



Supporting children and adults with developmental disabilities for 60+ years

May 15, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.M., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Langevin Block
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A2

The Honourable Bill Morneau, P.C, M.P
Minister of Finance
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Finance Minister Morneau,

RE: Covid19 Assistance for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities and their Families

I am writing to you on behalf of the many thousands of Alberta children and adults with intellectual disabilities and their families that we represent; and as a parent myself of an adult son with intellectual disabilities. Inclusion Alberta is a family advocacy organization of more than 60 years standing that has received international recognition for its world leading innovations in creating meaningful and inclusive lives for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

As I'm sure you were aware prior to the pandemic's devastating impact on our country, children and adults with intellectual disabilities and their families were already economically disadvantaged. Parents of who have children with intellectual disabilities not only experience the additional costs associated with raising a child with disabilities but are often forced to forego employment or advancement given the need to have at least one parent available to ensure the safety, development and well-being of their children. In addition, many adults with intellectual disabilities remain at home throughout adulthood which again often requires consistent and constant parental involvement. With limited support systems available, many families incur costs, if not by sacrificing employment and income, by expending funds on hiring or topping up the wages of support staff, securing and replacing adaptive equipment, health related costs not covered by healthcare plans, and so forth. As so few adults with intellectual disabilities are employed even part-time, they are

dependent on the limited government assistance available over the course of their lives which is less than Canada's poverty line.

Now the economic challenges associated with having a child or family member with intellectual disabilities are exacerbated and unabated. While parents of adolescent or teenage children might be able to return to work at least part-time, as their children can be left at home without a parent present, this is not true for parents of children with intellectual disabilities. When schools re-open the plans do not yet include full classrooms everyday which means parents will have to remain home if they have a child with disabilities. Support programs do not cover the hours of the school day. Many adults with intellectual disabilities are at home as those few who were employed lost their part-time employment which is not about to resume in the immediate future and the vast majority of adults no longer have access to their day programs and supports, leaving families solely responsible.

All Canadians, we would like to think, appreciate the continuing and substantive efforts of your government to offset the financial losses and costs of the pandemic for so many. However, no such consideration has yet been evident with respect to the additional and continuing COVID-19 financial challenges incurred by individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families. We are asking not to be forgotten and overlooked. Our commitment to our family members with intellectual disabilities is deeply rooted in love but many families live on a sharp edge and additional financial challenges can be enough to break a family. We are only seeking for ourselves and our family members the opportunity to live lives comparable to Canadians without disabilities.

Please consider providing our sons and daughters with intellectual disabilities and our families the additional short-term support we need to survive this pandemic without falling further behind. We too need to be a part of Canada's recovery, but this will only be possible with your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barb MacIntyre". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barb MacIntyre
President, Inclusion Alberta

cc The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion

