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Dear \_\_\_\_\_

As a supporter of Canadians with Down Syndrome, I am writing to urge you and your party to prioritize the rights, dignity, and inclusion of people with disabilities in your platform in the upcoming federal election.

Canada has made progress toward inclusion, but individuals with disabilities still face significant barriers in education, employment, healthcare, and independent living. The next federal government has a unique opportunity to enact policies that ensure full participation and equal opportunities for the millions of Canadians living with a disability.

### **1. Income Security and the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB)**

The CDB is a step forward, but it must go further to prevent disability-related poverty.

I urge your party to:

- Increase payments so recipients are above the poverty line, accounting for the additional costs of disability.
- Expand eligibility so all people with disabilities living in poverty, including those with Down Syndrome, can receive support.
- Ensure the benefit remains tax-exempt and is protected from provincial clawbacks.

### **2. Disability Tax Credit (DTC) Reform**

Families and individuals with Down Syndrome struggle to access essential financial support. I ask your party to:

- Automatically approve the DTC for people with lifelong disabilities.
- Eliminate unnecessary reassessments for permanent conditions.
- Cover the costs of professional assessments required for DTC applications.

### **3. Inclusive Employment Pathways**

People with Down Syndrome deserve equal access to meaningful paid employment.

I urge your party to:

- Ensure all federally funded employment programs include individuals with Down Syndrome.
- Invest in job training and supported employment programs.

#### **4. Inclusive Education**

Too often, school boards cite budget and staffing limitations as reasons for placing students with Down Syndrome in segregated classrooms. I urge your party to:

- Ensure federal education policies support students with Down Syndrome.
- Mandate inclusive education programs that provide individualized support in regular neighborhood classrooms.

#### **5. Healthcare Equity & Access**

People with Down Syndrome face unique medical needs but often experience gaps in care. I ask your party to:

- Improve training for healthcare providers on Down Syndrome-specific needs.
- Ensure timely access to specialized medical care, including cardiac and early dementia screenings.
- Invest in research and resources to improve health outcomes for people with Down Syndrome.

#### **6. Accessible and Affordable Housing**

Independent living should be an option for all people with disabilities, including those with Down Syndrome. I ask your party to:

- Increase investment in housing that is both affordable and accessible.
- Mandate accessibility standards for all new federally funded housing projects.
- Develop and enforce Accessibility Standards Canada's housing standards, including retrofitting existing homes to meet accessibility needs.
- Support community-based living options over institutional care.

As you develop your platform, I urge your party to engage directly with individuals with Down Syndrome and their families. Your leadership can help build a Canada where people with Down Syndrome have full and equal opportunities to thrive in their communities, workplaces, and cultural life.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues further and learn how your party plans to address them. Thank you for your time and commitment to making Canada a more inclusive country for all.

**It was never okay: Forward, not backward.**

Sincerely,

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