

Alberta Disability Assistance Program (ADAP) Cuts \$200/month from Adults with Disabilities

In recognition of the rising cost of living and affordability crisis, the Government of Alberta is offering pay increases over 4 years of 20% for nurses and 12% to teachers and AUPE members. MLAs increased their own housing allowance by 14% this year from \$1930 to \$2200. Also this year, the Government of Alberta has announced it will cut income support for most people on AISH by \$200/month.

The announcement in August that all AISH recipients will be transferred to ADAP, a new program with lower benefits, has caused panic. Tens of thousands are now unsure how they will pay for rent, food, and equipment or medication they require due to their disabilities. Most people with disabilities would welcome policy changes and employment supports that achieve government's stated goal of supporting them to "pursue fulfilling job opportunities." Both increasing the extent to which people with disabilities on AISH keep their employment earnings and medical benefits and offering enhanced employment supports could be accomplished without cutting benefits and creating a new program that brings new administrative expenses for government and fear and uncertainty for Albertans.

This summary outlines how ADAP would deepen poverty, punish employment, erode choice and fairness, and increase administrative burdens.

1. Reduced Financial Support and Increased Poverty

The cut from \$1,940 to \$1,740 for individuals moved from AISH to ADAP will force impossible budget choices. One [individual who receives AISH described](#) \$200 as "the difference between getting uncovered prescriptions paid for or having groceries for the month. The difference between almost living and barely existing." The assumption that tens of thousands of individuals with disabilities on ADAP will secure sufficient employment to be better off than on the current AISH program is unrealistic and will see thousands driven into deeper poverty.

Costs for basic necessities continue increasing at an even faster rate than the Consumer Price Index and now the [cost of a basic standard of living](#) is higher in Calgary than anywhere in the country outside of Vancouver and the territories. Calgarians experiencing a cut from \$1,940 to \$1,740 will descend below the [deep-poverty](#) threshold. Disability-related expenses, estimated at 20% above normal living costs, make the impact even worse.

2. Punitive Employment Policies

While ADAP claims to reward work, it actually **lowers the fully exempt employment income** from \$1,072/month under AISH to just \$350/month. The reduced exemption means that many people with employment will be financially worse off under ADAP.

Based on the [best available modeling](#) of how the earning exemptions will work, anyone earning less than \$25,368 annually (roughly 33 hours/week at minimum wage) from employment will have lower income on ADAP than on the existing AISH program. Even individuals able to reapply and get back on the diminished AISH program, will be worse off if they previously were able to make more in employment than \$350/month, or if they have a spouse/cohabiting partner who earns over \$1500/month from employment.

The barriers to employment for adults with disabilities are well documented and complex. Even if unemployment in Alberta wasn't over 8%, the suggestion that tens of thousands of Albertans with disabilities will be able to secure and sustain adequate employment is not realizable. While a few individuals with disabilities who are able to maintain full-time employment will not be hurt, the vast majority of adults with disabilities will be worse off than if AISH was to remain unchanged.

3. Erosion of Choice and Fairness

Under the current proposal, **all AISH recipients will be automatically transferred to ADAP**. They may requalify for AISH if deemed “permanently unemployable” but not if assessed as having ‘some’ ability to work. This binary classification is both **ableist and dehumanizing**, ignoring the spectrum of ability and the role of accommodations and supports in enabling employment. The proposal for ADAP would end the right to appeal eligibility to the Citizens Appeal Panel that is impartial and independent from AISH program administration.

4. Increased Bureaucracy and Administrative Burden

ADAP introduces a new administrative apparatus to administer a new program, wastes healthcare resources reassessing individuals, and burdens individuals with disabilities with navigating a new adjudication process to **re-prove their disability status**.

5. Lack of Meaningful Consultation

Despite government claims, Inclusion Alberta and other disability organizations report that they were **not meaningfully consulted** on the need for ADAP or its proposed design. Rolling out ADAP has created widespread fear and uncertainty, with minimal transparency. No one asked to have their income support reduced by over 10%.

Conclusion

ADAP fails at the objective offered by the government of ensuring that people with disabilities “not be punished for getting a job.” Given that the proposed design for ADAP fails at this objective, and would deepen poverty, erode choice and fairness, and increase administrative burden and red tape, there is no need for a new program. Individuals currently on AISH already benefit from employment income through earning exemptions. Inclusion Alberta is calling for the cancellation of ADAP and instead improving AISH by reducing earning clawback rates, ending the [clawback of CDB](#) and EI, enhancing employment support and extending health benefits to individuals who earn too much to receive a monthly benefit.

You have a vital role to play in ensuring that policy reforms align with values of equity, opportunity, and respect. Inclusion Alberta urges all allies to speak out and support a better path forward.