

Election 2023

Party Platforms and the CDS Sector



The **Alberta Council of Disability Services (ACDS)** is a **non-profit, non-partisan association** of Community Disability Services (CDS) sector organizations supporting people with disabilities to live full lives in their communities. Our member-driven organization works closely with the Government of Alberta and other partners to strengthen the CDS sector to benefit Albertans with developmental disabilities.

Based on what we have heard through the diverse mechanisms we use to engage with our members and the CDS sector, **we have identified three key priorities to bring to the attention of all political parties and candidates:**

Skilled and Fairly Paid Workforce

Increased System Capacity

Comprehensive and Timely Data

Using these overarching priorities, **we examined the election platforms of Alberta's five main political parties for any commitments made in the following five areas** to improve the quality of lives of Albertans with developmental disabilities, support the sustainability of the sector's workforce, and enhance the effectiveness of community-based organizations to respond to service needs:

Decent Income

Safe, Affordable, Inclusive Communities

Quality Health Services

Skilled Workforce

Effective Service Capacity



Decent Income

54% of the entire Community Disability Services (CDS) workforce made under \$20/hr in 2020. The average wage for the entire sector, including executive and leadership positions, was \$21.50/hr. The average wage for Community Disability Support Workers (\$18.76/hr) is below Alberta's Market Basket Measure (MBM), an index of affordability and basic standard of living across the province. Comparable positions in government, such as Individual Support Workers, earn between \$20.63 and \$25.07/hr, which is 10% to 34% higher than the average CDSW hourly wage. The recent 10% infusion narrows this gap, but only slightly, and only until competitive workers receive salary increases or inflation-indexed adjustments.

Although AISH benefits have recently been re-indexed to inflation, benefits are clawed back after income and asset limits are met, leaving most people with disabilities with inadequate income for quality of life pursuits.



Allocations by UCP government in Budget 2023-24 to continue recent initiatives, or support new services, programs, or capacity:

- \$345 million to provide Alberta Child and Family Benefit to lower and middle-income families
- \$276 million for affordability payments to seniors and low-income Albertans
- 6% increase to core benefits for individuals on AISH, Income Support and Seniors Benefits, with benefits indexed to inflation
- Individuals on AISH, Income Support, PDD, and Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPPD) will continue to receive \$600 affordability payments for 6 months

A new 8% tax bracket for personal income under \$60,000

- 20% reduction in provincial tax bill for Albertans earning less than \$60,000
- \$760 (\$1,520 per family) saving each year for Albertans earning \$60,000 or more

Continue to index all tax brackets to inflation

No increases in personal or business taxes without consultation

- Expand Taxpayer Protection Act to require a provincial referendum before increasing personal or business taxes



No increases to personal income tax



Reduce personal income taxes by increasing basic personal exemption for low- and medium-income earners

Implement a progressive personal income tax in Alberta

Explore a single-source income support program in collaboration with federal government

A comprehensive plan to support the working poor, including a wage top-up program with targeted benefits while maintaining incentives to work

Enact a poverty and homelessness elimination strategy, which would seek to address the root cause of poverty

Investigate introducing a combined Harmonized Sales tax (HST) with federal GST, after inflation is under control

- Low-income individuals will receive rebate similar to current GST



\$160 million annual grant for out-of-work and underemployed Albertans to pursue additional education and job training

Help employers offset the costs of hiring and training unemployed or underemployed Albertans



Implement a Universal Basic Income for all Albertans

Safe, Affordable, Inclusive Communities

All Albertans, especially Albertans with developmental disabilities, need to feel safe and included in their communities. The affordability of community activities is a major barrier for people on AISH, impacting their relationships and quality of life. Affordability is also a barrier for community disability professionals, especially frontline workers earning low average wages.



Allocations by UCP government in Budget 2023-24 to continue recent initiatives, or support new services, programs, or capacity:

- \$86 million to connect Albertans, including those with disabilities, to training and employment opportunities
- \$16 million to municipalities to support public transit programs for low-income Albertans
- \$48 million for Electricity Rebate Program to provide targeted relief for homes, farms, and small businesses
- \$42 million for strategies to address complexities in the classroom, including adding educational assistants
- \$421 million to address student access to schools, transportation cost pressures and affordability
- Expand post-secondary student aid program for students with disabilities to include those with persistent or prolonged disabilities
- \$342 million towards existing and new affordable housing, including rent supplements
- \$102 million for safe housing and supports for individuals experiencing homelessness
- \$5 million in grants and \$5 million in matching donations to support food security programs
- Expand Office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities to improve access to advocacy services

Extend Fuel Tax Holiday until Dec 31, 2023

- Saving of 13 cents/litre of gas continues

No provincial sales tax without a referendum

- Maintain current protection under Taxpayer Protection Act



House 40,000 additional Albertans in the next 5 years

- Expand affordable housing for people with the most needs, including Albertans with disabilities

Stable, predictable funding to shelters and agencies

Integrated teams to improve safety and address social problems especially in Edmonton and Calgary

- Hire 150 police officers, paired with 150 social workers, mental health workers, addiction counsellors, and community outreach workers
- Culturally appropriate and trauma informed approaches

New Indigenous Housing Strategy

Reform income support and rental supplement programs

Hire 4,000 new teachers and 3,000 educational assistants and support staff

Help seniors live independently at home by increasing homecare supports, building more housing, expanding home adaptation program

Implement an electricity rate cap of 12 cents/kWh from July to September

Safe, Affordable, Inclusive Communities



Re-introduce provincial carbon tax

- Include a rebate for low-income Albertans and nonprofits

Phase out Alberta's small business tax

Accessible, high quality, cost-effective childcare spaces

- Improve access by funding based on income-testing
- Improve access to before and after school childcare

Create accessibility legislation based on widespread stakeholder consultations

Comprehensive transportation, social, and electronic infrastructure for the needs of Albertans

Sustainable, consistent, adequate funding for schools, proportionate to population growth and inflation

Increase supports for students with special needs

- Additional trained staff and funding for educational assistants

Implement Indigenous Relationships Policy



Double the provincial budget to create and maintain affordable housing, and help municipalities fast-track low and middle-income housing projects

Maintain and expand current affordability programs and implement other methods to improve affordability

Keep electricity prices low and electricity market stable

- Expand eligibility for current electricity price rebates

Eliminate school fees

More teachers and educational assistants, to promote smaller class sizes

Increase wages and retention of educational staff



Housing First program to provide housing for all Albertans

- Prioritize housing as first step to improve health and wellbeing, followed by supports to address other issues
- Prevent homelessness through early intervention and financial assistance
- Offer homeless population a pathway to stable housing and support services

Create rent control, capping increases to 1.5%

Create affordable housing through government-subsidized non-profit / non-market housing options

Basic Income program would provide financial support to renters struggling to afford housing

- Vulnerable populations would receive financial support to help cover housing costs, to reduce risk of eviction and homelessness

Implement a comprehensive public transportation system connecting urban and rural areas of the province

- Publicly funded provincial bus and passenger rail services to provide accessible, safe, and sustainable option to access essential services and amenities

Expand, improve and eliminate fare costs for municipal transit services

Quality Health Services

Access to timely, affordable, quality health care is essential for Albertans with developmental disabilities, many of who have complex behavioural and medical support needs.

The PDD program bears the costs when individuals intersect with health services. In some cases, supports provided by Health are duplicated in PDD, creating a financially inefficient parallel system, or unintentional gaps if neither system addresses unmet needs. Integrated, multi-disciplinary, disability-aware primary care and specialty teams are the optimal solution for impactful, efficient care.



Allocations by UCP government in Budget 2023-24 to continue recent initiatives, or support new services, programs, or capacity:

- \$740 million for EMS, with new funding to address Emergency Services Advisory Committee recommendations and other pressures identified through Health Care Action Plan
- \$158 to train, recruit and retain more health care professionals
- \$603 million to construct health facilities

Public Health Care Guarantee

- Albertans will not have to pay out-of-pocket to see family doctor or receive needed medical treatment
- No medical services or prescriptions covered by Alberta Health Insurance will be delisted

\$5 million for testing and educational supports for children with autism and other complex needs

\$10 million to add obstetrics doctors and develop a province-wide midwives strategy

Expand newborn screening to test for more diseases and conditions

\$10 million grant to the Alberta Women's Health Foundation to support women-focused research, advocacy, and care



Expand mental health supports

Multidisciplinary Family Health Teams for every Albertan

- \$350 million to establish 40 new family health clinics
- \$400 million to hire 4,000 new allied health professionals
- Support evening/weekend hours for family doctors and health professionals

\$70 million annually to give signing bonuses for doctors, nurses, and other health professionals

Offer incentives for health care workers to work in rural and remote communities

Quality Health Services



Improve quality and affordability of health care

- Establish Wellness Foundation to promote prevention
- Expand use of Integrated Primary Care teams, and child-centred health services
- Improve Emergency Response System

Enhance facilities and dementia services for seniors

Enhance home care for seniors and persons with disabilities



A family doctor for every Albertan

- Ease administrative burdens and cause of vacancies in family medicine
- Integrate specialists, mental health, nurse and other health professionals into primary care clinics

Increase mental health funding by \$600 million annually

Make preventative care a centerpiece of the health care system

Invest in long term care and home care for seniors

Expand role of nurse practitioners

Address addiction through supervised consumption, safe supply, and treatment options



Expand universal health care to Comprehensive Health Care

- Universal mental health care, physiotherapy, pharmacare, dental care, optical services, and hearing services

Support healthcare workers with proper compensation and expand hiring initiatives

Mental health programs for first responders and hospital staff

Increase hospital capacity and functionality, including rural hospitals

Address opioid and poison drug epidemic through mental health outreach, harm reduction strategy, supervised consumption, and safe supply

Skilled Workforce

In December 2022, a 10% funding infusion (\$24 million) was provided for direct service worker compensation, with corresponding allocation included in Budget 2023-24. The gap between what was provided and what is needed remains substantial.

ACDS' Project Blueprint identifies 18 recommendations to address workforce challenges, organized by: understanding workforce context; responding to recruitment and retention issues; and developing the current and future workforce. Of these, addressing low wages and wage disparity with competing sectors are foundational needs.



Allocations by UCP government in Budget 2023-24 to continue recent initiatives, or support new services, programs, or capacity:

- \$102 million in Budget 2023-24 (\$305 million over 3 years) to increase wages in various social sectors, including disability workers
- \$10 million to support working families and youth, deliver skills training, and provide job supports for newcomers
- \$50 million over 3 years for settlement and immigration, newcomer needs, and recognition of qualifications from outside Canada
- \$990 million towards affordable licensed child care through parent subsidies and grants to \$15/day average
- \$60 million to expand licensed child care spaces in high demand areas

Alberta is Calling signing bonus

- \$1,200 signing bonus as a non-refundable tax credit for targeted workers in areas including healthcare and childcare
- Workers eligible after living in Alberta for one year

Auto-credentialling for in-demand professions

- Reduce barriers to credentialling from provinces and countries with similar standards

Invest in recruitment and training to expand healthcare workforce

- Create more spaces to train health workers

\$10/day childcare by 2026

- Federal childcare agreement has reduced fees to \$15/day
- \$3.8 billion investment over five years to create more spaces



Faster pathways for skilled workers to jobs and communities

- Improve foreign credential recognition
- Increase access to low-interest financing for upgrading
- Increase settlement, language training, education, credentialling and employment matching services

Create up to 10,000 new post-secondary spaces specific to healthcare and related fields over the next four years



Access to post-secondary programs

- Stable, multi-year operational funding
- Limit tuition fee increases



Reduce barriers to recognizing foreign credentials and job qualifications

Accelerate implementation of federal \$10/day childcare program

Create workforce development strategy in collaboration with businesses, educational institutions, and other stakeholders



Free undergraduate post-secondary tuition for all citizens and permanent residents

Basic income for Canadian students over the age of 18, to promote pursuit of educational goals

Implement federal \$10/day childcare program

- Include supplementary funding to eliminate extra fees, improve quality of care, and fair compensation for workers

Effective Service Delivery Capacity

Individuals with disabilities depend on service providers to have the organizational capacity (staffing, infrastructure, planning, etc.) so they can access required supports for daily living and pursue quality of life goals. 62% of CDS service providers projected a deficit in their 2022-23 PDD budget; 68% believe their PDD services are at moderate or high risk in the next 1-3 years due to unfunded, rising costs.

In December 2021, there were 2,000 individuals waiting for services (600) or in service planning stage (1,400) according to the most recent data available via the Alberta Government open data portal. The bottleneck is due, in part, to lack of PDD system capacity, as well as lack of organizational capacity in service providers.

In addition to having a skilled workforce, organizations need support to enhance their capacity in: capital and operational overhead costs, technology, leadership, innovations, mobilizing best practices, and access to data for forecasting and planning. Despite new funding in December 2022, and corresponding allocation in Budget 2023-24 to address rising administrative costs for CDS organizations, more is needed to increase service providers' organizational capacity to help PDD reduce the waitlist.

	<p>Allocations by UCP government in Budget 2023-24 to continue recent initiatives, or support new services, programs, or capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$240 million over 3 years to reduce the waitlist, starting with about 500 individuals and new applicants in 2023-24 • \$25 million over 3 years to address increased administrative costs for PDD and FSCD service providers, and FMS agreements • \$7.5 million to continue implementation of the Data Strategy to realize the full potential of Alberta government data
	<p>N/A</p>
	<p>Re-introduce provincial carbon tax</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a rebate for nonprofits <p>Make public information accessible to Albertans through open-data</p>
	<p>N/A</p>
	<p>N/A</p>

Disclaimer

ACDS is a non-partisan, nonprofit association of community organizations supporting people with disabilities to live full lives in their communities. The purpose of this document is to support our members and sector allies to make informed decisions leading up to Election 2023. The information is selected to reflect perceived relevance to Albertans with disabilities, their families, and the organizations and workers in the Community Disability Services sector who support them. While reasonable attempt has been made to include key relevant commitments and initiatives as posted on each party's official website at the time of publication, the information should not be considered comprehensive. No steps have been taken to further verify external sources, or assess the feasibility of the commitments made by the parties. ACDS takes no responsibility for any additional information that may become available from external sources after the publication date indicated on this document.

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