

## Access to Lifelong Learning for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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- The early learning and child care, K-12, and post-secondary systems should be able to support everyone; however, many children, youth, and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities face discrimination.
- Canada agreed to follow the *UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities* (2010), which recognizes that **people with disabilities have the right to inclusive education and lifelong learning, including early learning and child care, without discrimination**, so they can reach their full potential.
- Education is recognized as the way to enable persons to participate effectively in a free society, and the same is true for people with disabilities.

### Key Challenges

- There is **a lack of supports and resources to ensure access to inclusive education** for students and families. Common barriers include:
  - A confusing system with divided responsibility between the Ministry of Education and 60 school districts.
  - Individualized Education Plans are poorly developed or followed,
  - Limited capacity of teachers, educational assistants, and resource teachers, as well as not enough, or inadequate training.
  - Partial-day schedules and being sent home due to a lack of support.
  - Long wait times or no access to assessments and resources.
  - Ableism and a limited understanding of disabilities.
- In BC, early learning and **child care centers are not adequately funded or required to provide inclusive care**, meaning they can, and do, turn away children with disabilities.
- There are limited supports, including financial supports, for access to post-secondary education, skilled trades, and adult learning opportunities for students with disabilities.

### How to Make People's Lives Better

Create a **Provincial Disability Strategy** with steps, including:

- Establish a clear **legislated mandate for inclusion** and provide **access to a fully resourced, universal, inclusive, culturally safe, and affordable early learning and child care model**. This must include before and after-school care and age-appropriate support for youth aged 12+.
- A commitment from the provincial government to **implement the recommendations** that come out of the public investigation by the Ombudsperson of BC.
- Create and expand options within mainstream programs, diplomas, certificates, and adult training opportunities to ensure people with intellectual and developmental disabilities can access them, with the supports they need and deserve.