

Women, Disability, and Intersectionality: Designing for Equality and Leaving No One Behind

International Women's Day Annual Conference
Feminist Legal Studies Queen's and Queen's University Faculty of Law
March 13-14, 2026

Robert Sutherland Hall (School of Policy Studies)
138 Union Street, Katarokwi (Kingston), Ontario

CALL FOR INDIVIDUAL PAPER AND PANEL PROPOSALS

Feminist Legal Studies Queen's is delighted to circulate the call for our annual International Women's Day Conference with the Faculty of Law at Queen's University. The conference will take place on **March 13–14, 2026**, at Robert Sutherland Hall, School of Policy Studies, Queen's University, Katarokwi (Kingston), Ontario. This two-day event will be held in hybrid format, with opportunities for in-person participation and online engagement.

We invite submissions of individual paper proposals and complete panel proposals for presentation. The deadline for receipt of proposals is **Thursday, December 18, 2025 at 11:59pm EDT**. Details for submission are below.

We encourage submissions that address issues relating to gender, violence, and disparate impacts in the context of disability and intersectionality, including accessibility, inclusion, and the dismantling of systemic barriers across law, policy, education, health, and employment, as well as in the development, use, and application of new technologies. We also welcome submissions on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and inequality toward women and girls with disabilities and their empowerment within local, national, and international contexts. We welcome submissions that consider dimensions of care and care work and address various intersecting areas of consideration for disability equality, inclusion, and justice.

Submitting proposals: Please email proposals and a short bio to Professor Bitá Amani (amanib@queensu.ca) and Professor Debra Haak (debra.haak@queensu.ca), copying Natalie Moniz-Henne (natalie.henne@queensu.ca). Acceptances may be issued on a rolling basis.

- **Individual paper proposals:** Email presentation title and a one-paragraph abstract.
- **Complete panel proposals:** Proposed panels should include three to four papers. Please e-mail proposed panel title and designated panel chair (who may or may not be presenting in the panel), along with a one- paragraph abstract.

Keynote Lecture: Professor Anna Lawson

We are delighted to announce that our keynote lecture will be delivered by Professor Anna Lawson, Queen's University Principal's Development Fund Visiting Scholar. Professor Lawson is a British legal scholar specializing in disability law and policy at the School of Law at the University of Leeds. She is Joint Director of the interdisciplinary Centre for Disability Studies and Co-ordinator of the Disability Law Hub. Appointed in 2013, she

became the UK's first blind woman to hold a professorship in law. Alongside her illustrious academic career, Professor Lawson has achieved numerous distinguished accomplishments. Dr. Lawson obtained her PhD from Leeds University and was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Louvain la Neuve, Belgium. She is a Fellow of the UK Academy of Social Sciences; the winner of the 2016 Bob Hepple Memorial Prize for contributions to equality (awarded by the Equal Rights Trust and the Industrial Law Society); an honorary Master of the Bench of the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple; and is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Science. Her scholarship focuses on disability law, policy and practice; disability equality, human rights, non-discrimination, and inclusion within disability studies and socio-legal studies; and disability in legal education. She is a thought leader who brings a unique ability to bridge legal analysis, policy development, and lived experience to her work, a quality that positions her as a transformative figure in shaping inclusive societies.

Professor Lawson is a luminary in her field, an invaluable advocate, and a specialized advisory consultant with significant and substantial expertise. She holds membership, trustee and advisory positions in a range of local, national and international organizations, including Disability Rights UK, the European Disability Forum, the International Disability Alliance, and the Disability Law Service. She is a regular advisor to policy-makers, governments and intergovernmental organizations, including acting as expert advisor on accessibility for the Council of Europe in connection with its Disability Strategy 2017-2023. She was a special advisor to the UK House of Commons' Women and Equalities Committee in connection with its inquiry into Disability and the Built Environment 2016-2017; and is a long-standing advisor to the British Equality and Human Rights Commission on disability law and policy (bio details available [here](#)). She has advocated for disability mainstreaming and calls for the strengthening of Disability Law as an academic discipline.¹ Her work exemplifies the significance of the "nothing about us without us" approach and helps to highlight the work that lays ahead for disability equality and inclusion. We are grateful that she is willing to join us in person for our FLSQ IWD 2026 conference.

Dr. Lawson's keynote address at Queen's will anchor this year's IWD conference and launch us into what we trust will be a productive conference event for critical reflection and inspired action. In the tradition of past FLSQ IWD conferences, this event will also incorporate artistic and cultural contributions, creating space for dialogue that engages both hearts and minds in building more inclusive and equitable futures.

About the Conference Theme

Feminist Legal Studies Queen's (FLSQ) is very pleased to announce the theme of its 2026 International Women's Day Annual Conference: **Women, Disability, and Intersectionality: Designing for Equality and Leaving No One Behind**. This year's theme focuses on disability; accessibility and justice; intersectionality and the recognition that disability equality is one of the most historically underserved but profoundly urgent dimensions of equality. This theme aligns with the seventieth session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70) priority theme of "[e]nsuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, and addressing structural barriers", and review theme of "women's full and effective participation and decision making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls."²

Disability is referenced in a number of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 4 (inclusive and equitable quality education), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG10 (reduce inequality within and among countries), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and environments), and SDG 17 (partnership for the goals), as well as in relation to data collection and monitoring.³ *Envision Disability 2030* seeks to situate the SDGs within a

¹ Anna Lawson, "Disability Law as an Academic Discipline: Towards Cohesion and Mainstreaming", (2020) 47:4 *Journal of Law and Society*, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jols.12258>

² UN Women, CSW70 (2026), <https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/commission-on-the-status-of-women/csw70-2026>.

³ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Disability, <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-and-disability>.

vision of the world as fully inclusive of persons with disabilities.⁴

Internationally, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that about 1.3 billion people, or around 16% of the global population (“1 in 6 of us”), currently “experience significant disability” and that persons with disabilities face many health inequities, are more likely to develop other diverse conditions (e.g. from depression to stroke), and that “some persons with disabilities die up to 20 years earlier than those without disabilities.”⁵ Women with disabilities experience higher rates of violence than men with disabilities and women without disabilities; children with disabilities are also more likely to experience violence than those without. As the UN reports, “[w]omen and girls with disabilities are particularly targeted by perpetrators of violence because of social exclusion, limited mobility, a lack of support structures, communication barriers, and negative social perceptions.”⁶ Women with disabilities constitute 14.9% of women in Canada but 45% of all reported incidents of violent crimes; intersectional identity factors contribute to the risk.⁷ Violence can also result from caregivers, with age converging with disability as a factor. Violence against women and girls also contributes to creating new impairments and disabilities.⁸

Colonization, ethnic cleansing, conflict areas, war and genocide, profoundly impact immediate populations generating new sites of complex physical, mental, and moral injury and poly-trauma. Gaza, for example, now “has the highest number of child amputees per capita anywhere in the world”.⁹ It has been estimated “that 4,500 new amputees require prosthetics, in addition to the 2,000 existing cases requiring maintenance and follow-up care, while about 24,000 injured people required rehabilitation”.¹⁰ This is, of course, in tandem with other complex factors for multiple forms of trauma. In Ukraine, it is estimated that 300,000 people have acquired disabilities due to war-related injuries and that “3.9 million people are estimated to have severe to moderate mental health conditions, with persons with disabilities among those most at risk.”¹¹ Too often the basic accessibility infrastructure and/or access to care is lacking, compromised, or denied. Yet, there have also been renewed initiatives such as in remote disability assessments, enrolment in social services, and public health initiatives.¹² In Sudan, more than 11.5 million people have been displaced, 10-15% of the total population is estimated to be persons with disabilities and within the current humanitarian crisis, they are the hardest hit, leading to calls for humanitarian corridors.¹³ There are long term consequences of injury, in addition to the humanitarian, migration, and displacement crises that make receipt of care, treatment and mobility for persons with disabilities in such landscapes further burdened if not fully constrained.¹⁴ Local conditions are disparately experienced by women and girls as persons living with disabilities and exposed additionally to sexualized violence. There are broader disabling impacts, including moral injury; those in service and/or persons returning from service experience life altering

⁴ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “#Envision2030: 17 Goals to Transform the World for Persons with Disabilities”, <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/envision-2030/17goals-pwds>.

⁵ World Health Organization Fact Sheet: Disability, March 7, 2023, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health>.

⁶ UN Fact Sheet, “Violence against Women and Girls with Disabilities”, https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw57/side_events/Fact%20sheet%20%20VAWG%20with%20disabilities%20FINAL%20.pdf.

⁷ Western Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, https://www.gbvlearningnetwork.ca/our-work/issuebased_newsletters/issue-27/index.html#:~:text=71%25%20of%20women%20living%20with,victimized%20in%20their%20own%20home

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ UN News, “Driven by hunger in Gaza, child amputees are part of the collateral damage”, August 24, 2025, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/08/1165713>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ European Disability Forum, “The War on Ukraine: Impact on Persons with Disabilities”, <https://www.edf-feph.org/the-war-in-ukraine-impact-on-persons-with-disabilities/>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See Yasmine Belabed, Blog Post, The Borgen Project, “Addressing Disability and Poverty in Sudan” <https://borgenproject.org/addressing-disability-and-poverty-in-sudan/>; see also Humanity and Inclusion Press Release, “People with Disabilities Hardest Hit by Forgotten Humanitarian Crisis” April 11, 2024, <https://www.humanity-inclusion.org.uk/en/sudan-conflict-people-with-disabilities-hardest-hit-by-forgotten-humanitarian-crisis>; and Asala Salah, “Overcoming Barriers : Disability Rights in Sudan”, January 9, 2025, <https://andariya.com/post/overcoming-barriers-disability-rights-in-sudan-1>.

¹⁴ Ukraine Human Development Update, In Focus: Disability and Inclusion, February 2024, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099032824073057091/pdf/P181236-d6feb077-28cd-456c-a506-92390987152a.pdf>.

events leading to disability.¹⁵ Disabilities may generate care work, disproportionately shouldered by women.¹⁶

Climate change and natural weather-related disasters have also amplified harmful impacts on persons with disabilities as vulnerable populations, including with access to health and rehabilitation care and basic necessities of life (food, safe drinking water and safe mobility). These environmental factors exacerbate the multidimensions of the inequalities located at the margins and in the intersections of identity. Globally, “more than 1 billion people with disabilities, 80% of whom live in low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs), are disproportionately and differentially adversely affected by the climate change crisis....People with disabilities have substantially higher rates of mortality and undergo greater harms in climate emergencies than do their non-disabled counterparts”¹⁷; with disparate impacts, discriminatory attitudes, and poor historical representation being amongst factors in the call to action for disability justice and inclusive climate research, including with adoption of a human rights approach for migration and humanitarian assistance as well as for monitoring and assessment tools; incorporating gender as a disability issue is imperative given gendered risks and disparate impacts.¹⁸

A human rights approach to disability recognizes the indivisibility of all rights and foregrounds the inherent dignity of all persons; Canada is a signatory to the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)* and has ratified this instrument.¹⁹ There is discernable complementarity between the social model of disability and a human rights approach that informs law and policy making.²⁰

Nationally, Statistics Canada reports that disability rates are increasing, with the increase being largely attributed to the prevalence of mental health disabilities (from 33% in 2017 to 39% in 2022).²¹ Disability is broadly understood to include multiple forms of diverse and dynamic disabilities. It has been given inclusive legal interpretation in Canada with renewed commitment to the removal of barriers to accessibility. The *Accessible Canada Act* defines disability to mean:

any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment — or a functional limitation — whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person’s full and equal participation in society
(*handicap*)

“[B]arrier” is defined as:

¹⁵ A 2024 Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research/ National Institute on Aging provides – based on a 2022 Canadian Veterans Health Survey - that among Veterans aged 55 and over, 4.2 % (aged 55+) and 9.1% (35-54 age) reported disability as their main activity; see M Brydges, E Mebrahtu, E MacLennan, A Flanagan, D Pedlar, J Muscedere & SK Sinha. (2024). *Addressing the Coming of Age and Its Related Complexities Among Canada’s Veterans*. Toronto, ON: National Institute on Ageing, Toronto Metropolitan University, the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research and the Canadian Frailty Network [*Coming of Age*]; https://cimvhr.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/24-56_VeteransReport_v6_Accessible.pdf at 21. In relation to Afghanistan veterans in receipt of disability benefits, see <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/news-and-media/facts-and-figures/100-afghanistan-veterans>.

¹⁶ A 2019 veterans survey in Canada found, for example, that 25 % of veterans reported needing help with daily living tasks, with 79 % depending on their spouses or partners acting as unpaid caregivers (and given the significant gender differential in the population, this care falls to women), see *Coming of Age*, *ibid* at 21. See also Statistics Canada, “More than half of women provide care to children and care-dependent adults in Canada, 2022”, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221108/dq221108b-eng.htm>

¹⁷ Penelope JS Stein et al, “Advancing disability-inclusive climate research and action, climate justice, and climate-resilient development”, (2024) 8:4 *The Lancet Planetary Health*, citation omitted, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S254251962400024X>.

¹⁸ *Ibid*. The authors posit: “climate-related disability data disaggregated by gender and age are urgently required... Also needed are gendered disability analyses and gendered social learning methodologies with relational dimensions that can provide crucial social insights.”

¹⁹ See Preamble and Article 1 (Purpose), *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, 13 December 2006, UN Doc A/RES/61/106, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>.

²⁰ Anna Lawson and Angharad E. Beckett, “The social and human rights model to disability: Towards a complementarity thesis” (2021) 25:2 *International Journal of Human Rights* 348-379.

²¹ Statistics Canada, “The disability rate in Canada increased in 2022”, <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/o1/en/plus/5980-disability-rate-canada-increased-2022>.

anything — including anything physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice — that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.
(*obstacle*)

Disability affects some eight million people in Canada over the age of fifteen and is, as noted by Canada’s Chief Accessibility Officer Stephanie Cadieux in her 2023 annual report, “everybody’s business”. In her 2024 annual report, she notes that progress towards an accessible and barrier free Canada by 2040 – a goal set out under the *Accessible Canada Act* – has been slow; that “[d]isability remains the basis for half of human rights complaints processed by the Canadian Human Rights Commission. And latest evaluations by the United Nations show that Canada still has significant issues in disability inclusion, in employment and other areas.” Persons with disabilities face a variety of barriers in every dimension of life. Having two or more co-occurring disabilities is very common as are intersectional identities by which persons may be marginalized. Persons with disabilities continue to face higher poverty rates, with intersectional vulnerabilities for experiencing multi-dimensional inequality. In Canada, as per 2021 data, 16.5% of people with disabilities lived in poverty, about twice the rate of those without disabilities (8.6 %); women with disabilities were more likely than men with disabilities to live in poverty (17.6% compared to 15.1%).²² While the population of persons with disabilities is diverse (with 30% of women and 24% of men reporting disability), the highest rate of disabilities is amongst Indigenous Peoples in Canada (32% as compared to 27% of all Canadians).²³

Disability equality and at the intersection of marginalized identities is the focus of this year’s conference. We invite contributions that engage with the human rights dimensions as well as the medical, care and social dimensions of disability, including in relation to the extrinsic factors contributing to disability and the process of disablement through existing barriers and potentially new and emerging ones in society, built environments, technological developments and deployments, social attitudes, and design. Moreover, these areas may encompass the politics of disability, austerity, care and care work, and the social structures and conditions that produce varied and dynamic dimensions of (dis)ability and disabling experience for persons living with diverse impairments, their families, and communities.

Disability requiring some measure of care is common to aging. Distinct populations, as aging veterans and public safety personnel, raise their own considerations. Government supports include income supports, social assistance and benefits, housing, health care, training and employment services. Technologies may offer some resources, including prosthetics; “[d]isabled people are often on the front lines of tech users” yet “disabled people are almost never included in discussions about what technology means and how it integrates into daily life...”; there are issues of representation and engagement, but also potential philosophical and normative concerns surrounding “ableism” and “technoableism” that merit attention.²⁴

This year’s conference builds on the tradition of the annual FLSQ International Women’s Day conference to advance work to promote and achieve equality in all forms for all peoples, in tandem with all SDGs towards the realization of better futures. This conference seeks to explore any and all dimensions of the conference theme including systemic factors creating accessibility barriers and perpetuating structural inequalities impacting the experiences of persons living and working with disabilities, their equal enjoyment of all fundamental rights and freedoms, their participation and inclusion, and sense of belonging in society. We invite submissions with a focus on advancing the work needed for disability equality and disability justice as a call to action to ensure that *no one is left behind* and, as the 2030 Agenda pledge demands, that we *start with the most behind first* while moving toward a barrier free society by 2040.

²² See *Disability Poverty In Canada: A 2023 Report Card*, https://www.disabilitywithoutpoverty.ca/sites/default/files/2024-11/DWP-Report-Card-23-FINAL_compressed.pdf

²³ ESDC, *Disability Inclusion and Accessibility*, <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/documents/corporate/reports/esdc-transition-binders/2024-december-transition-binder-thompson/6-disability-inclusion-and-accessibility-en.pdf>

²⁴ See eg Ashley Shew, *Against Technoableism: Rethinking Who Needs Improvement* (WW Norton and Company, NY: 2023).

Universities have a large role to play in advancing knowledge, creating opportunities for radical collaboration, and in modelling disability inclusion and equality in education, research, and clinical experience. Queen's University has committed to advancing equality, accessibility, and inclusion across research, teaching, and community engagement, with strong commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.²⁵ FLSQ continues to bring attention and a call to action for the attainment of all the SDGs, with particular attention to SDG 5 (gender equality and empowerment of women and girls) and SDG 10 (reduce inequality within and among countries). There are more than 50,000 students with academic accommodation for disability "registered in accessibility offices around Ontario..."²⁶ While there are many initiatives underway to accommodate, address, and prevent new barriers, and generate new opportunities,²⁷ a lot of work remains to be done towards fully accessible institutions, services, and technologies in the academy and Canadian society more generally. We welcome submissions engaging with the conference theme and in advocacy and grass roots efforts to identify and address these areas as well as any identifiable gaps.

Incredible and significant critical disability work has been and continues to be done by persons with disabilities, advancing the "nothing about us without us" commitment for bringing and centering lived experiences of those most intimately impacted by research, scholarship, and advocacy, and in driving it. The FLSQ IWD 2026 conference seeks to support such leadership and provide a forum for discussions that may inform and enhance the work of multi and inter-disciplinary scholars and disability rights advocates, fostering socially impactful work for evidence-based law and policy reforms, education, and attitudinal change; against this backdrop, this dedicated FLSQ conference is long overdue. The incredibly challenging contexts, however, coming out of a global pandemic, multiple regions of war and violent conflict, political instability, and intensified sites of trauma and injury of all forms, including moral harm, also make it imperative. This year's keynote speaker and conference will contribute to this work and our collective efforts to this end, wherever we direct our attention.

Conference Details

Dates: Friday, March 13, 2026 from noon to late afternoon/early evening; Saturday, March 14, 2026, (~9:00 am) to mid to late afternoon (~4pm). All times TBC.

Location and accessibility: The conference will be conducted **in-person and in a hybrid format** at Queen's University in Katarokwi (Kingston), Ontario. Parts, if not all, of the conference may be streamed via secure links. Further information will be provided. Queen's University is committed to accessibility and equity. The conference will be held in accessible venues, and online sessions will include closed captioning.

For further information, please contact Bitu Amani (amanib@queensu.ca) and Debra Haak (debra.haak@queensu.ca);

For registration details and future updates, please check our [website](#) (registration free but required for in person or online).

Queen's University is situated on traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee territories.

²⁵Queen's University has ranked in the top 10 of universities globally for the fifth year in a row by the *Times Higher Education Impact Rankings*, ranking first in Canada and 6th worldwide in 2025 for its contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, <https://www.queensu.ca/social-impact/our-results>.

²⁶Anne Fu, "For Students Living With Disabilities, Self-Advocacy is Key: Students and Faculty Members Discuss Living With Disabilities on Campus", September 23, 2022, <https://www.queensjournal.ca/for-students-living-with-disabilities-self-advocacy-is-key/>.

²⁷Queen's Initiative for Social Enterprise & Disability, for example, is a collaborative research initiative that demonstrates the university's leadership in addressing barriers faced by people with disabilities; it seeks to "advance innovative and evidence-informed social entrepreneurship for people with disabilities and other sources of employment disadvantage." See <https://rehab.queensu.ca/research/our-centres/quisbd>.