

# In from the Margins, Part II: **REDUCING BARRIERS TO SOCIAL INCLUSION AND SOCIAL COHESION**



Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs,  
Science and Technology

The Honourable Kelvin K. Ogilvie, Chair

The Honourable Art Eggleton, P.C., Deputy Chair





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

In November 2011, the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology received an order of reference from the Senate “to examine and report on social inclusion and cohesion in Canada.” Continuing from its earlier study on social conditions in Canadian cities, the committee built upon the testimony from more than 170 witnesses, who contributed to the earlier report, *In from the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness*, tabled in December 2009. With testimony from more than 65 witnesses over two Parliaments, the committee has now completed its second report, entitled *In from the Margins, Part II: Reducing Barriers to Social Inclusion and Social Cohesion*.

The committee notes that exclusion remains a challenge to overcome. With this report, the committee’s intention is to highlight successful efforts by all sectors of Canadian society to engage more fully those Canadians who, for a variety of reasons, find themselves on the margins and lacking in influence over the major decisions affecting their lives. Through evidence garnered from research and testimony by witnesses, and by building on examples of success, the committee identifies ongoing barriers to inclusion and offers recommendations designed to try to make Canada more inclusive and cohesive. The committee also notes that well-intentioned programs may have the effect of exacerbating exclusion. Recommendations are also directed to reforming programs to minimize this possibility.

As in its earlier study, and the committee’s report on access to post-secondary education, statistical evidence, testimony during hearings and written submissions identified particular groups that are vulnerable to economic and social marginalization. These groups include recent immigrants, visible minorities, religious minorities, sexual minorities, urban Aboriginal peoples, and individuals with disabilities. In addition, the committee heard that youth and seniors also face barriers to social inclusion in their communities. For each of these groups, the committee learned about particular barriers, current initiatives intended to reduce and eliminate these barriers, and persistent challenges that remain. The committee has made recommendations to support these groups in overcoming remaining hurdles to their inclusion, with a particular focus on income mobility as a route to greater equality and inclusion.

The committee also recognizes that urban safety and upward income mobility are prerequisites to social inclusion, and has included these themes in this study.

In this Executive Summary, recommendations are abbreviated, but are understood to be directed to the Government of Canada and to be cognizant of existing programs and operational constraints.





## CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

The committee recognizes that some individuals, particularly those in marginalized groups, do not enjoy full participation in the economic, social, cultural and political dimensions of their communities. In the absence of indicators that define and measure inclusion, the concept of exclusion is often used, but not always with common meaning. However, the committee learned of particular groups at the greatest risk of exclusion: Aboriginal peoples, newcomers to Canada, people with disabilities, low-income households, other minorities (including religious, visible and sexual minorities), and the young and the old in Canada. The committee is also aware that individuals who are members of more than one of these groups have an even higher risk of exclusion.

In its hearings, the committee learned of the consequences of continued exclusion. Growing income inequality, for example, can lead to a divided society, with the disadvantaged becoming organized and vocal, with general strikes and disruptive protests. Other witnesses identified higher rates of unemployment for excluded individuals and groups, and a greater negative impact on these groups in times of economic recession.



In addition, witnesses told the committee that socially excluded individuals and groups are more likely to be victims of crime, mental illness, addiction and poor health. They are also more likely to experience family break-up, to join gangs (especially among youth), to distrust police and to face greater barriers to education.

## RECENT IMMIGRANTS

Canada welcomes approximately 250,000 newcomers a year as permanent residents, many of whom become citizens over time. While historically Canada's immigration came primarily from western European countries, this trend began to change in the 1960s, with immigrants from Asia outnumbering those of European origin by 1980. By the mid-1990s, immigrants were the major source of population growth, outnumbering the natural increase in population in Canada.

Increasingly, newcomers also join racial minorities within Canada, and may be less skilled in either of Canada's official languages. The committee heard that highly educated recent immigrants face barriers to working in their fields of expertise, and, in contrast to historical trends, immigrants in general are not achieving the same levels of economic returns as Canadian-born citizens.

The committee heard that selection processes are being modified to place greater emphasis on official language proficiency, that efforts are continuing to expedite the recognition of the foreign-earned credentials of skilled immigrants and that pre-departure services are being expanded and have shown greater promise in facilitating the social and economic integration of recent immigrants. The committee recommends enhancement of these initiatives to support greater social inclusion.



For recent immigrants who need support to develop official language proficiency, the committee recommends that access to these services, especially for parents with young children, be expanded.

The committee learned that some recent immigrants are settling in communities that are at greater risk of exclusion because of poverty and the absence of links to employment and social engagement. To overcome these challenges, the committee recommends partnerships with municipal and provincial governments to expand the existing Local Immigration Partnership model, in order to support newcomers and their neighbourhoods that are at heightened risk of exclusion. The committee also recommends that such partnerships be used to promote both civic awareness and civic participation among recent immigrants.



## VISIBLE MINORITIES

As noted above, an increasing proportion of newcomers to Canada are visible minorities, who now represent a majority of immigrants. While the presence of visible minorities pre-dates Confederation, the committee learned that visible minorities continue to face challenges to full participation in Canadian society, particularly with respect to employment opportunities. As the

visible minority population increased by more than a million people from 2001 to 2005, the projections are that by 2031, almost one-quarter of the Canadian population will be non-Caucasian.

Labour force participation rates for visible minorities are lower than for non-visible minorities, with an unemployment rate of 8.6% in 2006, more than two percentage points higher than that for non-visible minority people. Those visible minority individuals who are employed earn 81.4 cents for every dollar paid to non-visible minority earners. Low incomes, precarious employment and higher rates of unemployment among visible minorities, most of whom live in Canada's cities, result in higher levels of poverty relative to non-visible minorities.

Witnesses told the committee that higher levels of participation by visible minorities in organizations that contribute to the development of public policy at all levels was an important step in increasing social inclusion for this population. The committee agrees and calls for federal government support initiatives to achieve this goal. Witnesses also told the committee that persistent racism plays a role in the social exclusion of this population; the committee recommends a continuation of federal efforts to combat racism and encourage provincial and territorial governments to develop a national comprehensive education policy to challenge and address racism, other forms of intolerance, and the bullying that can result.

Although the *Public Service Employment Act* requires the representation of visible minorities in the federal public service hiring and retention practices to achieve participation that reflect their labour force availability, the committee learned that the percentage of visible minority employees in the public service is slightly below their availability in the labour market. The committee recommends an acceleration of hiring and staffing process for visible minorities and other groups identified in



the Act, and that federally regulated industries be invited to hire and retain members of these groups in proportion to their workforce availability.



## RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

In recent years, the percentage of Canadians who identify themselves as Protestant or Catholic has remained high, but the composition of those identifying themselves as adhering to a minority denomination increased substantially from 1991 to 2001. Most notably, there was an increase of approximately 90% or more among Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs. Despite Canada's history of religious tolerance, the committee learned that almost 400 hate crimes reported to police in 2010 were motivated by religious intolerance. Of these crimes, 55% targeted members of the Jewish faith, 14% targeted Muslims, and 14% targeted Catholics. The remaining hate crimes were committed against other religious groups, such as Sikhs, Hindus and Buddhists.

The committee noted the protections offered by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the establishment of a permanent federal program to provide financial support to groups at risk of hate-motivated crime.

## URBAN ABORIGINAL CANADIANS

The committee heard of the persistent barriers faced by Canada's Aboriginal peoples living in cities, including poorer health, education, social and economic outcomes relative to their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

The committee also learned that the demographic profile of Aboriginal peoples continues to show a younger population than among Canadians in general, and an increase in the proportion of older Aboriginal peoples as well. The 2006 Census found that the median age of the Aboriginal population was 27 years, compared to 40 years for non-Aboriginal people. While seniors aged 65 and older make up only 5% of the Aboriginal population (among non-Aboriginal people, seniors make up approximately 13% of the population), the percentage of senior Aboriginal people doubled between 1996 and 2006.

The diversity among Aboriginal peoples – comprising First Nations, Inuit and Métis – was highlighted in testimony before the committee. The committee also heard of a growing proportion of Aboriginal peoples moving to cities, and the widely varying proportion of Aboriginal peoples among Canadian cities. Although the legal interpretations of the definition of “Aboriginal” under the Constitution have been the subject of litigation that continues, witnesses told the committee that determining jurisdiction should not delay action to address the needs of Aboriginal peoples in our cities.

The committee and its witnesses also focused on the participation of young Aboriginal people in youth gangs in Canadian cities. Witnesses linked this participation to poverty and exclusion, and told the committee that Aboriginal organizations and services were under-resourced to respond fully. Although federal funding is available in the Youth Gang Prevention Fund, the committee



recommends that national Aboriginal organizations be consulted and informed about how these funds could be accessible to and effective for activities among Aboriginal youth.

A recurring theme in testimony was that existing federal programs would be more effective if they were developed and implemented in closer co-operation with existing Aboriginal organizations. The committee recommends that Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development work with the National Association of Friendship centres in delivering the Cultural Connections for Aboriginal Youth Program and in supporting transition services for Aboriginal peoples moving to cities. The committee calls for increased collaboration within the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, both with respect to improving distributional fairness and coordination on the community steering committees developed under the Strategy and with a view to working with other governments to expand the Urban Aboriginal Strategy beyond its current reach in 13 communities. The committee also recommends a review of core funding under the Aboriginal Friendship Centre Program and, where warranted, adjustments in funding to appropriate levels.

The urgency of improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal peoples was an echo of testimony heard during earlier committee studies. In 2006, 34% of Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64 did not have a high school diploma, compared to 15% of the non-Aboriginal population. At the same time, in that same age group, only 8% of Aboriginal people had a university degree compared to 23% of non-Aboriginal people. Access to post-secondary education and training was identified by witnesses and endorsed by committee members in those studies as one of the best opportunities for social and economic inclusion of Aboriginal peoples.

Witnesses also identified the need to increase both employment opportunities and entrepreneurial pursuits among young Aboriginal peoples. The unemployment rate for Aboriginal people was 13.3% in 2006, compared to 5.2% for non-Aboriginal people. In addition, the recession that began in 2008 had a harder and longer impact on Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal people. The committee recommends continued emphasis by the federal government on ensuring that Aboriginal youth access skills training and employment opportunities, and co-operation with private sector partners to enhance such opportunities in all sectors of the Canadian economy.

With respect to the encouragement of entrepreneurial opportunities for Aboriginal peoples, the committee calls for co-operation with provincial and territorial governments to work with national Aboriginal organizations to support new and existing Aboriginal businesses. The committee also recommends that federal partnership with these organizations focus on skills development appropriate to the needs of Aboriginal entrepreneurs and their businesses.

The committee recommends that the federal government explore its participation in the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group currently bringing together ministers and officials from provincial and territorial governments to discuss and address the broad range of needs and interests of Aboriginal Canadians.



## CANADIANS WITH DISABILITIES

Approximately one in seven Canadians reported a disability in 2006, a significant increase over five years earlier. While the aging of the population was reported to have accounted for part of the increase, Statistics Canada indicated that the changing perception of disability may have contributed to more individuals being willing to report a disability.

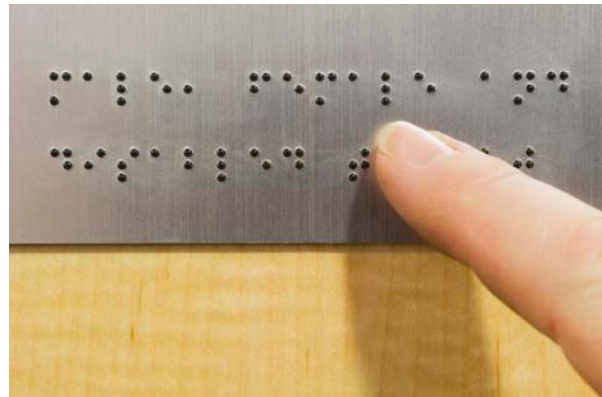
The committee heard that one in five working-age persons with disabilities had a low income in 2006, about twice the rate for persons without disabilities. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) reported in 2010 that the average income of working-age persons with disabilities was 20% lower than their non-disabled counterparts. This differential, combined with the impairments associated with disabilities, make inclusion of persons with disabilities a challenge in Canada's cities.

Federal initiatives have included the introduction of the Registered Disability Savings Plan, bilateral Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities, the non-refundable Disability Tax Credit, the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities and ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

To improve the reach and effectiveness of these initiatives, the committee recommends reporting on allocations to and achievements of the



Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities in the HRSDC Departmental Performance Report, monitoring of the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with provincial and territorial partners and continued collaboration with provincial and territorial governments to identify and implement measures to encourage and support persons with disabilities to enter the labour market.



## YOUTH AND SENIORS

The committee heard that Canadians at both ends of the age spectrum experience challenges to inclusion.

Younger Canadians are a declining portion of the population and an increasingly diverse group. The committee heard about an innovative program to engage youth in problem-solving by including them in local decision-making bodies. Recognizing a wide range of federal programs that are intended to support youth who may be unemployed, Aboriginal, disabled or newcomers, the committee recommends that information about these programs be communicated in youth-friendly language and through social media.

Based on this and past studies, the committee is aware of the challenges facing youth in their transition to employment particularly following the recession, and recommends federal collaboration with provincial and territorial governments to support this transition with





programs that increase opportunities with respect to training, apprenticeship and other programs that increase labour mobility. The committee also recommends that the government consider tax incentives for companies that hire and invest in young Canadians.

The proportion of Canadians over the age of 65 is increasing, and this population is increasingly diverse. The population is also increasingly urban, making the World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities initiative particularly relevant.

Their social inclusion is affected by their income and health status. Statistics Canada reported in 2006 that the financial situation of older Canadians had been improving for 25 years. The committee also heard that the proportion of seniors in low income had risen from the 1990s to the mid-2000s.

Federal initiatives with respect to seniors have included support for that initiative, along with the New Horizons for Seniors Program and an awareness campaign with respect to elder abuse. The committee recommends that the government's efforts to raise public awareness about elder abuse devote particular attention to reaching seniors who are living independently or in isolation.

## SEXUAL MINORITIES

While lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people are also a diverse group with respect to age, ethno-racial background, gender and socio-economic status, the committee learned that specific demographic data with respect to sexual minorities is limited. However, police data indicate an increase in hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation, which accounted for approximately

one in six hate crimes in 2008. Other studies report that more than half of LGBT youth (60%) have been verbally harassed about their sexual orientation and that these youth are more likely to have experienced physical and sexual abuse, harassment in school, and discrimination in their communities than their heterosexual counterparts. These youth are at greater risk of homelessness and street involvement than their non-sexual minority counterparts, and are more likely to commit suicide.

The committee heard that the “invisibility” of sexual minorities has contributed to a dearth of federal and other programs intended to overcome these challenges to inclusion. The committee recommends that the federal government recognize sexual minorities as a distinct minority, like other cultural, linguistic and ethnic communities, to support their inclusion in all federal programs policies designed to support minorities. The committee also recommends that identity and gender expression be included in the hate crime provisions of the *Criminal Code of Canada* as aggravating circumstances to be taken into consideration in sentencing.





## COMMUNITY SAFETY

The committee recognizes that safe cities and community spaces within them are necessary elements to social inclusion and that many of those vulnerable to exclusion are also vulnerable to crime, e.g., seniors and persons with disabilities. Aggregated crime data indicate that the level of crimes reported to police is dropping in Canada, yet self-reported victimization surveys show that most incidents of victimization are not reported to police and not included in the declining rates of police-reported crimes.

While most Canadians report feeling safe in their communities, with more than 90% of all Canadians over the age of 15 satisfied with their personal safety from crime, just over half felt safe using public transit. The committee heard that women are over-represented among victims of certain types of crime, notably criminal harassment, and recommends support for awareness and education programs to combat sexual assault and harassment, including cyber-bullying. Aboriginal peoples, people with a disability and sexual minorities are also over-represented among victims of crime.

Some of these groups, along with visible minorities, have also reported less satisfaction than the rest of the population with police services and the criminal justice system. Recognizing the increasing diversity of some police forces, the committee recommends federal government support for the diversification efforts being made by these forces.



Testimony from police and academic witnesses highlighted the importance of crime prevention to reduce victimization and costs, and to increase both the safety and the perception of safety in Canadian communities. The committee recommends that an increased proportion of the federal criminal justice budget be devoted to crime prevention.

The committee also heard testimony about the need to ensure public safety when offenders have completed their sentences and are seeking integration into communities. With a view to rehabilitation of offenders, the committee recommends offering small incentives to offenders to receive further education and training while incarcerated to increase employment options on release; making addiction treatment mandatory for inmates with addictions in federal institutions. The committee recommends facilitating and increasing access to mental health services for offenders to increase integration into the community.

Safe and efficient urban transit systems promote and enhance community safety. This is particularly important to those individuals who cannot afford private transportation options, many of whom are in groups at high risk of social exclusion. Recognizing existing federal support for municipal transit systems, the committee recommends federal encouragement of provincial and territorial governments to identify and develop urban transit strategies; the introduction of a tax-exempt status for employer-provided transit benefits; and consideration of additional allocations from the Gas Tax Fund specifically to transit capital investment.



## THE INCOME GAP AND MOVING UP THE INCOME LADDER

Relatively high rates of low income are common among groups at risk of social exclusion and may reflect limited resources needed for full participation in community life. Although there is some debate as to the mechanics of measurement of income inequality, witnesses described increased income inequality and its correlation to a lower share of income for less-skilled workers and a larger share for higher skilled workers.

The committee heard that over the past 20 to 30 years, the proportion of total income going to the top 1% increased from 7% to approximately 12% now. Looking at market income, the committee learned that from 1976 to 2009, two-thirds of Canadians experienced a decline in their real market income, although the wealthiest fifth of the population added 27.5% to its average market income, and the next wealthiest added 6.9%. The committee heard that the shift resulted from a mismatch between the available skills and market demand and the concentration of wealth described above. Tax systems and income support for lower income people has reduced the gap, but not as much in recent years. With this polarization, mobility up the income ladder becomes more important. The evidence before the committee suggested that while upward income mobility was somewhat limited within one lifetime, it is still relatively high from one generation to the next. To support income mobility, the committee recommends consideration of an increase in the value of and specific expansion of eligibility for the Working Income Tax Benefit.

Recognizing that public policy has been credited with supporting intergenerational income mobility, the committee also recommends a review of the *Income Tax Act* and its application to ensure progressivity and fairness and that this review pay particular attention to the role of the tax system in reducing income inequality, improving the circumstances of low-income Canadians and stimulating job creation.

## CONCLUSION

This report expands on the committee's earlier work on mental health, post-secondary education, and poverty, housing and homelessness. It addresses the results of disadvantage identified in those reports, examines the extent of marginalization and recommends policy and program responses that could minimize exclusion.

The results sought by the committee are a strong economy, more vibrant civil and political institutions, and healthier and safer Canadian cities. The solutions proposed in this report are intended to bring people in from the margins, to full economic, social and civic participation in their communities.



# LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

## RECOMMENDATION 1

That the Government of Canada initiate research that will lead to the development of a set of indicators to measure levels of social inclusion and social cohesion in Canada:

- a) That the Government of Canada, using these indicators, establish goals for social inclusion and social cohesion in those areas which fall within its responsibilities as set forth under the Canadian Constitution;
- b) That the Government of Canada use these indicators, when appropriate, in the design and evaluation of its policies, programs and activities; and
- c) That the Government of Canada measure, at regular intervals, the extent to which its policies, programs, and activities are achieving the social inclusion and social cohesion goals it has established, and report the results to the Parliament of Canada.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

That the Government of Canada work in partnership with other levels of government to provide support over the long term for initiatives that have, as their objective, enhanced social inclusion and social cohesion; and

That the Government of Canada support efforts by provincial and territorial ministers of education to implement and integrate the importance of social inclusion and acceptance into their educational systems.

## RECOMMENDATION 3

That the Government of Canada enhance the availability of the full suite of pre-arrival services provided to immigrants prior to their departure for Canada.

## RECOMMENDATION 4

That permanent residents and their dependents between the ages of eighteen and fifty-four, and members of the family class of permanent residents within the same age range be assessed for their skills in one of the two official languages following arrival in Canada;

- a) That based on this assessment, those tested be directed to an appropriate level of language training under the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program;
- b) That enrolment in the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program be strongly encouraged for all those falling below a predetermined level of linguistic ability; and
- c) That the Government of Canada continue to make improvements to the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program. In particular, such improvements should take into consideration those language skills that are work-specific and that enhance the ability of newcomers to interact with Canadians in ways that facilitate community involvement.

## RECOMMENDATION 5

That the Government of Canada employ campaigns explaining the importance of community engagement and to promote volunteerism among immigrant communities.

## RECOMMENDATION 6

Where warranted, such as for immigrant women who stay at home to care for young children, that immigrants be granted admission to the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada program up to five years following arrival regardless of acquisition of Canadian citizenship.



### **RECOMMENDATION 7**

That Citizenship and Immigration Canada expand the number of Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program sites equipped with child care facilities for pre-school children.

### **RECOMMENDATION 8**

That the Government of Canada initiate efforts to expand the Local Immigration Partnership model beyond the province of Ontario.

### **RECOMMENDATION 9**

That the Government of Canada work with the provincial and territorial governments and municipalities to support programs that identify neighbourhoods at risk and to help provide services and infrastructure to overcome negative effects of enclaves arising from poverty.

### **RECOMMENDATION 10**

That the Government of Canada work in partnership with provincial, territorial and municipal levels of government to promote civic awareness among new Canadians. Such programs should emphasize both the rights and responsibilities of citizens vis-à-vis their communities.

### **RECOMMENDATION 11**

That, as part of the pre-departure services, prospective immigrants be advised when their academic or other credentials do not meet the standards required by Canadian employers.

### **RECOMMENDATION 12**

That the Government of Canada support initiatives that empower members of minority communities to become better represented in federal boards, commissions, and in public office.

### **RECOMMENDATION 13**

That the Government of Canada encourage the provinces and territories to develop a national comprehensive educational policy to challenge and address underlying structural issues such as racism, religious and sexual intolerance, and bullying in schools and society.

### **RECOMMENDATION 14**

That the Government of Canada continue actions to combat racism and discrimination as set forth in Canada's Action Plan against Racism.

### **RECOMMENDATION 15**

That the Government of Canada accelerate equitable hiring and staffing processes for visible minorities and other designated groups as called for under the federal *Public Service Employment Act*, and

That the Government of Canada invite employers in federally regulated industries to hire and retain members of the four groups designated under the *Employment Equity Act* in proportion to their workforce availability.

### **RECOMMENDATION 16**

That the Government of Canada enhance efforts to communicate information regarding the Youth Gang Prevention Fund to national Aboriginal organizations and consult with those organizations regarding the design and opportunities available under the program, with a view to enhancing its overall effectiveness.



### **RECOMMENDATION 17**

That in developing and delivering the Cultural Connections for Aboriginal Youth (CCAY) Program, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada and the National Association of Friendship Centres work together to ensure that local Aboriginal communities are given a prominent role in shaping the Program to respond to community needs.

### **RECOMMENDATION 18**

That the Government of Canada, in partnership with national Aboriginal organizations and other levels of government, expand the Urban Aboriginal Strategy beyond the thirteen municipalities where it is already in operation.

### **RECOMMENDATION 19**

That the Government of Canada work with national Aboriginal organizations and other levels of government to bring about better coordination and distributional fairness within community steering committees established under the Urban Aboriginal Strategy.

### **RECOMMENDATION 20**

That the Government of Canada continue to work in partnership with Aboriginal Friendship Centres to support transition services for Aboriginal peoples moving to Canadian cities.

### **RECOMMENDATION 21**

That the Government of Canada continue to place an emphasis, in all federal government employment programs or initiatives, on making sure that there are skills training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal youth.

### **RECOMMENDATION 22**

That the Government of Canada continue to work with private sector partners to stimulate efforts to open up employment and skills training opportunities for Aboriginal youth in all sectors of the Canadian economy.

### **RECOMMENDATION 23**

That the Government of Canada, along with provincial/territorial governments, place additional emphasis on working with national Aboriginal organizations to support the development of Aboriginal entrepreneurs, with a focus on new and existing Aboriginal businesses through such activities as business assessments, business and marketing plans, and mentoring for business owners; and

That the Government of Canada, in partnership with national Aboriginal organizations, place additional emphasis on developing Aboriginal human capital, through such measures as arranging full access for Aboriginal peoples for skills development and training specific to their businesses, and the provision of business skills training that would assist Aboriginal entrepreneurs to own and manage a successful business.

### **RECOMMENDATION 24**

That the Government of Canada explore, with provincial and territorial governments, its involvement in the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group.

### **RECOMMENDATION 25**

That the Government of Canada review core funding under the Aboriginal Friendship Centre Program and, where warranted, adjust funding to appropriate levels.



## RECOMMENDATION 26

That Human Resources and Skills Development Canada provide information on the resources allocated to, and the outcomes achieved by, the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities in its annual *Departmental Performance Reports* tabled in Parliament.

## RECOMMENDATION 27

That the Government of Canada, with provincial and territorial partners, monitor implementation of UN *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Monitoring should include the active involvement of Canadians with disabilities and organizations that represent them, as specified in Article 33.3 of the Convention.

## RECOMMENDATION 28

That the Government of Canada, in partnership with provincial and territorial governments, continue to identify and implement measures designed to assist Canadians with disabilities to enter the labour market.

## RECOMMENDATION 29

That the Government of Canada use youth-friendly language in materials intended to inform the public and enhance the use of social media for that purpose.

## RECOMMENDATION 30

That the Government of Canada work with the provinces and territories to support school-to-work transition programs that increase opportunities in training, co-op, apprenticeship and education programs, and that increase labour mobility to enter the workforce, and also consider tax incentives for companies that hire and invest in young Canadians.

## RECOMMENDATION 31

That as part of its efforts to raise public awareness about elder abuse, the Government of Canada devote particular attention to reaching seniors who are living independently or in isolation.

## RECOMMENDATION 32

That the Government of Canada recognize sexual minorities as distinct minority groups like other cultural, linguistic, religious, and ethnic communities in all federal programs and policies designed to support minorities; and

That the Government of Canada include identity and gender expression in the hate crime provisions of the *Criminal Code of Canada* as aggravating circumstances to be taken into consideration at the time of sentencing.

## RECOMMENDATION 33

That the Government of Canada support awareness and education programs to combat sexual assault and harassment, including cyber-bullying.

## RECOMMENDATION 34

That the Government of Canada support efforts by Canadian police forces to enhance the recruitment and retention of women and members of Canadian minority communities in proportion to their labour market availability.

## RECOMMENDATION 35

That the Government of Canada increase the share of its current criminal justice budget that is devoted to crime prevention.



### **RECOMMENDATION 36**

That the Government of Canada increase supports for offenders to decrease recidivism and victimization by offering small incentives for offenders to receive further education and training while incarcerated in order to increase employment options upon release into the community;

That the Government of Canada make mandatory alcohol and substance abuse programs for addicted inmates while incarcerated in federal institutions and then follow up in the community with drug enforcement testing during reintegration; and

That the Government of Canada facilitate and increase access to mental health counseling and programs for offenders to increase successful reintegration in the community.

### **RECOMMENDATION 37**

That the Government of Canada encourage the provinces and territories to identify and develop urban transit strategies;

That the Government of Canada give tax-exempt status for employer-provided transit benefits. This would complement the current federal tax credit for transit pass purchases and encourage employers to support transit commuters financially; and

That the Government of Canada consider additional allocations from the Gas Tax Fund specifically to transit capital investment.

### **RECOMMENDATION 38**

That the Government of Canada consider increasing the value of the Working Income Tax Benefit (WITB) and move toward widening eligibility for the WITB to include all households with earned income below the after-tax low income cut-off (LICO).

### **RECOMMENDATION 39**

That the Government of Canada initiate a review of the *Income Tax Act* and its application to ensure progressivity and fairness.

That in conducting this review, the Government of Canada pay particular attention to the role of the tax system in reducing income inequality, improving the circumstances of low-income Canadians, and stimulating job creation.