

The Honourable Carla Qualtrough  
Minister of Employment, Workforce Development & Disability Inclusion  
House of Commons  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

**VIA EMAIL**

May 20, 2020

Dear Minister Qualtrough:

**Open Letter Re: COVID-19 Supports for People with Disabilities**

Further to our letter of April 21, 2020, and on behalf of the undersigned organizations, we are writing to call attention to the urgent need for emergency COVID-19 supports for people with disabilities – particularly, people who rely on CPP-Disability (“CPP-D”) as their main source of income.

We are hearing daily from members and clients that fear for their health, safety, and financial well being during this unprecedented emergency. Many have specifically expressed feeling forgotten and abandoned in the pandemic response, and ask why the federal government has not introduced additional financial supports specifically for people with disabilities. Although some jurisdictions are starting to ease COVID-19 restrictions, it is clear that the pandemic will have a long-lasting financial impact, particularly on already marginalized members of our communities.

As we noted in our previous letter, we are concerned that those who rely on CPP-D benefits have been left behind in the emergency supports announced to date. Despite comparable vulnerability, many CPP-D recipients are not eligible for emergency supports available to people on provincial disability assistance. CPP-D defines disability in terms of employability, so most of the people in this group are also not eligible for Employment Insurance and many of the federal financial supports.

Many CPP-D recipients are people with chronic illnesses and others who may have acquired a disability later in life after having worked for a number of years. Many are at heightened risk of infection and serious illness due to their disabilities, and are unable to leave their homes to purchase essential goods or to attend appointments. In addition to increased social isolation, people are facing additional expenses due to the pandemic and are having difficulty making ends meet. Examples of such expenses may include a stock of food in the household, medical supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE), over the counter medication, cleaning supplies and hand sanitizer, and delivery costs. Inability to leave one’s home (or difficulty in doing so) also means that people are

unable to shop around for more affordable options as they might in normal circumstances.

People with disabilities who rely on CPP-D are desperately in need of emergency supports to ensure they can stay safe and meet their basic needs during this crisis.

**We urge the federal government to immediately provide emergency financial supports to CPP-D recipients.**

Thank you in advance for your prompt consideration of this issue. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further.

Sincerely,

Erin Pritchard  
Executive Director: Programs & Policy

Andrew Robb  
Staff Lawyer

- c. The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada  
The Honourable Bill Morneau, Minister of Finance  
The Honourable Diane LeBouthillier, Minister of National Revenue  
The Honourable Deb Schulte, Minister for Seniors  
The Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Minister for Families, Children, and Social Development  
The Honorable Jean-Yves Duclos, President of the Treasury Board  
Mr. Peter Julian, Member of Parliament for New Westminster-Burnaby  
Federal Disability Advisory Group, c/o Al Etamanski

**Co-Signatories:**

The Advocacy Centre, a program of Nelson CARES Society  
ARCH Disability Law Centre  
BC Poverty Reduction Coalition  
British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability (BCANDS)  
Community Legal Assistance Society (CLAS)  
Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre Society  
Family Support Institute of BC (FSI)  
First United Church Community Ministry Society  
Health Justice  
Individualized Funding Resource Centre Society (IFRC Society)

MS Society of Canada: BC & Yukon Division

Okanagan Advocacy and Resource Society (OARS)

Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN)

Powell River Community Services Association – Poverty Law Advocacy

Together Against Poverty Society (TAPS)

Trail FAIR Society

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West Coast LEAF