



Richmond Centre for Disability

“Promoting a new perspective on disability”

March 4, 2016

Hon. Teresa Wat
Minister for International Trade &
Minister Responsible for the Asia Pacific Strategy & Multiculturalism
MLA, Richmond Centre

Dear Hon. Minister Wat,

On behalf of the Richmond Centre for Disability (RCD), we hope to express our opinions on the recent budget and its implication on people with disabilities.

We understand that the 2016 BC Provincial budget shows an increase of \$77 per month for each Person with Disabilities (PWD) receiving provincial benefits. At first glance this appears to be wonderful news. Unfortunately this is combined with a huge increase in the cost of a Bus Pass for each PWD. We observe one scenario may be that the bus pass cost will include not only the current administration fee of \$45 per year but an additional \$52 per month taken directly from the benefits each PWD receives. This means that the ‘increase’ given to any PWD using a bus pass is \$25 per month while other PWDs receive \$77 per month. Moreover, each PWD receives benefits that amount to only about 65% of the minimum income for seniors who, on the contrary, will continue to pay \$45 per year for the bus pass. This is indeed a mind-boggling arrangement to comprehend; we truly love to learn about your rationale behind this.

In addition, PWD clients who qualify for the Special Transportation Subsidy (STS) will no longer receive an annual lump payment. They will receive the \$77 per month increase but \$66 of this amount will replace the STS annual lump sum payment, so their actual increase in benefits will amount to \$11 per month. We do not agree that this is fair arrangement.

We also want to emphasize that the PWD rate has not increased in a long time, and many PWDs are facing continual increased pressure of making ends meet, even for basic daily necessities. They may use the \$77 for food, shelter and clothing; forfeiting their bus pass in the course. This will increase their isolation and minimize their community participation, which is integral to their overall well-being, mental health and connection to the society. We do not support a change that would create a situation subjecting PWDs to such a dilemma where they have to choose among two equally important issues in life.

The RCD is writing this letter to protest the unfair policies which impact the incomes and quality of life of many PWDs.

Vince Miele, RCD Board Chair

cc. MLA Richmond East Hon. Linda Reid, MLA Richmond-Steveston Mr. John Yap