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Budget 2014 Invests in 'Ready, Willing & Able' Partnership for Employers & People with Developmental Disabilities

The Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) and the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance (CASDA) applaud the Government of Canada's 2014 budget investment of \$15million dollars in the 'Ready, Willing and Able' (RWA) national employment initiative for people with developmental disabilities. Designed to respond to employer need and demand for labour from this largely untapped pool of labour, the investment is very welcome news by people with developmental disabilities and their families across the country.

Laurie Larson, President of the Canadian Association for Community Living said "As a mom of two sons with developmental disabilities, I can tell you our family and so many others are grateful for the commitment made today. Canada cannot afford the costs of exclusion. Employers cannot afford to overlook this untapped workforce. People with disabilities cannot afford to be left out of opportunity longer."

Laurie Malwam, Chair of the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance said "Underemployment is a common phenomenon among adults with developmental disabilities. Currently, approximately 50 percent of adults with autism spend their days with little community contact and in segregated work or activity settings. It doesn't have to be this way. Ready, Willing and Able is designed to make a difference."

CACL and CASDA have joined forces to launch 'Ready, Willing and Able' to

- Engage and support local and national-scale employers to hire people with developmental disabilities;
- Promote understanding and awareness among employers and the general public on the value of hiring people with developmental disabilities;
- Enhance the capacity of the community employment services system to be the effective bridge-builders that small, medium and large-scale employers need.

Responding to the expressed interest of employers to hire people with disabilities, RWA equips communities to be nimble and responsive to employer demand. The program is designed to transform and shift investments in the community employment service system that currently segregates people with developmental disabilities. By harnessing employers' demand for employees, the program will result in labour force inclusion. Building on best practices and successes to date, this new federal investment will put RWA to work in demonstration communities in every province and territory across Canada.

With today's announcement the half a million working-age adults with developmental disabilities who could be working are today one step closer to achieving that goal.

For more information visit www.readywillingandable.ca.

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