

Position Statement

Access to Housing for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Technical Version

Adopted March 2026

Introduction

Inclusion BC is a federation of members committed to advancing the human rights and social inclusion of children, youth, and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Canada is committed to upholding the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which affirms the equal right of people with disabilities to choose their place of residence, live independently, and be included in the community.

Our position statement aims to challenge racist, ableist, ageist, colonial and other unfair ideas about people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our goal is to promote the inclusion of everyone in the community no matter how much money they have, where they come from (background or culture), what their religion is, if they are married or not, what their sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity and expression is, their age, or the type of disability they live with.

We recognize and support Indigenous rights and titles throughout the province of British Columbia, the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the 94 Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the B.C. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

Position Statement

Inclusion BC affirms that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have the right to a full continuum of inclusive housing options that support them across different life stages and transition periods. Housing should be a choice, not constrained by disability or income, and should be designed to promote independence, dignity, and community participation.

An inclusive housing situation is defined by the following features:

- **Removes barriers to daily living:** Disability-related and health-related obstacles are addressed so that people can live comfortably and safely.
- **A home by choice:** Housing is selected by the person, not grouped based on disability or income, and is part of a diverse neighbourhood.
- **Supports community participation:** People can fully engage in their community's social and economic life.
- **Recognizes and values residents:** People are seen as full members of their neighbourhoods and communities.
- **Promotes independence:** People can live independently and be included as active members of their community.

Inclusive housing is more than just a physical place; it is a foundation for autonomy, community integration, and full participation in all aspects of life.

Inclusive housing must respect Indigenous self-determination. This means governments need to be working in partnership with Indigenous people and communities, ensuring their perspectives and experiences guide policies and plans that impact Indigenous people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Governments at all levels have a responsibility to ensure access to safe, affordable, and inclusive housing. This responsibility includes removing systemic barriers and providing the supports and services necessary to enable the full inclusion of all British Columbians. In this position statement, we highlight the specific needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and outline clear calls to action to realize their rights.

To skip the background and rights-based section and move directly to the calls to action, [click here](#).

Background

For much of the 20th century, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in British Columbia were routinely segregated from their families and communities and placed in large institutions. Facilities such as Woodlands School in New Westminster were presented as places of care and protection, but in practice, were rooted in ableist beliefs that people with disabilities needed to be controlled, hidden, or apart from society. Many residents experienced profound isolation, loss of

autonomy, systemic neglect, and abuse.¹ People had little say over their daily lives, relationships, or futures. Institutionalization was based on broader social policies that denied people with disabilities their basic human rights, including the right to family life, education, meaningful work, and community belonging.

Beginning in the 1970s and accelerating through the 1980s and 1990s, advocacy by people with disabilities, families, and allies, alongside growing evidence of harm within institutions, led to a fundamental shift toward community living in British Columbia. This movement emphasized that people with disabilities thrive when they live in homes of their own, with appropriate supports, rather than in segregated settings. The closure of large institutions and the development of community-based supports marked important progress, grounded in principles of inclusion, dignity, and self-determination. While this shift represented a critical human rights advancement, ongoing challenges remain, including housing shortages, underfunded supports, and the persistence of congregate models that risk replicating institutional conditions. Historical harms underscore the importance of continuing to invest in truly inclusive, individualized community living options that uphold choice, control, and full citizenship.

Rights of People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

The rights-based framework for inclusive housing in British Columbia is grounded in the recognition that housing is a human right, not a privilege. This framework is informed by the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#), the [BC Human Rights Code](#), and BC's commitments under the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#) (DRIPA), which aligns provincial law with [the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#).

In practice, a rights-based approach requires governments and housing systems to proactively eliminate discrimination, address systemic barriers, and ensure that people, particularly people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, and other marginalized communities, can choose where and how they live. Inclusive housing under this framework emphasizes:

- autonomy,
- accessibility,

¹ McCallum, D. (August 2001), The Need to Know: Administrative Review of Woodlands School, online: [REPORT1B.AUG01](#)

- cultural safety,
- meaningful participation, and
- ensuring that housing is integrated within communities rather than segregated or institutional in design or practice.

At the national level, Canada's framework for inclusive housing is anchored in the [National Housing Strategy Act](#), which formally recognizes housing as a human right. This framework, in addition to Canada's obligations under international human rights treaties, requires governments to move beyond charity-based or crisis-driven responses and toward systemic solutions that ensure the accessibility, affordability, and cultural safety of housing.

A rights-based approach to housing also demands accountability through transparent decision-making and monitoring, so that people whose housing rights are violated can seek remedies. In this context, inclusive housing is not an optional policy choice, but a legal and moral obligation to create communities where everyone can live with dignity, security, and full participation.

To reinforce a shift towards a rights-based approach, [Canada's National Housing Strategy](#) established the Federal Housing Advocate, an independent oversight role to monitor and promote the right to adequate housing for all people in Canada. A [key recommendation](#) is for the government to take urgent steps to ensure *adequate housing* for people with disabilities, which the advocate defines as housing that is:

- visitable,
- safe,
- accessible,
- habitable,
- culturally adequate, and
- affordable.

Steps should include developing public policy to address the increasing cost of housing, including but not limited to the implementation of rent caps and the introduction of more non-market housing. Any new policies should be developed in collaboration with people with disabilities of diverse, intersectional lived experiences and their advocates.²

² Canadian Human Rights Commission (2023), *Advocating for Change: The Housing Crisis in Canada*, The Office of the Federal Housing Advocate's 2022–2023 Annual Report to the Minister, online: [CH1-44-2023-eng.pdf](#)

Housing Preferences and Barriers

To be considered affordable, housing should not exceed 30% of a household's gross income.³ People with intellectual and developmental disabilities who work are likely to have an annual income of less than \$20,000, meaning an affordable housing cost is \$500 per month. This amount does not reflect current housing rates, highlighting a significant affordability gap across the province.

This is an even greater challenge for people facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that create additional barriers to equity and inclusion. For example, to find accessible housing, Indigenous people with disabilities often must leave their communities.⁴

In BC, evidence demonstrates that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities overwhelmingly prefer to live in their own homes with individualized supports. A 2020 [report](#) by the BC Non-Profit Housing Association, Inclusion BC, and Community Living BC found that 60% of people with developmental disabilities would choose to live in their own home with drop-in or outreach support. These findings reinforce the need for housing systems that expand options rather than constrain them, to meet people where they are in life.

Community Living BC (CLBC) projects a 107% growth rate over 20 years. This increase includes an aging population and adults leaving family homes.⁵ Yet, people with disabilities continue to be absent from housing plans and face structural barriers to inclusive housing, including:

- Overrepresentation among those experiencing homelessness.⁶
- Living in the family home out of necessity, not choice.

³ Statistics Canada (2022), Acceptable Housing, online:

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/ref/dict/az/Definition-eng.cfm?ID=households-menage040>

⁴ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, (2025), Concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of Canada - Advance Unedited Version, online:

tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=4&CountryID=31&DocTypeID=5

⁵ Community Living British Columbia (2023), 2023/24 – 2025/26 Service Plan, online:

<https://www.communitylivingbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023-2024-CLBC-Service-Plan.pdf>

⁶Concluding Observations, *supra note*4

- A lack of support for families caring for loved ones at home.
- A lack of in-home individualized supports to promote independence.
- Severe affordability gaps, with market housing requiring an additional \$800–\$1,400 per month beyond available incomes.
- Persons with Disability (PWD) housing allowances of \$500 per month,⁷
- Insufficient supply of subsidized housing with rent set at \$500 per month.
- Systemic discrimination in the rental market, particularly among parents with disabilities, 65% of whom report experiencing housing discrimination in BC.⁸

These conditions make finding inclusive housing options almost impossible, even where housing technically exists.

False Choice

People who contact Inclusion BC for support express their desire to feel safe, supported, and included. Often, institutional or congregate housing is portrayed as the only feasible option to ensure safety and care. These placements are seldom a matter of personal choice, but a response to limited alternatives and systemic failures.

Housing and disability-related supports should be kept separate as much as possible, both administratively and financially. Coupling housing options with disability support is one of the foundations of institutional models and one of the biggest reasons why they persist today. Institutional models, regardless of size, deny people basic rights, including personal control, decision-making power, and full participation in the community. An institutional model can never truly be considered a home. Similarly, block-funded large group homes and other congregate settings, such as long-term care facilities, restrict the rights of people placed in them.

In a well-intended attempt to move away from institutional models, we have created an over-reliance on shared living or home share arrangements for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in our province. This is often driven by the limited availability of alternative, personalized housing options and under-investment in a full spectrum of housing. While home sharing can provide meaningful community connections and individualized care for some, an

⁷ British Columbia (2026), Disability Assistance Rate Table, online: [Disability Assistance Rate Table - Province of British Columbia](#)

⁸ First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society (2023), A Failure to Protect: The Denial of Children's Right to Housing in British Columbia, online: [First-Call-Housing-Report-2023.pdf](#)

overdependence on this model can inadvertently constrain choice, force some people into arrangements that don't fully align with their preferences, and mask broader systemic gaps in accessible, independent, and supported living options. This imbalance places pressure on a relatively small pool of home share providers and can lead to inconsistent quality of support, caregiver burnout, and fewer opportunities for people to exercise autonomy over where and with whom they live.⁹

Additionally, many existing housing and disability supports are not designed to meet the unique needs of people with complex needs, meaning people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who experience substance use and/or mental health challenges that increase their vulnerability to homelessness and other adverse outcomes. We discuss meaningful actions to address these challenges in the [Position Statement on Access to Disability Supports and Services for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#).

A more diverse housing ecosystem, encompassing independent living with tailored supports, cooperative housing models, and community-based options, would better uphold dignity, choice, and inclusion for all people across the lifespan.

Responsibilities Across Levels of Government

The municipal, provincial, and federal governments have essential responsibilities to uphold the right to housing for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In this section, we discuss the actions taken so far and what each level of government needs to do.

Municipal Government

The [Reimagining Community Inclusion Work Plan](#) emphasizes the importance of encouraging municipalities to include inclusive housing in their housing plans. Lasting change depends on local governments integrating inclusive housing into community plans, zoning decisions, and housing strategies. Without municipal awareness and commitment, inclusive housing rarely becomes a practical part of land use and development decisions.

⁹ Tamar Consultancy Pty Ltd (2025), External Review of the Community Living British Columbia (CLBC) Home Share Program Final Report, online: [External Review of the Community Living British Columbia \(CLBC\) Home Share program](#)

Local governments play a critical role in ensuring all residents have access to safe, affordable, and inclusive housing. By developing Local Housing Plans that adopt an inclusive definition of “housing affordability,” municipalities can create policies and programs that reflect the real needs of households with low and moderate incomes. This includes people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who, on average, require 35% more income to reach the poverty line.¹⁰ This approach goes beyond generic affordability targets to meet the diverse needs of the community.

Cities and towns control zoning, density rules, bylaws, and local incentives, all of which influence what housing gets built, where, and how accessible it is. Raising awareness among municipal leaders helps them understand the importance of affordable, accessible, and welcoming housing for all people.

Monitoring and accountability are also essential. Tracking the creation of affordable housing units allows municipalities to identify gaps, adjust policies, and target investments effectively. Including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities ensures these often-overlooked community members are not left behind and that their needs and right to live in homes that support independence, dignity, and community participation are actualized.

Municipalities can expand housing opportunities through collaboration. Partnerships with the housing development sector, non-profit housing organizations, and other stakeholders can increase housing diversity, supply, and affordability. Tools such as social procurement¹¹ can further promote equity and inclusion, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to live in a home that supports a full and dignified life.

Provincial Government

In 2017, Inclusion BC and Community Living BC came together to address the need for inclusive housing for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Together, they established the Inclusive Housing Task Force and released the report [Home is Where Our Story Begins...](#), which highlighted the importance of:

1. Data and resources
2. Identity and visibility
3. Affordability and finance

¹⁰ Disability Without Poverty (2024), Disability Poverty in Canada Report Card, online: [2024 Disability Poverty in Canada Report Card | Disability Without Poverty](#)

¹¹ The Community Social Planning Council (2013), Toward a Community Benefit Model of Procurement in Community Services, online: [Towards a Community Benefit Model of Procurement for Social Services 2013 – Community Social Planning Council](#)

4. Inclusive design

The work of the Task Force was incorporated into the [Re-imagining Community Inclusion Initiative](#), launched on May 31, 2019, which positioned housing as one of four key pillars. This transition led to the Task Force's dissolution and the creation of a provincial working group. Through this working group, the BC Non-Profit Housing Association completed provincial research, and Inclusion BC, in partnership with SPARC BC, co-developed [13 community snapshots](#) to help municipal governments better understand their communities' housing needs.

Despite the introduction of 50 new portable rental supplements under an agreement between Community Living BC and BC Housing, collaborative housing developments have been limited and have not kept pace with growing demand or the diversity of housing needs. According to CLBC,¹² as of March 31, 2025, the caseload distribution for housing options is as follows:

- Staffed Living or Group Home Model: 2,998
- Shared Living (Home Sharing and Live-in Support): 4,263
- Independent Living: 2,779

As of 2026, 29,271 people are eligible for CLBC-funded services. Based on the case load breakdown above, 19,231 people live in other arrangements, most of whom, in our experience, continue to live in family homes. This means that 66% of people eligible for CLBC are not meaningfully included in the [provincial housing strategy](#). This also means many people are remaining in the family home, not out of choice, but out of financial necessity and to ensure their disability support needs are met by family members. For some families, this arrangement works well; for others, the strain is contributing to family breakdown and financial insecurity.

To fulfill our human rights obligations and acknowledge the historical harms experienced by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, the province must create clear pathways for people to access the full range of housing options outlined in the provincial housing strategy. This includes a dedicated plan to expand diverse housing options beyond group homes and shared living arrangements, with meaningful targets for this population. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities have a right to a home of their own, including the right to rent and to own.

To be truly effective, housing options must be coordinated with each person's disability-related needs to ensure safety, independence, and meaningful

¹² External review, *supra note 9* at 19

community participation. This requires a collaborative agreement between the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction and the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs, along with their respective Crown Corporations, Community Living BC and BC Housing.

Aligning housing with disability-specific requirements allows people to:

- Live in the most appropriate and least restrictive setting.
- Exercise their right to choice and control over their lives.

It also ensures that public investments effectively meet both social and functional needs. This coordination cannot be achieved by a single ministry alone; it requires collective, cross-sector action.

Federal Government

Access to inclusive housing is a fundamental component of Canadians' human rights. However, current housing initiatives funded by the federal government and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) too often allow for segregated models that isolate people with disabilities from their communities. The [National Housing Strategy](#) and related CMHC programs should use this definition:

Inclusive housing means safe, affordable, accessible homes where people with disabilities can live by choice, in dispersed mixed-income neighbourhoods, with the supports they need to participate fully in community life.

An inclusive approach:

- Eliminates physical and systemic barriers,
- Promotes participation in social and economic life, and
- Respects the rights to liberty, equality, and non-discrimination as embodied in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Despite this clear vision, significant federal investments continue to flow into *congregate and segregated housing models*, including group homes and institutional-like settings that undermine choice, autonomy, and community inclusion for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Inclusion Canada has highlighted that such models “deny choice, deny opportunity,

congregate, segregate, and isolate people,” and fall short of supporting meaningful community living.¹³

The Federal Housing Advocate has called for urgent action to ensure adequate, accessible, and inclusive housing for people with disabilities and a coordinated strategy across federal, provincial, and municipal governments to address systemic barriers to community living.¹⁴

To align federal housing policy with human rights, Canada must stop federal funding for congregate housing models that segregate people with disabilities and instead prioritize investments in inclusive, community-based housing paired with individualized, portable supports.¹⁵ This includes launching a national deinstitutionalization plan with:

- clear timelines,
- measurable targets, and
- dedicated funding to transition people out of institutional and congregate settings, including the thousands of people with disabilities who are not seniors living in long-term care facilities,¹⁶ into community homes of their choosing, with supports that travel with the person.

Federal funding agreements with provinces and territories should be amended to prohibit the use of any federal housing dollars, including those flowed through provinces for segregated congregate housing models, ensuring National Housing Strategy investments directly support inclusive housing outcomes. These reforms would put Canada on a path toward fulfilling the promise of the strategy and the human right to housing for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.¹⁷

¹³ Inclusion Canada (2020), Position on Housing, online: [Housing | Inclusion Canada](#)

¹⁴ Canadian Human Rights Commission, *supra note 2*

¹⁵ Dickson D, Linton M. (2025), A Haunting Legacy: Systemic Ableism in Canadian Housing Policy for People Labelled with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*. 2025;58(3):565-590. doi:10.1017/S0008423925000253

¹⁶ The Canadian Human Rights Commission (2024), The right to housing for people with disabilities: Monitoring framework, online: [The right to housing for people with disabilities - December 2024](#)

¹⁷ Ibid.

BC's current monthly Persons with Disability benefit rates¹⁸ leave people roughly 35% below the poverty line¹⁹. The Canada Disability Benefit launched in July 2025 provides some people with disabilities an additional \$200 per month. However, restrictive eligibility criteria, particularly the Disability Tax Credit, prevent people who are otherwise eligible from receiving the benefit. In its current form, the Canada Disability Benefit does not adequately reduce poverty. Although this position statement makes no direct calls to action regarding access to income security, it is a significant contributor to housing barriers. We examine this issue in greater detail in the [Position Statement on Income Security for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#).

Calls to Action

Inclusion BC calls on all levels of government to adopt a comprehensive, rights-based approach to housing and community living that aligns with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and work collaboratively to ensure access to inclusive housing for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Municipal Governments

Develop Local Housing Plans that include concrete actions to:

- Adopt an inclusive definition of 'housing affordability' that takes into consideration the specific needs of households with low and low-to-moderate incomes.
- Monitor the number of new housing units that are created that are affordable to households with low and low-to-moderate incomes.
- Ensure that the needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are reflected in local housing needs reports and housing strategies.
- Encourage partnerships with the housing development sector, the non-profit housing sector, and others to explore ways to increase the supply, diversity, and affordability of the existing housing stock.

¹⁸ Disability Assistance Rate Table, *supra note 6*

¹⁹ Statistics Canada (2025), Market Basket Measure (MBM) thresholds for the reference family by Market Basket Measure region, component and base year, online: [Market Basket Measure \(MBM\) thresholds for the reference family by Market Basket Measure region, component and base year](#)

- Explore opportunities to use social procurement as a way of expanding the range of housing choices available to people who have been traditionally excluded from the housing market.
- Commit to supporting local Indigenous Nations and Indigenous organizations, ensuring they lead on design and decision-making of housing strategies in their communities.

Provincial Government

Add a clear definition of inclusive housing to the [provincial housing strategy](#) and BC Housing programs, with steps to:

- Work with Municipal and Federal Government to increase the supply and diversity of available housing options across the province to ensure access to inclusive and culturally safe housing for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Ensure collaboration between the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction and Community Living BC with the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs and BC Housing to coordinate inclusive housing needs with disability supports.
- Expand the range of housing choices that are available and affordable to people with low and low-to-moderate incomes and set measurable targets.
- Understand and respond to ongoing housing and affordability pressures for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, including setting a specific target for supported housing units dedicated to CLBC-eligible people to meet increasing demand.²⁰
- Commit to supporting Indigenous Nations and Indigenous organizations, ensuring they lead on design and decision-making of housing strategies in their communities.

Government of Canada

Add a clear definition of inclusive housing to the [National Housing Strategy](#) and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) programs, and:

- Stop federal funding for congregate housing models that segregate people with disabilities.
- Launch a national deinstitutionalization plan with timelines, targets, and funding for portable supports.

²⁰ External review, *supra note 9* at 43

- Mandate in federal/provincial/territorial funding agreements that no federal housing dollars, including those that flow through the provinces and territories, will be used to fund congregate housing models.

Inclusion BC maintains that segregated and congregate housing models are incompatible with human rights, dignity, and inclusion. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities belong in the community, in homes of their own choosing, with the supports they need to live safe, meaningful, and self-directed lives. Housing policy must move decisively away from segregation and toward a future grounded in rights, equity, and inclusion for all.