

# Maximizing Impact through Prudent Investment

## About Community Disability Services

Community disability service organizations are vital partners with the Government of Alberta in the delivery of supports to facilitate the citizenship of individuals with developmental disabilities.

Funded by the Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) program, community-based organizations provide adults with developmental disabilities with home living, employment, community access, and specialised supports in their local communities. PDD also funds government-run operations and provides funding to families to manage their own supports through Family Managed Services (FMS). Some families choose to contract with community disability service organizations to provide necessary professional supports to their family member.

### In 2017-18:

- **12,061** Albertans received supports and services from the PDD program<sup>1</sup>
- About **9,000** individuals (**70%-75%**) receive supports from **157** community disability service providers<sup>2</sup>
- **157** community service organizations provided supports across Alberta<sup>1</sup>
- **15,000** workers were employed by community disability service organizations<sup>3</sup>
- **\$900 million** supported community service delivery (service provider contracts, FMS, PDD program/regional offices), and \$47 million for direct operations, for a total operating cost of \$947 million<sup>4</sup>

## Our Vision and Framework for Impact

Our vision for vibrant communities is places where all citizens feel safe, healthy, connected, and valued. Community disability services provide essential, personalized supports to Albertans with disabilities to facilitate their full potential for citizenship. The capacity of community disability services to have maximum impact rests on three pillars; these pillars are the guiding principles for our recommendations to the Government of Alberta to maximize the impact of community disability supports. One of these guiding principles is **prudent investment** in the disability sector.





## Social and economic benefits of the sector

Investment in community disability services has high returns. Resources spent on community-based supports enable people to receive services in locations surrounded by familiar and reliable networks. They allow individuals to contribute to their communities rather than being segregated, isolated, and forever dependent. They strengthen the social fabric of the community, increase services for all residents, generate employment, and divert funds from costly systems such as hospitals and correctional facilities. Even a small reallocation of public spending from health to social services results in significantly improved population health outcomes.<sup>5</sup>

## The issues

**Funding to community disability service organizations has not kept pace** with inflation, recognized other economic pressures, or addressed the costs of providing services to individuals with increasingly complex needs. This is despite significant increases to the PDD program over time

**Administrative budgets have not increased since 2008.** Contracts have not considered the rising costs of running sound and sustainable organizations, and the indirect costs of providing quality supports. These include time and costs associated with submitting service proposals, getting to know individuals, consulting specialists and professionals, developing community relationships, arranging service review meetings, and navigating bureaucratic processes for changing services.

**Contracts have not provided any wage increases since 2014.** Staff compensation has been below market value for a long time compared to similar jobs such as nursing, homecare and teaching aides, creating ongoing recruitment and retention challenges. Turnover in frontline positions is over 30%.<sup>6</sup>

**Most post-secondary disability programs have been discontinued.** Many new staff need training in some of the basic skills, including mandatory training and specialised training in complex supports. Training budgets are highly inadequate, and access to training varies greatly across the province.

**Increased safety risks.** Low compensation has created a vicious cycle of recruiting untrained and inexperienced workers, providing core training, and then losing these staff to higher paying jobs. Under-qualified staff can result in poor support, or create a safety risk for individuals, staff and public.

**Accountability pressures have increased significantly.** Prescriptive oversight and paperwork overload have become the norm in service delivery, creating burdens and diverting resources from achieving service outcomes, planning quality services, innovating, or investing in professional development.

**Innovations are not actively supported.** Despite numerous initiatives in the past to test innovative service models and new concepts, there has been no support for wide-scale implementation of successful projects, or for sharing knowledge and learnings from these projects more broadly.

## Recommendations for maximizing impact through prudent investment

Investing in community disability services benefits the individuals receiving services, creates employment, strengthens the social fabric in communities, reduces risk, and contributes to the provincial economy.

### To maximise this investment, we recommend the government:

- **Establish a flexible, responsive funding model** that provides predictability and sustainability through contracts that: are spread over at least 3 years; are indexed to inflation; incorporate all administrative and indirect costs associated with providing quality supports (true cost of service); and, allow service providers the flexibility to re-allocate funds to accommodate the changing needs of the individuals receiving supports.
- **Set aside annual innovation funding** dedicated to support community disability service providers to pilot, evaluate, share, and scale up innovative, successful service models and approaches.
- **Create a comprehensive human resource strategy** in collaboration with community disability services and post-secondary institutions. The strategy should include adequate and sustainable funding for staff compensation, training, and professional standards designation applicable to all community disability workers regardless of employment context (service providers and FMS).

### Sources

1. PDD Program Review Discussion Guide. 2018
2. Estimated from: Alberta Community and Social Services. "PDD by the Numbers" webpage. Last updated October 4, 2016
3. Estimated from ACDS 2017 Annual Workforce Survey
4. Alberta Ministry of Community and Social Services. Annual Report 2017-18. Voted Actuals
5. Dutton et al. 2018. CMAJ January 22; 190:E66-71. doi: 10.1503/cmaj.170132
6. ACDS 2017 Annual Workforce Survey

<b>Vision</b>	People with disabilities live full lives as citizens supported by a vibrant network of services in their communities
<b>Mission</b>	ACDS is the collective voice of our members, advancing excellence and best practices, advocating for effective public policy, and championing disability services