



AAN POVERTY REDUCTION

Date/Time:

March 21st, 2022 /1:30pm –3:30pm

Location: Zoom

Chairs: Allyson Dann, Margot Brunner

In Attendance:

Aisha Siddiqui (University of Calgary)
 Allyson Dann (Calgary Fetal Alcohol Network)
 Brad Robertson (Community Advocate)
 Colleen Huston (Disability Action Hall)
 Darryl Janzen (Cerebral Palsy Alberta)
 Katie Dodd (Children's Link)
 Levi Nilson (Cerebral Palsy Alberta)
 Margot Brunner (Voice of Albertans with Disabilities)

Meri Topchieva (Alberta Ability Network)
 Mezaun Lakha-Evin (Alberta Ability Network)
 Patti Desjardine (University of Calgary)
 Philip Ney (Inclusion Alberta)
 Phillip Dom Shaw (Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities)
 Roy Pierson
 Sarah Brazeau (Easter Seals Alberta)
 Shane Rempel (Southern Alberta Brain Injury Society)
 Tyler Cooley

Meeting Minutes

Welcome
 Land Acknowledgement
 Breakout Rooms
 Meeting considerations
 Review of last month's meeting minutes

Spotlight Agency:**Inclusion Alberta**

- Inclusion Alberta is calling people to speak up on the following issues when meeting with candidates, attending candidate forums or otherwise being engaged in the election process:
 1. Persons with Developmental Disabilities Program (PDD) and Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD): Access and funding
 2. Inclusive education: Ensuring access and quality
 3. Indigenous children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families: Access to culturally relevant supports and resources
 4. Expanding inclusive housing and ending institutionalization
 5. Improving income security and increasing employment opportunities
- The government assumed that the funding from the last budget would solve most of the problems in the disability sector but dire change is still needed for people waitlisted on FSCD and PDD. Many people are not receiving services for years on end because of waitlisting, there needs to be a plan to eliminate waitlists.

- There currently isn't enough money in the budget to serve everyone who's eligible, hence why people are waiting for an extended amount of time.
- Children with disabilities are only being taught 1-2 hours a day and school districts need to prioritize the education of children. The government needs to keep the districts accountable, so they support children more.
- Some of the recommendations for improving income security and increasing employment opportunities are: 1) no provincial clawbacks related to CDB and exempt CBD income from any eligibility calculations. 2) increase PDD funding 3) increase inclusive employment 4) AISH policy to treat EI as earned income and deducted only in accordance with income and not dollar for dollar.
- View the Inclusion Alberta's document to share the same message:
<https://inclusionalberta.org/albertaelection2023/>

Cerebral Palsy Alberta – RDSP

- With the current statistics available, it was shown that in 2020 in Alberta, only 30% of the eligible people have gotten an RDSP.
- 70% of eligible RDSP individuals have not received one.
- If this continues, about 2.9 billion dollars in government entitlements are going to be left on the table.
- Massive information gap between the people who are eligible for an RDSP and don't have one.
- People usually lack a general understanding of what the benefits are and how it can work for them.
- Financial advisors within banks do not always know about the program, making it harder to access information.
- Some financial advisors have attended the RDSP information sessions to get better acquainted with the program.
- Withdrawals start at 60 but it wasn't clear what could happen if someone does not withdraw. One client did not withdraw for a year after turning 60 and was at risk of his account being non-compliant and losing thousands of dollars.
- Getting the DTC is the hardest part of getting an RDSP.
- This information needs to be taught in colleges, training programs, and schools.
- As the RDSP specialist is writing his Q4 report, he will be putting recommendations for the RDSP program and submitting them to the government of Alberta.
- The withdrawal age for RDPS is high and some clients are worried that they will not get the chance to use the money they're putting into their RDSP by that time. The government is treating this retirement plan like others and this is an inefficient policy that should be changed to improve the value of an RDSP.
- One of the reasons this program doesn't have a large uptake is because of the age restriction and the withdrawal claw backs. Since, if a client withdraws money before turning 60, the money will be taken \$3 for every \$1 withdrawn.



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Alberta Affordability Plan

- Many people that need financial support aren't getting it with the current affordability plan eligibility requirements.
- People on AISH should be given an exemption on the \$500 one-time housing benefit.

University of Calgary Internship Presentation

- This presentation focuses on poverty reduction frameworks around Canada and how Alberta can enact one.
- Nova Scotia made a poverty reduction framework aiming to improve support and access to necessities and enable more participation in society.
- PEI has created a Poverty Reduction Advisory Council where they implemented many initiatives to improve the quality of life such as increases in the minimum wage, income tax relief, changes to social assistance, increasing food and shelter initiatives, and increases to seniors and low-income home repairs programs.
- BC created its framework focusing on families, children and youth, education, and social support.
- Enough for All was Calgary's first poverty reduction strategy and the first one in Alberta. 2 key reports were submitted, Poverty Costs 2.0 in 2013 and Poverty Costs 2.5 in 2015 produced by Vibrant Communities Calgary and Action to End Poverty in Alberta. These reports had 71 recommendations for policies that could support poverty reduction in Alberta. Currently, 22 of these have been implemented.
- Please click here to view the Beneath the Surface report <https://enoughforall.ca/articles/beneath-the-surface>
- Please click here to view the 2022 community wellness report <https://wellbeing.enoughforall.ca/3/>

Action Items:

- The table will investigate drafting a letter to Minister Jeremy Nixon to support AISH recipients an exemption on the \$500 one-time Federal housing benefit.
- Poverty Reduction framework developed.
- Follow up with U of C to discuss potential Poverty Reduction Strategy

Wrap-Up/Adjournment

Next meeting:

Date: April 18th, 2022

Time: 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm

Location: Zoom