

# An Open Letter to Prime Minister Harper

February 16, 2007

The Right Honorable Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6  
Email: pm@pm.gc.ca

Dear Prime Minister:

We, the undersigned, have followed with pride the excellent work by Canadian officials and civil society members at the United Nations where for the past 5 years Canada has taken a central leadership role in the elaboration of a new Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

We applaud Canada's leadership at the United Nations on this issue. Through law reform and jurisprudence, Canada has a long history of making human rights protections meaningful to people with disabilities, and Canada brought this experience to the UN discussions. This important new human rights convention has been the beneficiary of Canada's thirty years of leadership and innovation on disability issues, as well as our strong record in other areas of international law.

Canada's participation in all of the meetings of the Ad Hoc committee to draft this historic document has been exemplary and a source of pride for us all. *In light of this expansive history of leadership we were disappointed to learn that your government has decided not to participate at this crucial moment in the life of the new Convention, and we are writing to urge the Canadian Government to reconsider its position and participate in the signing ceremony for this historic Convention on March 30, 2007.*

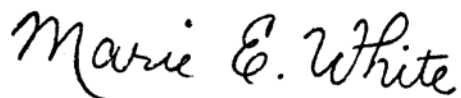
While we appreciate and support the need for ongoing consultations with Provincial and Territorial Governments, in particular with regard to ratification, we believe that the ongoing Federal/Provincial/Territorial consultations undertaken by the Canadian delegation throughout the five-year Convention negotiating process has been sufficient to enable Canada to become a signatory to the Convention. We recognize the need for further consultation in advance of ratification and are hopeful the consultation process will be open and transparent and inclusive of the disability community at the provincial/territorial and national levels.

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Prime Minister, people with disabilities, their families and their allies in Canada and around the world have steadfastly supported Canada's participation in the development of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

With respect, it is time now for your government to support us, by taking its place with other leading countries and signing the Convention on March 30, with a view to ratifying it as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,



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M. Gilles Duceppe  
Mr. Jack Layton

Organizational Supporters:

Action Canada for Population and Development, Jane Gauthier, Associate Executive Director  
Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians, John Rae, President  
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Amnistie internationale (section canadienne francophone), André Paradis, Directeur  
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British Columbia Coalition of People with Disabilities, Al Hanet, President  
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