

Crippling Climate Adaptation

Disability Justice and Climate Change Insights from Conversation Notes

On November 17, 2023, the Prairie Climate Centre, in collaboration with the University of Winnipeg Research Office, hosted the event “Crippling Climate Adaptation: Disability Justice and Climate Change”, engaging disability community members, activists, local organizations, knowledge holders, community members, academics, and representatives from nonprofit and government organizations.

This page portrays some of the participants’ contributions to the conversation on the intersection of Disability Justice and climate change.

What were the aspects identified for a transition to Disability Justice and climate change adaptation?

RISKS

What are the disproportionate risks faced by disabled Canadians in the climate crisis, including those who face multiple and intersecting barriers and forms of discrimination?

Need to explore the possible unintended consequences of addressing a climate risk and how it could result in maladaptation.

Systemic ideas around capacities, rights and lived experience, get in the way of fighting climate change.

Lack of progress as a result of not including disabled people on the climate adaptation conversation.

OBLIGATIONS

How are we ensuring that adaptation efforts enhance climate resilience with disabled people?

Need to meet people where they are at, to understand the levels of what people experience and attend to those who might require more assistance in any climate emergency situation.

Building the networks needed to make sure processes are inclusive.

Disabled people should be incorporated into planning processes.

You can't have only a voice to talk about disability.

ROLES

What are the roles that disabled people, their leadership, and their knowledge can play in efforts to enhance climate resilience in Canada?

When developing climate adaptation strategies, different ways of knowing and doing must be included. People with disabilities already have different ways of knowing and operating in their environments, such as “life hacks” and worldviews about coexistence and stewardship of the environment.

During evacuations, there is high reliance on friends and family to help disabled people.

Consider the role of support workers for disabilities in planning situations.

OPPORTUNITIES

What are the opportunities to use disability knowledge in climate resilience?

If we make things more accessible, it opens up a lot of doors.

At the core we need a collective identity, so we are taking care of everyone: elderly, children, and adults.

Inclusion of disabled people will enrich the climate adaptation conversation.

How can climate change adaptation policies be used to make some of the changes that we want to see here to reduce impacts?

CHALLENGES

Challenges highlighted by participants on the transition to Disability Justice and climate change adaptation.

Preparedness for climate change needs to reflect the level that we will be impacted by it.

Climate Resilience is new to disabled people; it is new to all people.

Regional and geographical differences need to be taken into consideration as the effects of climate change are different.

What are acceptable conditions for all of us?

We need to plan as if everyone is disabled, because everyone has the possibility to be disabled.

* Insights from conversation notes

“Nothing About Us Without Us”

This motto centers around the principle of participation and has been used as part of global movements in its effort to achieve full participation and equalization of opportunities for, by, and with persons with disabilities, being an example of how the principle of full participation contributes to the development of inclusive societies (UN, 2004).

