

*The following is an Open letter and urgent plea to the Honourable Katrine Conroy, Shane Simpson, Adrian Dix, Rob Fleming and Dr. Bonnie Henry on behalf of British Columbians with a Disability and their families.*

## **DR. HENRY, PLEASE DON'T LEAVE OUR LOVED ONES WITH DISABILITIES BEHIND**

March 20, 2020

We write as a coalition of BC family-based organizations who are deeply worried about access to health care, social supports, disability benefits and other financial support for our family members with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have a province-wide network of resource parents and professionals up and running to support individuals and families. We also have a 1-800 number providing tips on staying healthy and connected for vulnerable and isolated people.

To date, the lack of a direct and coordinated response from Government is putting the lives of our sons, daughters, brothers, sisters and other loved ones – particularly those who have complex medical needs, underlying medical conditions and compromised immune systems – at great risk.

This is an urgent plea to the BC government to immediately and specifically address the lives of children and adults with disabilities during this COVID-19 pandemic. **We want to work with you to keep people with disabilities safe, healthy and supported at home.**

We ask that you do the following:

- (1) Mandate the immediate suspension of group activities. **Despite Dr. Bonnie Henry advising people with disabilities to stay home, they are still attending day services. This must stop immediately.** There is no reason why people with disabilities should be treated differently than the general public. This is endangering them, their staff, and their families;
- (2) Allocate the required additional resources to support people with disabilities in their homes and places of residence. In addition, people with disabilities must be included in the financial relief and stimulus packages that your government is preparing for the upcoming budget;
- (3) Within the next seven days, convene a Task Force to develop a provincial emergency health care strategy for people with disabilities, their families and service providers. This is a particularly high-risk group that absolutely must avoid infection, continue to receive regular health care and therapies, and not be harmed by potential health care rationing. This strategy should be created with engagement from individuals with

We respectfully suggest to include at a minimum:

- (a) immediate introduction of personal protection and appropriate health supports to the homes of children and adults with disabilities;
- (b) identification of a dedicated Public Health Physician with experience working with people who have disabilities to oversee these medical recommendations;
- (c) assure that persons with disabilities are given equal access to medical care

Given the vulnerability of the disabled population, we look forward to your early response. We can be reached by email at [rpauls@plan.ca](mailto:rpauls@plan.ca).

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On behalf of Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN), Family Support Institute of BC, and VELA.

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A copy of this letter has also been sent to:

BC NDP Caucus  
 BC Liberal Caucus  
 BC Greens Caucus  
 Various media outlets