

Recommendations for Budget 2024

Inclusion BC is a non-profit federation working with our partners to build community and enhance the lives of children, youth, and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and their families. We do this by supporting people's abilities, promoting positive action, and advocating for rights, responsibilities, and social justice. We are supported by a membership of individual people, families, and 65-member organizations who are working together to build inclusive communities across our province. Our vision is a world where everybody belongs.

In preparation for this submission, we brought our membership together to ask a straightforward question – If the government of BC could make one investment to improve the quality of life of those we work for and with what would it be?

Our members agreed the top funding priorities are a livable income and secure housing, closely followed by improved health and mental health support for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The combination of these three inequities continues to keep people marginalized in their communities and from systems of support. In this submission, we identify the most critical funding gaps currently preventing the full inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families in B.C.

Recommendation #1 Raise the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) benefit to \$2,200 per month, increase the associated health supplemental benefits, and add 400 additional portable rental housing supplements on top of the \$500 shelter allowance to ensure that people can access safe, accessible, and inclusive market housing anywhere in BC.

As we advocate for the rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, we see the relationship between disability and poverty every day. We know that, according to a [2018 fact sheet](#) published by Inclusion Canada, 73% of working-age Canadians with an intellectual disability who live on their own are living in poverty and less than 25% are employed. We also know that safe and affordable housing is a barrier for this population; a [2020 report](#) by Inclusion BC and Community Living BC found that over 5,000 people in British Columbia alone will be looking for a home in the next 5 years. However, the current shelter allowance won't give them access to inclusive housing and the portable rental housing supplement is a mechanism to achieve it.

This cycle of disability poverty often starts young; a [2008 study by the Centre for Childhood Disability Research](#) found that “children living in poverty are at a greater risk for a disability or developmental delay, and caring for a child with disability increases the odds of a family living in poverty.” Parents of children with disabilities, particularly those already experiencing

poverty, report “urgent and unmet support needs for respite care, caregiving support, household assistance, and accessible child care.” There are often huge demands on the time and financial resources of families who have one or more members with a disability, which can contribute to families being stuck in cycles of poverty. We encourage the government to consider the early onset of disability poverty in their poverty reduction, inclusive childcare, and housing plans through additional and disability-focused investments in these areas.

Recommendation #2 Targeted investment of \$1,000,000 for the development of an Inclusive Health and Mental Health strategy to adequately respond to the health and mental health needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and the creation of a provincial oversight structure to provide leadership of these services.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities have unique, often more complex health needs and a greater presence of co-existing health issues than neuro-typical people. For example, professionals report that the [prevalence](#) of co-occurring mental health conditions in adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities is as high as 40% in some studies.

The fragmented services and the limited understanding of the health and mental health needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have left them significantly marginalized. For example, [young adults like Simon](#), who has been living in and out of hospital mental health wards for 3.5 years because there are no living options that would provide the care and coordination of care he requires for both his health and mental health needs. Developmental Disabilities Mental Health Services are not able to respond to the demand and the waitlists can be up to 24 months long.

A provincial strategy for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities is long overdue to address the following:

- the gaps in provincial leadership and data collection in health care;
- the need for specialized and bridging expertise between health and all services – CLBC, Health Authorities, and service providers;
- the need for essential community nursing supports for children, youth, and adults;
- the need to update the guidelines providing direction to Health Authorities, CLBC, and service providers;
- the need to support the health-related needs of adults as they age; and
- the responsibility to ensure that all adults can equally exercise their rights and have equitable access to health care.

The needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are impacted across multiple systems with scattered accountability. Having a dedicated leadership structure to provide oversight, collect data, and offer training would provide a coordinated approach that is much needed to meet people’s health and wellness needs.



Recommendation #3 Establish an Innovation Fund of \$1,000,000 through the Office of the Parliamentary Secretary for Community Development and Non-Profits to support community living organizations to invest in new solutions and approaches to strengthen the inclusion and resilience of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in their home communities.

Organizations in the community living sector have been working on resolving and responding to crisis after crisis with limited capacity and funds to explore and implement new approaches.

As a social sector that was built on community development approaches to supporting inclusive pathways for the people, the ongoing surge in administrative costs such as technology, rent, property taxes, and wage compression have diminished the administrative structure needed to support the transformation of services required to meet the changing support needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

More simply put, the cost of operating a community living organization keeps going up and the administrative funds remain the same limiting our sector's ability to respond to changing support needs of the people we work for and with.

In a sector whose number of eligible adults increases at an average of 5% per year, we need to transform the services and supports to ensure each person is given the opportunity to flourish in communities prepared to support them. Investment in community living organizations and person-centered societies is an investment in better lives for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

