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March 2017

Community Update Disability Assistance Rate Increase and New Child Benefit Exemptions

The monthly disability assistance rate for people receiving Persons with Disabilities (PWD) benefits from the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation (MSDSI) will increase by \$50 beginning with the cheque that will be issued on March 22 (for April benefits). Families with two people designated as PWDs will receive a \$100 increase. The new maximum rate for support, shelter, and transportation for a single person is \$1033.42.

People receiving Room and Board benefits and the Comforts Allowance for people residing in a special care facility will also get the benefit of this increase. The Comforts Allowance for support and transportation for a single person will be \$222.

Disability Alliance BC welcomes any increase to the disability assistance rates, and we particularly pleased that the Comforts Allowance has been increased significantly over the last year: up from \$95 a month. At the same time, we are disappointed that the increase is not greater, and that there is no commitment to index the rates or to a timeline to introduce regular increases to the rates.

It is also disappointing that the Province's budget contains no monthly increase for people receiving income assistance (IA) and Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers to Employment (PPMB) benefits. These rates remain frozen at \$610 and \$657.92 respectively for single persons. Many people with disabilities receive IA or PPMB benefits for months or years before transitioning to PWD.

New Exemptions for Certain Child Benefits

The Province has also announced that effective April 1 the Canada Pension Plan disabled contributor's child benefit, foster-care payments, and Public Guardian and Trustee payments for children will all be exempt from calculations of income and disability assistance.

If you have any questions about this, please feel free to contact our Advocacy Access Program at 604-872-1278 or 1-800-663-1278 to talk to an advocate.