

Inclusion BC Background Document and Questions for Provincial Political Parties

Introduction

Inclusion BC is pleased to share this background package with British Columbia's provincial political parties for the 2026 election.

This package highlights some key issues that affect people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families across British Columbia. We invite each party to review the information and respond to the questions. Please explain how your party would address these issues and priorities.

Your responses will help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, and supporters understand each party's plans and priorities before the election.

These issues do not affect all people with disabilities and their families in the same way. However, they are some of the biggest barriers for many of the people and families that Inclusion BC supports. These barriers can make it harder for people to live a good life in the community.

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Issue #1: Access to Early Learning and Child Care for Children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Inclusive early learning and child care are every child's right. It requires removing barriers and providing the supports children need to participate fully.

Inclusive early learning and child care means all children are welcomed into regular programs, with children their age, and the supports needed to participate fully. Programs should be affordable, accessible, inclusive, and culturally safe.

The principles of universal design should be used to create programs so that all children have opportunities to participate, learn, and do well.

Key Challenges

1. Discrimination

Children with disabilities face discrimination and are often left out from child care. Without clear laws that require inclusion, not all children have access to child care in British Columbia. This raises concerns under the BC Human Rights Code.

2. Barriers Faced by Families

Families often experience:

- Being denied a child care space because of their child's disability. This can limit employment and create financial stress.
- Additional costs to meet their child's support needs.
- Difficulty finding child care programs that are accessible, have trained staff, and appropriate supports.
- A shortage of child care spaces, especially in rural and remote communities.

3. Long Waitlists for the Supported Child Development Programs

The Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Supported Child Development Programs (ASCDP and SCDP) are important to inclusion. Many children are on waitlists for these programs. This leaves them without the supports they need.

The province doesn't have a clear framework for deciding who gets ASCDP and SCDP supports. Access is especially limited for children ages 5–12 and youth over age 12. Creating new child care spaces without requiring inclusion means that not everyone gets fair access.

4. Children with Medical Complexity Are Being Left Out

Since Nursing Support Services stopped providing training for child care programs, many children with medical complexity are being left out. Programs can no longer safely meet the health-related needs of this group of children.

Recommendations

Require Inclusion in All Early Learning Child Care Programs

Require all child care programs to include children with disabilities by:

- Updating the BC Early Learning and Child Care Act to clearly define inclusion and align it with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Requiring and funding all BC licensed programs to provide inclusive child care.
- Issuing a Ministerial Order under the BC School Act that requires all child care programs run by school districts to be inclusive and follow the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Fully Fund the Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program

Provide enough funding for the ASCDP and SCDP to eliminate waitlists and provide inclusive supports to children with disabilities across British Columbia.

Make sure Children with Medical Complexity can Access Child Care

Require the Ministry of Education and Child Care, the Ministry of Health, and regional Health Authorities to work together. Make sure child care providers have the training and support they need to safely meet children's health-related needs.

Develop an Inclusive Workforce Strategy

Develop a strategy that:

- Addresses staff shortages in child care
- Provides better training on inclusive practices, including in post-secondary programs.
- Makes sure child care providers have the skills and resources to support children with disabilities.

Questions for Political Parties

1.1 Will your party update BC's Early Learning and Child Care Act to require all licensed programs to include children with intellectual and developmental disabilities and define inclusion in a way that aligns with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities?

1.2 Will your party use Early Learning and Child Care Agreement funding to eliminate ASCDP and SCDP waitlists and make sure children with disabilities have fair access to supports, including in rural and remote communities?

1.3 What will your party do to make sure child care programs have enough staff, training, and health-related supports to include children with disabilities, including children with medical complexity?

Issue #2: Supporting Transitions for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

The transition from childhood to adulthood is an important time in people's lives. Yet, gaps between child and adult services can make it harder for people to access needed supports and participate in adult life.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities face barriers to:

- inclusive education,
- career planning,
- employment, and
- lifelong learning.

Young people and their families often have difficulties using services that do not always work well together. When support is not easy to get and use, people are left without the help they need. This can affect mental health and lead to a crisis.

Successful transitions require supports that work well together. Supports should promote inclusion, independence, and full participation in community life.

Key Challenges

1. Gaps between Child and Adult Services

Young people can experience gaps in support as they transition from child to adult services. This can include challenges connecting with Community Living BC (CLBC). These gaps can delay access to services needed for:

- education,
- employment,
- housing,
- health care, and
- community participation.

Indigenous young adults with disabilities may face additional barriers caused by unfair systems.

2. Long Waitlists for Supports

Long waitlists for disability, health, mental health, and other community-based supports can leave people and families without needed supports. This can make their situation worse and increase the risk of a crisis.

3. Limited Opportunities for Inclusive Learning and Employment

Many students with intellectual and developmental disabilities get limited career and transition planning before leaving school. School staff often lack the resources, time, and training to create transition plans that connect students with meaningful opportunities after graduating.

Gaps in inclusive post-secondary education, lifelong learning, and employment opportunities can leave young people unprepared for adult life.

4. Systems Do Not Work Together

The following systems often work independently:

- ministries,
- school districts,
- post-secondary institutions,
- health authorities,
- CLBC, and
- community organizations.

Without coordinated planning and clear responsibilities, families may face confusion and gaps in services.

Recommendations

Develop a Transition Framework

Create a provincial framework for transitioning youth with disabilities into adulthood. Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of:

- ministries,
- health authorities,
- school districts,
- post-secondary institutions,
- CLBC,
- housing providers, and
- community organizations.

Improve Access to Health, Mental Health, and Disability Supports

Make sure children and youth with disabilities can get health, mental health, and disability-related supports in their communities without long delays. Supports should be available before, during, and after key transition periods to reduce the risk of a crisis.

Build Inclusive Community Services

Invest in community organizations and mainstream services across British Columbia. Make sure they can provide accessible and inclusive supports to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout their lives.

Create More Inclusive Employment Opportunities

Invest in supported employment, work experience, employer education, and inclusive hiring practices. This can increase employment opportunities and workforce participation for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Strengthen Transition Planning in Schools

Make sure students and families receive transition and career planning before leaving high school. Planning should include options for meaningful employment, post-secondary, housing, community participation, and adult services.

Questions for Political Parties

2.1 What actions will your party take to prevent service gaps for young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities transitioning from child to adult services?

2.2 Will your party commit to developing a coordinated provincial transition framework with clear goals and responsibilities across:

- ministries,
- health authorities,
- school districts,
- post-secondary institutions,
- Community Living BC (CLBC),
- housing, and
- community services?

2.3 What will your party do to reduce waitlists and improve access to health, mental health, and disability-related supports during the transition to adulthood?

2.4 How will your party improve access to inclusive post-secondary education, lifelong learning, and employment opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities?

Issue #3: Access to Housing for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Safe, affordable, and inclusive housing is essential to living a good life in the community. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities need housing that supports:

- choice,
- control,
- independence,
- dignity, and inclusion.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities says people with disabilities have the right to choose where they live and who they live with. People have the right to live independently and participate fully in their communities.

Key Challenges

1. Limited Housing Options

More than 5,000 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in British Columbia require housing. However, affordable, accessible, and inclusive housing options are limited.

Housing choices are limited further by beliefs such as:

- There are only one or two appropriate housing models.
- Segregated settings, such as group homes, are the only or safest option.

2. Affordability Gap

Many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities cannot afford market housing. People need an extra \$800-\$1,400 each month to afford housing.

Reasons for this affordability gap include:

- Persons with Disabilities (PWD) benefits provide only \$500 per month for housing and keep people below the poverty line.
- People with intellectual and developmental disabilities who work often earn less than \$20,000 a year.
- Many people with very low incomes do not qualify for rent-geared-to-income housing.
- There is less subsidized housing set at \$500 per month than what is needed.

3. Barriers to Inclusive Housing

People with disabilities are often left out of housing planning and decision-making. People may face discrimination, limited access to disability supports, and housing and support systems that do not work well together.

These barriers can lead to experiences of homelessness. They can also lead to crises, poor health, and a greater risk of harm. These outcomes can be prevented.

Recommendations

Include Disability in Housing Planning

Meaningfully include people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in BC's housing strategy.

Create a Provincial Disability Housing Strategy

Develop a strategy that:

- Uses an inclusive definition of affordable housing.
- Creates more affordable, accessible, and inclusive housing.
- Increases housing options with the supports people need to live independently in their communities.

Improve Coordination Across Government

Make sure government works together to connect housing with the supports people need to live successfully in their communities. This includes:

- the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs,
- the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction,
- BC Housing, and
- Community Living BC (CLBC).

Clear Targets and Accountability

Set clear targets for housing development. This includes supported housing for people who are eligible for CLBC services. Publicly monitor and report on progress.

Questions for Political Parties

3.1 What will your party do to increase affordable, accessible, and inclusive housing options that allow people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to choose where they live and who they live with?

3.2 What actions will your party take to address the gap between housing costs and what people with intellectual and developmental disabilities can afford, including changes to disability benefits and access to rent-geared-to-income housing?

3.3 Will your party commit to a provincial disability housing strategy with measurable targets and clear coordination between BC Housing, Community Living BC, and relevant ministries to make sure people have housing and the supports they need to live independently in their communities?

Issue #4: Access to Income Security for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

British Columbia has one of the highest poverty rates in Canada.

Canada agreed to follow the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2010. This means Canada has committed to making sure people with disabilities have the right to a good standard of living. This includes help with disability-related expenses and access to financial supports.

Everyone deserves enough income to live a good life and participate fully in their communities.

Key Challenges

1. Barriers to Income Security

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities face barriers to having enough income. These include:

- Complicated support systems that do not fully meet people's needs.
- Limited education and job opportunities.
- Higher costs for housing, health care, transportation, and daily needs.

2. Rates are Too Low

The Persons with Disabilities (PWD) program provides some income and health care supports, but the rates are too low. For example, a single adult receives \$1,483.50 a month. This is about 35% below the poverty line and does not keep up with the rising cost of living in British Columbia.

The Canada Disability Benefit provides just \$200 a month and can be difficult to access. This amount is not enough to lift people out of poverty.

3. Policies that Keep People in Poverty

PWD earning exemptions and clawbacks limit people's annual household income.

These policies keep people living in poverty. They can also create financial dependence, which increases the risk of gender-based violence.

For example:

- People who work, or who have a working partner, may lose their benefits or have their income reduced.
- Couples get \$695 total for a monthly shelter allowance, compared to \$500 each for individuals, despite higher housing costs.
- People cannot combine benefits like shelter allowances with other housing supports. This makes it harder to address affordability gaps.

Recommendations

Create a Provincial Disability Strategy

Create a strategy that improves access to health care, housing, and disability-related supports and services. These services should support the well-being of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and provide enough income to live well.

Improve Benefits

Guarantee a livable income, with benefit rates starting at \$2,400 a month and adjusted for inflation over time. Make benefits like the Canada Disability Benefit and the Disability Tax Credit easier to access by working with the federal government to create an automatic approval process for people receiving provincial benefits.

Eliminate Policies that Keep People in Poverty

Make Persons with Disabilities (PWD) benefits fully individualized, meaning they are attached to the person, not the household. Couples should receive the same shelter allowance as two individuals. Eliminate clawbacks based on a spouse's income and allow people to combine benefits to better meet their needs.

Question for Political Parties

4.1 Will your party commit to increasing the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) benefit to at least \$2,400 per month and indexing it to inflation, so people with disabilities can live above the poverty line?

4.2 Will your party allow people with disabilities to combine provincial, federal, housing, and other supports without losing essential income or benefits?

4.3 Will your party end all household-based eligibility rules and ensure PWD benefits are fully individualized, so a person's financial security is not determined by their relationship status or living arrangements?

Full List of Position Statements and Calls to Action

Our work extends beyond the four issues highlighted in this request. We have developed position statements outlining key disability issues and fair solutions to help your party make lasting change.

Each of our position statements is grounded in the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**. They are also informed by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, our member organizations, and our Board of Directors.

As you develop your policies and priorities, we invite you **to apply a disability lens** to your platforms.

- [Access to Early Learning and Child Care for Children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#)
- [Access to Supports and Services for Children and Youth with Disabilities](#)
- [Access to Health Care and Coordination of Care for Children and Youth with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#)
- [Access to K-12 Education for Children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#)
- [Income Security for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#)
- [Access to Health and Coordinated Care for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#)
- [Access to Housing for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#)
- [Access to Disability Supports and Services for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#)
- [The Right of People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities to Parent](#)
- [Access to Justice for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#)
- [Income Security for Families Raising Children and Youth with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#)
- [Access to Mental Health Care for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#)

Summary of Questions

Access to Early Learning and Child Care for Children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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1.3 What will your party do to make sure child care programs have enough staff, training, and health-related supports to include children with disabilities, including children with medical complexity?

Supporting Transitions for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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2.2 Will your party commit to developing a coordinated provincial transition framework with clear goals and responsibilities across:

- ministries,
- health authorities,
- school districts,
- post-secondary institutions,
- Community Living BC (CLBC),
- housing, and
- community services?

2.3 What will your party do to reduce waitlists and improve access to health, mental health, and disability-related supports during the transition to adulthood?

2.4 How will your party improve access to inclusive post-secondary education, lifelong learning, and employment opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities?

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