



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 27th, 2016

In March 2016, at the invitation of the Minister of Social Development and Social Innovation, a small group of stakeholders from the province's disability sector met with Minister Stilwell and senior ministry staff.

This meeting was held in relation to the messaging conveyed from the 2016 provincial budget announcement regarding the province's bus pass program, and to further the commitment of the government to work with stakeholders for increased opportunities and equality for all people with disabilities within British Columbia.

During this meeting a number of priority areas facing persons with disabilities were discussed, foremost being the critical need to increase the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) assistance rate to a level that will ensure the health, well-being and inclusion of one of the province's most vulnerable populations, both currently and in the future.

Other areas discussed included the need for increased information sharing and collaboration with stakeholders by government, including working together to ensure accurate, plain language messaging in relation to any changes to PWD benefits. The stakeholder group additionally requested the elimination of the annual \$45 bus pass administration fee.

We are pleased that the Minister has begun the process to address the areas discussed at the March meeting and, as a first step, has eliminated the annual bus pass fee and with it, one of the many barriers faced by British Columbians with disabilities.

We look forward to the ongoing work and the forward movement of the province to address the priority areas outlined during the March meeting, all of which are necessary for the realization of government's commitment to make British Columbia the most progressive province in Canada for people with disabilities.

Neil Belanger - Executive Director - British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society

Faith Bodnar - Executive Director - Inclusion BC

Jane Dyson - Executive Director - Disability Alliance BC

Al Etmanski - Co-Founder Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN) / Parent Advocate

Richard Faucher - Executive Director - Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion

Dr. Michael J. Prince - Lansdowne Professor of Social Policy - University of Victoria