



## **Health NGOs endorse premier think tank's roadmap for economic integration of Canadians with serious illness**

**Toronto, ON – September 3, 2015** – The Canadian Caregiver Coalition (CCC) and Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada (MS Society) are pleased with the recommendations in the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP)'s report, titled "Leaving Some Behind: What Happens When Workers Get Sick." This report highlights the need for a fundamental renewal of Canada's income, disability and employment support system and calls on the federal government, and roundtable participants to champion the renewal. This report was based on a sponsored discussion by the MS Society, Canadian Cancer Society and Canadian Caregiver Coalition, on the burden and household impact of serious illness in Canada which included 33 participants from academia, think tanks, government, employers, and private insurance along with 7 health NGO's. The meeting took place this past June in Ottawa and was convened by the Institute for Research on Public Policy

"The burdens faced by Canadians with serious illness and their loved ones need to matter to governments. This report is the first major effort to quantify the issue of employable, ill Canadians being excluded from the labour market by public policy," says Neil Pierce, National Vice President, Government Relations, MS Society of Canada. "It speaks to the impacts and high cost in the billions to Canadian households, governments, and employers. And perhaps more importantly, this report's recommendations show a constructive way out of this predicament. It's life-changing."

"Key issues are outlined in this report such as the exhaustion of short-term benefits without access to longer-term supports and poor coordination among public programs, which echo what people living with multiple sclerosis have told us about their interaction with support systems when they have needed them," says Sylvia Leonard, Vice President, Programs and Services, MS Society of Canada.

Containing both long-term directions and immediate reforms, the report calls on the federal government to act as a champion for these identified and necessary improvements. Reforms include improving the coordination of basic definitions and program parameters across the disability support system and enhancing the breadth and quality of disability insurance coverage within the labour market. The federal government can extend the duration of EI benefits and create a flexible work-sharing program, so that a person can reduce work hours while receiving EI income. Additionally, it can create a system for the expert dissemination of information and hands-on support to employers on roles, best practices and resources when an employee is diagnosed or have to care for someone with an illness and may require time away or accommodations so they can continue to work.

"For family caregivers this report acknowledges that, just like those who are sick, job protection, flexible work arrangements and income replacement while on leave are critical for helping them balance their work and care responsibilities," says Nadine Henningsen, President, Canadian Caregiver Coalition.

The sponsor-NGOs and nearly 90 partner organizations will work closely with the federal government and roundtable participants to ensure no one who has a serious illness or disability, chronic or episodic, who needs supports is left behind.

For more details and to download the report, the public may visit [irpp.org](http://irpp.org).

The partner organizations include: Canadian Cancer Society, Neurological Health Charities Canada, Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work, Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation, DisAbled Women's Network of Canada, and Health Charities Coalition of Canada.



CANADIAN CAREGIVER COALITION • COALITION CANADIENNE DES PROCHES AIDANTS

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### **About the Canadian Caregiver Coalition**

Established in 2000, the Canadian Caregiver Coalition (CCC) is a virtual alliance of diverse partner organizations that work collectively, and autonomously, to identify and respond to the needs of caregivers in Canada. Our mission is to enhance the quality of life for family caregivers through advocacy and synergistic partnerships. Together we strive to achieve our vision of “a Canada that recognizes, respects and values the integral role of family caregivers in society.” [www.ccc-ccan.ca](http://www.ccc-ccan.ca)

### **About multiple sclerosis and the MS Society of Canada**

Canada has the highest rate of multiple sclerosis in the world. MS is a chronic, often disabling disease of the central nervous system comprising the brain, spinal cord and optic nerve. It is one of the most common neurological diseases affecting young adults in Canada. Most people with MS are diagnosed between the ages of 15 and 40, and the unpredictable effects of MS last for the rest of their lives. The MS Society provides services to people with MS and their families and funds research to find the cause and cure for this disease. Please visit [mssociety.ca](http://mssociety.ca) or call 1-800-268-7582 to make a donation or for more information. Join the conversation and connect with the MS community online. Find the MS Society on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) or like our page on [Facebook](#).

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