
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

Annual bus pass available through new disability-assistance supplement

VICTORIA – Beginning Jan. 1, 2018, annual bus passes will be available to people on disability assistance through a new transportation supplement.

People who have the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) designation can use the new supplement for an annual bus pass or for other transportation needs, such as HandyDART.

As individual needs can change over time the supplement will also provide flexibility. People can apply for the B.C. Bus Pass at any time during the year. They can also cancel their bus pass at any time and use the supplement for other transportation costs.

The new supplement responds to requests from the disability community to fix changes that were made to transportation supports for people on disability assistance. Government committed to addressing their concerns and consulted with stakeholders on the best approach.

The transportation supplement is \$52 per month and will be on monthly assistance payments, starting with the Dec. 20, 2017, payment. It is expected to cost government approximately \$70 million annually.

The B.C. Bus Pass can be used in both TransLink and BC Transit areas.

Quotes:

Shane Simpson, Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction –

“People have shared their concerns over changes made to the B.C. Bus Pass for people with disabilities, and fixing this has been a priority for our government. Over the last two months, I have reached out to stakeholders and asked for their advice on the approach we should take to resolve this issue. The transportation supplement is the result of those conversations.

“This has been a longstanding issue for those in the disability community, and we are glad that we could find a resolution that better supports people’s needs. Beginning in January, anyone with a disability who is on assistance will be able to get a bus pass and they will no longer have \$52 deducted from their support payment.”

Faith Bodnar, executive director, Inclusion BC –

“Inclusion BC is very pleased that the issues related to previous changes to the bus pass have been resolved. Collaboration is always the best approach, and I appreciate that we were sought out for our expertise and ideas prior to today’s announcement. Over the past 18 months, our government heard loud and clear that a bus pass is essential for many on disability assistance. It means people can choose for themselves where and when they travel.

"Today's announcement restores the bus pass for those who want it and goes an additional step by providing a transportation supplement for everyone. This is a major improvement that acknowledges all British Columbians with disabilities on assistance should receive support to get around in their communities, wherever they live. This, and the increase in earnings exemptions, is an important step forward in providing people on disability assistance with the capacity to work, improve their quality of life without penalty and contribute economically to the province."

Jane Dyson, executive director, Disability Alliance BC –

"Disability Alliance BC is pleased with today's announcement of a new \$52-monthly transportation supplement for people with disabilities receiving assistance. The additional \$52, on top of the recently implemented rate increase, and increase to the annualized earnings exemption are very encouraging first steps from B.C.'s new provincial government. We appreciate the fact that the minister consulted and listened to stakeholders in designing the new supplement and look forward to working with his ministry to develop more poverty-reduction initiatives."

Neil Belanger, executive director, B.C. Aboriginal Network on Disability Society:

"The ability to access and cover the costs of transportation has been a barrier to many people in receipt of PWD benefits, particularly for those residing in our province's rural and remote communities. Today's announcement of the new \$52 transportation supplement acknowledges this barrier and is a positive step forward in ensuring that those receiving disability assistance have support to address their individual transportation needs.

"Complementing the new transportation supplement, government recently increased earning exemptions and has taken the initial steps to develop a provincial poverty reduction plan. We applaud the government's announcement today and look forward to our continued work with the ministry to achieve our shared vision of a province in which all persons have the ability to be active and thriving members of their communities."

Learn More:

- B.C. Bus Pass Program: www.buspass.gov.bc.ca
- Social Development and Poverty Reduction: www.gov.bc.ca/SDPR

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