that take away the rights of people with disabilities to make their own decisions



- have a good national plan to make sure the Disability Convention is used in all parts of Canada



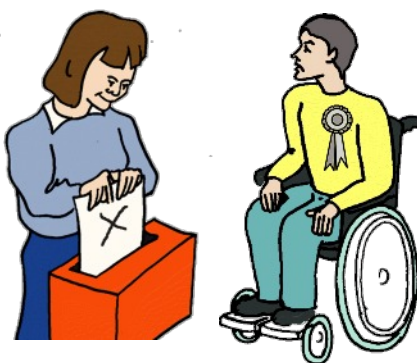
- stop discrimination against indigenous people and make sure they have services that are right for them



- give the Human Rights Commission enough money so it can check how the Disability Convention is working.

Having the same rights as other people

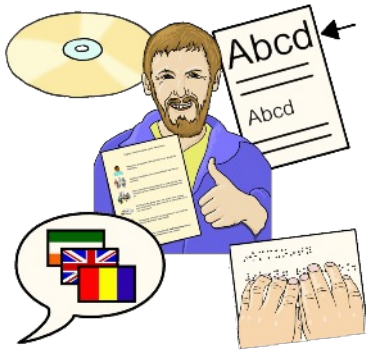
The government should:



- get rid of things that stop people with disabilities doing the same things as everyone else

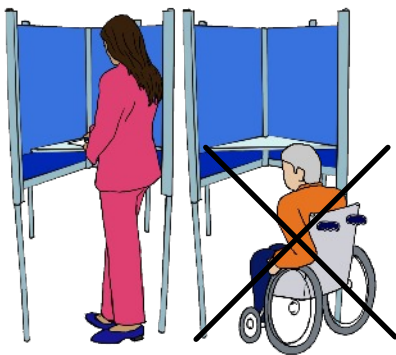


- have a plan and set aside money to make the Accessible Canada Act work



- make sure people with disabilities get information in the different ways they need it.

Being involved



The government should:

- get rid of the things that limit the right to vote of people with disabilities and their right to be elected



- give groups and organisations of people with disabilities money to involve and speak for more people



- make sure all people with disabilities can understand and get involved in laws and plans that affect everyone. Stop discrimination against any groups that find it difficult to be involved.

School and college



The government should:

- write a plan for all schools and colleges to have the buildings, staff and equipment to support children with disabilities properly
- make sure students with disabilities have the same support and chances to go to college or university in every part of Canada.



Having a job

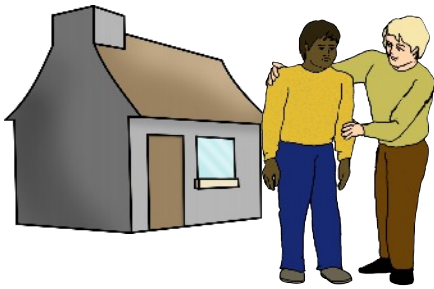
The government should:

- help **employers** understand how to change things so people with disabilities have the same chance as other people to work and do well.

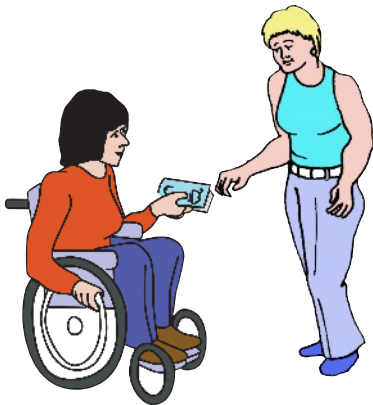


Social protection

The government should:



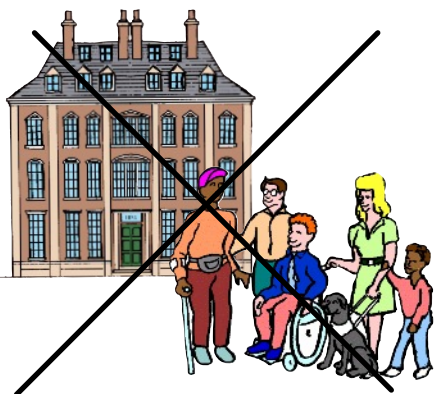
- make sure social protection gives people with disabilities the support they need, wherever they live



- make sure benefits give people with disabilities enough money to live on and pay for the equipment they need.

Living independently in the community

The government should:



- stop sending people with disabilities to institutions away from other people



- plan for all people with disabilities to have a home and support to live in their community



- work on plans that give people with disabilities more choice and control over their services



- give families more support to care for children with disabilities at home.

The right to life

The government should:



- look into whether people with disabilities who are in institutions are pressured to choose to die



- make sure people don't choose to die just because they don't have the care they need

Health



The government should:

- make it easier for indigenous people with disabilities to use health services near their homes



- give people with disabilities free or affordable assistive technology.

Being treated equally by the law, free and safe

The government should:



- get rid of laws that take away the right to make decisions about going to hospital, treatment and medicines



- have better community services that respect rights



- give money to organisations to support and involve people with disabilities in making their own decisions



- have independent ways to check that people do not have their freedom taken away by hospitals or mental health services.

Using the courts and justice system

The government should:



- make sure people with a disability who are accused of a crime have the same rights as everyone else



- say how to support people with disabilities to use the police and courts



- have money to help people with disabilities take a case to court.

Working with other countries

The government should:



- talk about rights and people with disabilities in all their plans and projects. In Canada and in other countries



- only give money to projects that include people with disabilities and treat them fairly.



8. What the words mean

Abuse - To hurt, frighten or upset someone on purpose.

Accessible - Easy to use or understand.

Accused - The person who the police think did a crime.

Assess - Find out what kind of support someone needs.

Article - The different parts of the Disability Convention are called articles.

Assistive technology - Switches or other equipment that help you communicate or do things.

Audio description - Extra sound on a TV programme that describes what is happening for blind people.

Benefits - Money the government gives to people who need help because they have a disability or cannot work.

Domestic violence - To be threatened or hurt by someone in your family or by someone who live with.

Disability Convention - A set of rules that countries agree to follow to give people with disabilities the same human rights as everyone else.

Discriminate - To treat someone badly or unfairly because of who they are. For instance because of their disability.

Employers - Companies or organisations that give people jobs.

Foster care - When social care services arrange for a child to live with another person or family if their own family cannot care for them. Foster carers are trained and checked by the local council.

Guardian - Someone who takes decisions for another person.

Human Rights – Basic rights and freedoms that should happen for every person in the world. For example to be treated fairly, equally and with respect.

Human Rights Commission - A public organisation that looks into and protects human rights.

Indigenous people - People who originally settled in a country or area. They sometimes have their own language and culture, different from the rest of the country.

Insurance - A way for people to buy protection so they get money if they lose something or cannot work anymore.

Loan - To borrow money from someone or from a bank.

Justice - Organisations like the police and courts that deal with people who commit crimes or who want to get to their rights.

Migrant - Someone who moves from one country to another.

Politics - Being involved in the way a country is governed. For example, voting or being part of local or national government.

Refugee - Someone who has to leave their country because of war or something else that means they are in danger.

Reserve - A piece of land that is set aside for indigenous people to live on safely.

Shelter - A safe place for adults and their children to live if they are victims of domestic abuse.

Social protection – Things that give everyone the same chances in life. For example, having enough food, basic healthcare, going to school or money to help pay for things.

Special Rapporteur – A person working for the UN who helps countries understand what they need to do to make sure people with disabilities get their rights.

Sub-titles - Words at the bottom of a television picture to help deaf people know what people are saying.

Supported decision-making - When supporters help a person with a disability understand, make, and communicate their own choices.

Torture - Deliberately hurting or abusing someone in a cruel way.

United Nations (UN) – An organisation with 193 countries that work together to make the world a better and safer place for everyone.



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Ref ISL178 19. December 2019.

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