

Submission to the BC Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

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Submitted by: Inclusion BC

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the 2026 Budget Consultation process. We appreciate the Committee's commitment to hearing from diverse voices across the province.

Although many funding deficits in our province negatively impact the lives of children, youth, and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and the community organizations that provide disability support, we wish to highlight three key priorities that we believe require urgent and sustained investment in Budget 2026.

1. Every Child Deserves a Strong Start—including Children with Disabilities

Early childhood development is among the most powerful and cost-effective investments a government can make to support lifelong health, educational attainment, and economic productivity. The Government of British Columbia has taken significant steps toward making child care more affordable and accessible through its \$10-a-day child care initiative and ongoing collaboration with the federal government.

However, for too many children with disabilities in BC, access to child care remains out of reach. Despite eligibility, children are often rejected or removed from child care programs because centres lack the additional staff, training, or resources required to support inclusive participation. As a result, these children are being systematically excluded from vital early development opportunities, and their families are left without support, trapped in cycles of stress and poverty.

This is a matter of equity, human rights, and smart public policy.

We urge the government to make a significant and targeted investment in the **Supported Child Development (SCD) Program**, the province's primary mechanism for enabling the inclusion of children with disabilities in community-based child care settings. This investment must:

- **Expand funding to eliminate regional disparities**, ensuring consistent access to inclusive services across urban, rural, and remote communities.
- **Increase staffing capacity** so that child care providers can confidently and competently support children with diverse needs.
- **Build on the momentum of the \$10-a-day child care initiative** by ensuring that affordability does not come at the cost of accessibility.

Inclusive early childhood care is not optional—it is essential. It empowers children to reach their full potential, enables parents to work and contribute to the economy, and lays the **groundwork** for a more inclusive, equitable society.

Investing in the Supported Child Development Program is not just the right thing to do—it is the smart thing to do.

The estimated annual funding deficit is \$10 million.

2. Strengthening the Case for Investment in a Province-Wide Complex Needs Strategy

Youth and adults with complex needs—including those with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health and substance use challenges, and involvement with the justice system—continue to fall through the cracks of fragmented and siloed service systems. They are often forced to navigate multiple government ministries on their own, without coordinated care or consistent support. As a result, their needs frequently go unmet, leading to worsening health outcomes, higher rates of institutionalization, and increased long-term public costs.

Access to wellness and recovery services is minimal for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, who are often excluded from mainstream mental health and addiction services. This exclusion leaves many vulnerable people without the

necessary supports to recover and thrive, further perpetuating cycles of crisis and marginalization.

To address these systemic gaps, we urge the implementation and sustained funding of a **province-wide Complex Needs Strategy**. This strategy must include:

- **Robust cross-ministry coordination** to integrate health, education, social development, mental health, substance use, and corrections services.
- **Person-centred planning** that respects individual needs and preferences.
- **Shared accountability mechanisms** to ensure that ministries and service providers work collaboratively rather than in isolation.
- **Dedicated care coordinators** who can guide people through the system and connect them to appropriate services and supports ensuring collaborative planning and implementation across systems.

By investing in this strategic approach, British Columbia can lead the way in delivering equitable, integrated, and wraparound support for people with complex needs.

This is not only a moral imperative—it is a sound economic investment that will reduce duplication, improve outcomes, and build a more inclusive and resilient province.

Estimated cost to develop the strategy and a 2-year pilot: \$1.5 million

3. Investing in Housing for Adults Eligible for CLBC Supports: A Critical Step Toward Inclusion and Stability

Access to safe, stable, and affordable housing is not just a basic human need—it is a cornerstone of health, dignity, and full participation in community life. Yet more than 700 adults eligible for Community Living BC (CLBC)-funded supports remain unhoused, many displaced from their families and forced into precarious or unsafe living situations.

People living with disabilities and complex needs face systemic barriers to securing appropriate housing. Without targeted support, they are at heightened risk of incarceration, hospitalization, and chronic homelessness—outcomes that are both harmful and costly.

We call on the government to include in Budget 2026 a dedicated housing strategy for adults eligible for CLBC services. This strategy should include:

- **Scaling up complex care housing options** for people who are eligible for CLCB-funded support to address high support needs in a stable and supportive environment.
- **Expanding rental supplements** to make private market housing financially accessible.
- **Incentivizing inclusive housing development** through planning tools and funding for accessible, community-based housing options.
- **Partnering with the non-profit housing sector** to leverage their expertise and capacity for delivering person-centred housing supports.

Investing in housing for this population will not only promote social inclusion and improve quality of life, but it will also reduce pressure on emergency services, health care, and institutional systems. A well-resourced housing strategy is essential to ensuring that adults eligible for CLBC-funded supports can live with dignity, autonomy, and safety in their communities.

British Columbia has the opportunity to lead the way in inclusive housing—now is the time to act.

Funding to devise a strategy and initiate implementation will require \$4.2 million a year of sustained funding over a minimum of five years.
