

## Your Story Is Needed!

### Disability Support Workers Are Essential!

#### Why

We know how important it is to keep staff who know you or your family member and are skilled, respectful, and empowering. History tells us that low wages and low recognition of skilled staff lead to staff burnout, and ultimately leaving for other jobs and careers. The Alberta Disability Workers Association (ADWA) believes that our workers deserve professional compensation that reflect the value and importance of the work they do. The pandemic has presented new challenges and expectations for workers and they have risen to the occasion showing commitment and creativity in their daily work. Now is the time to speak up for the top up of wages to ensure these workers are recognized financially for providing these essential services.

#### What

We (ADWA) are asking you to join a letter-writing campaign to advocate for Disability Support Workers to receive the federal top up for essential workers. On May 7, 2020 the Prime Minister of Canada announced that the Government of Canada would provide up to \$3 billion in support to increase the wages of low-income essential workers. Each province or territory would have to determine which workers would be eligible for support, and how much support they will receive. To our knowledge at this time, no employer in Alberta's disability services sector has received any money for wage top ups for their workers.

The provincial government is still deciding who should receive the top up money. That's why ADWA campaigns have focused on telling our funders in the provincial government why our sector deserves extra pay at this time. Other sectors will be doing the same about their workers. We think the CSS Ministry now understands the sacrifices our workers are making for relatively low wages (some barely above minimum wage). That's why we are now asking people to send their letters to the party leaders (Jason Kenney and Rachel Notley), as well as your local MLA, so we can educate the rest of the government about the essential services that are provided by individuals who support you and/or your family member.

We need to convince this government to give our workforce the emergency top up for our sector. If you are comfortable with sharing your story now is the time to do so. **We need individuals with disabilities, their families and/or guardians to tell the government how important and valuable these workers are in your lives.**

#### Share your story by writing a letter

1. Describe how important your workers are in supporting you or your loved one.  
What things would not be possible without their support? How has their ongoing work during this pandemic been important to you and your family? What skills, etc. have these workers displayed to ensure that you or your loved ones have stayed safe during this time? During COVID-19 how have staff members went above and beyond? Were there any new learning curves and tasks thrown at the workers that are supporting you or the ones you love?
2. Describe how it affects you/your loved one when staff leave their job.  
What training did they have that a new person will need? What did the previous staff mean to you on a personal level (friendship, companionship, shared stories and memories, etc.)? Have some of your favourite staff quit/left for a job or career that pays more? How do long-term staff affect your

sense of health, well-being and safety? How would it impact you and/or your family if your worker left during the pandemic due to the lack of recognition for their work?

3. Describe how difficult it is to hire new people with skills, education, training and experience to be a good Disability Support Worker.

Are there times when you do not have staff because it is difficult to find someone to hire? Are there times when your schedule or activities have been postponed because there are not enough staff available? Have you offered a qualified and/or experienced person the job and they have declined it due to low wages? How would it impact you if you had to hire and train new staff during the pandemic?

**Send your letter to:**

Premier Jason Kenney  
Office of the Premier  
307 Legislature Building  
10800 - 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6  
Email: [premier@gov.ab.ca](mailto:premier@gov.ab.ca)

Rachel Notley, Official Opposition Leader  
Legislature Office  
5th Floor  
9820 - 107 Street  
Edmonton, AB, Canada T5K 1E7  
Email: [Edmonton.Strathcona@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:Edmonton.Strathcona@assembly.ab.ca)

Your MLA (here's a link to help you find your [MLA](#))

**Copy (Cc:) your letter to:**

Minister Sawhney  
Legislature Office  
224 Legislature Building  
10800 - 97 Avenue NW  
Edmonton, AB, Canada T5K 2B6  
Email: [Calgary.NorthEast@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:Calgary.NorthEast@assembly.ab.ca)

Marie Renaud, Opposition Critic  
Legislature Office  
5th Floor  
9820 - 107 Street  
Edmonton, AB, Canada T5K 1E7  
Email: [St.Albert@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:St.Albert@assembly.ab.ca)

ADWA (so we can document and follow the campaign)  
Alberta Disability Workers Association  
PO Box 83029 Canyon Meadows  
Calgary, AB T2W 6G8  
Email: [info@adwa.ca](mailto:info@adwa.ca)

Thank you for considering taking this step and we appreciate your support during this time. If you would like to find out more about ADWA our website is [www.adwa.ca](http://www.adwa.ca). If you prefer to chat with us email [info@adwa.ca](mailto:info@adwa.ca)

Take care & stay well,

### **ADWA Board Directors**

The **Alberta Disability Workers Association (ADWA)** launched as a professional association in 2010. The focus of the association is to provide a voice for the workforce on a broader provincial level. The board has actively advocated for fair compensation, professionalizing the field and increased access to educational opportunities. We have adopted a Code of Professional Ethics & Conduct that each member signs upon joining. We completed a pilot project that reviewed a process that would evaluate and validate workers demonstration of core competency standards for community disability workers. The above are just a few activities that we have engaged in since we began. For more information on ADWA please visit our website at [www.adwa.ca](http://www.adwa.ca)