

# Family Support Institute of BC (FSI) Budget Submission to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

June 2025

## Introduction: Building a Truly Inclusive British Columbia

The Family Support Institute of British Columbia (FSI) is a provincial, family-led non-profit with over 40 years of experience supporting families of people with disabilities across the lifespan. FSI's peer network reaches every region in BC, providing real-time insight into systemic gaps and solutions across education, health, housing, and disability supports.

Despite provincial, federal and international commitments to inclusion and equity—under the BC School Act, Ministerial Orders, BC Human Rights Code, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)—many children, youth, and adults with disabilities or support needs continue to face exclusion, isolation, and gaps in support. This is not about bad intent. It's the result of chronic **underinvestment**, **inflexible systems**, and a **lack of data-informed planning**.

All the areas discussed in this submission, including education, children's services, adult transitions, housing, mental health, and data, are deeply connected and should be viewed as a whole, together. They must also be considered through an intersectional lens that acknowledges how colonialism, race, disability, poverty, other protected classes, and geography combine to shape access to services and inclusion in BC.

We call on government to commit to **bold, rights-based investments** and to **mandate provincial data tracking** across ministries to ensure that all people with disabilities or support needs and their families in BC can access what they need, when they need it.

# #1

## Recommendation 1 Invest in Children and Youth Services and Supports

### Inclusive Education: Ending Exclusion in BC Schools

BC's vision of an inclusive education system is under threat. While the *School Act* and *Ministerial Order M150/89* affirm the right of every student to equitable access, in practice, students with disabilities are being excluded due to under-resourced classrooms, staffing shortages, and the lack of specialized supports.

Many groups are looking closely at school exclusions for children and youth with disabilities:

- [BC Exclusion tracker](#)
- [BC Ombudsperson investigation into school exclusions \(2025\)](#)

#### Key Barriers:

- Limited availability of trained Educational Assistants (EAs) and classroom supports
- Insufficient access to behavioural specialists, occupational therapists, counselors, and Speech and Language Pathologists
- Overreliance on part-time or segregated education for students with complex needs
- Lack of mechanisms to ensure accountability for inclusive practices across school districts

#### Recommendations:

- Substantially increase inclusive education investments that support co-teaching, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and differentiated instruction
- Mandate province-wide disaggregated and race-based **data tracking** of:
  - Students receiving inclusive supports
  - Student exclusion
  - Students on modified or restricted schedules
  - EA hours per district
  - Wait times for specialist interventions
- Embed inclusive education and disability competency into all teacher training and professional development
- Ensure full implementation and public reporting of Ministry of Education Inclusive Education Policy commitments, including but not limited to an IEP outcomes audit provincially.
- Expand the mandate of the Representation of Children and Youth's office to include inclusive education in K-12.

## Context & Need

British Columbia invests approximately \$5 billion annually in K–12 education, representing roughly 22% of the provincial operating budget. Despite this investment, current funding for inclusive education covers only a portion of the actual costs, with districts facing a significant funding shortfall to provide the necessary support for all learners.

## Proposal

- Restore the estimated \$340 million annual shortfall to reflect actual district-level inclusive education spending.
- Enhance funding with an additional \$125 million annually to:
  - o Expand Education Assistant (EA) hours
  - o Support co-teaching and team-based instructional models
  - o Fund teacher professional development focused on inclusion
  - o Implement tracking systems to monitor support delivery and impact

**Total Investment:** \$465 million/year

## CYSN System: Individualized, Early, and Equitable Support for All Children

The current Child and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) system remains deeply fragmented, underfunded, and diagnosis dependent. Families report delays of **2–3 years** for assessments, something that is often the barrier to accessing programs, supports at school, and more. Children without one of the small number of diagnoses that qualify are excluded from meaningful, needs-based support.

Children with medical complexity, Indigenous children, and those living in rural or underserved communities are particularly disadvantaged.

## Key Barriers:

- Long diagnostic waitlists as a prerequisite for funding and support
- Unequal access based on diagnosis, rather than functional need
- Workforce shortages mean families can't access needed professionals.
- One-size-fits-all services that do not in fact fit all
- Lack of cross-ministry coordination, especially for medically complex and high-needs children
- No centralized data system to track need, service levels, or waitlists

## Recommendations:

- Families have raised the same issues in multiple BC reports, including:
  - o [BC Family Survey \(2020\)](#)
  - o [RCY Still Left Out Report \(2023\)](#)
  - o [BC Disability Collaborative Report \(2024\)](#)
  - o [FSI - Family Voices Report of Community Engagement \(2024\)](#)
  - o [Community Led Collaborative Report \(2024\)](#)
  - o [Reciprocal Consulting – CYSN engagement Report \(2024\)](#)

| Key Findings                          | Family Voices Project   | BC Family Survey (2020)   | RCY Report (2023)  | BC Disability Collaborative (2024)                              |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| <b>Family-Centered Approach</b>       | Families need holistic support, including mental health & respite.    | Supports should focus on the whole family, not just the child.      | Family engagement should be prioritized in service planning. | Services should be designed with family input.                  |
| <b>Flexible Funding &amp; Choice</b>  | Families want to direct funding and choose their providers.           | More flexibility in funding and service options needed.             | Families should have a say in service decisions.             | Funding should be flexible and individualized.                  |
| <b>Interministerial Collaboration</b> | Families struggle to navigate multiple ministries and need cohesion.  | Stronger collaboration between ministries is essential.             | Cross-sector collaboration is key to improving supports.     | Government must improve inter-agency coordination.              |
| <b>Workforce Shortages</b>            | Not enough trained professionals; high turnover in CYSN workers.      | Understaffing and lack of trained professionals is a major barrier. | Staff shortages impact service quality and accessibility.    | There are not enough disability professionals across BC.        |
| <b>Timely Access to Services</b>      | Long waitlists delay critical early intervention and care.            | Waitlists prevent children from accessing timely supports.          | Delays in assessment and support lead to poor outcomes.      | Early intervention is critical for positive long-term outcomes. |
| <b>Transition to Adult Services</b>   | Families feel abandoned when children age out of MCFD services.       | Transition to adulthood is confusing and unsupported.               | Greater attention to youth transitions is needed.            | Gaps in adult services leave families unsupported.              |
| <b>Cultural Safety &amp; Equity</b>   | Indigenous & marginalized families face systemic barriers.            | More culturally responsive supports are needed.                     | Calls for anti-racist policies and Indigenous-led services.  | Systemic change is needed to remove inequities.                 |
| <b>Need for Navigators/ Advocates</b> | Families need independent advocates to guide them through the system. | Families need better guidance on available services.                | Families need support navigating complex systems.            | Families require more direct assistance accessing care.         |

### Our immediate recommendations:

- Immediately transition to **individualized, needs-based funding models** that are diagnosis-neutral, responsive, and flexible
- Mandate real-time, province-wide **data tracking** of:
  - Children waiting for services (including those awaiting diagnosis)
  - Children with medical complexity accessing coordinated services
  - Caseloads per social worker
- Increase investment in **early intervention services** including infant development, supported childcare, respite, therapy, and complex care navigation
- Fill the gap in investment for support and care for youth aged 12 and over
- Require and fund family and culturally centered planning practices that include Indigenous-led services where applicable

### Current Spending

The CYSN service area is currently funded at approximately \$635 million per year.

### Gaps and Needs

Persistent waitlists in early intervention services, including speech therapy, occupational therapy, and Supported Child Development programs, are leaving families without timely, adequate, or sometimes any support. Children with complex medical needs face compounded barriers due to limited specialist availability and inflexible service models.

### Proposal

- Increase annual investment by \$50–70 million to:
  - o Eliminate waitlists for critical early supports
  - o Provide flexible, family- and child-centred services
  - o Transition to individualized funding models that prioritize unique support needs and family agency

**Total Investment:** \$685–705 million/year

## #2

## Recommendation #2 Investing in Youth transitions and Adult supports

### Transition to Adulthood: Addressing Gaps between CYSN and CLBC

The transition from youth to adulthood is a time of increased and significant vulnerability. Too often, young people with disabilities or support needs age out of Child and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) services without adequate planning or timely access to Community Living BC (CLBC) or Health supports.

Families and youth/young adults are frequently left on their own during this critical time, navigating disconnected systems and often going without services for an extended period.

#### Key Barriers:

- Disconnection between CYSN and CLBC eligibility and planning
- Inconsistent or no support from Education in transition planning
- Lengthy waitlists for support, even post-eligibility
- Inconsistent application of CLBC's funding and policy frameworks
- Lack of service data to inform budget allocation and regional needs

#### Recommendations:

- Fund dedicated **transition coordinators** who start planning by age 15 and stay engaged post-transition (source: [BC summit on Navigation for children and youth with neurodevelopmental differences, disabilities and special needs](#))
- Eliminate CLBC service waitlists through direct investment in service provider capacity and individualized planning
- Mandate the collection and public reporting of:
  - Number of youth turning 18 annually and deemed eligible for CLBC
  - Time to receive services post-eligibility
  - Number of individuals waiting for planning or support
- Prioritize investment in supported employment, post-secondary access, direct family support, and inclusive housing options for young adults

#### Current Spending

CLBC operates on an annual budget of roughly \$825 million, with more than 90% directed to services for adults with developmental disabilities.

#### Challenges

Youth transitioning into CLBC services often face long wait times and insufficient planning support, creating gaps during a vulnerable period of life.

## Proposal

- Increase annual funding by \$130 million to:
  - Eliminate waitlists and backlogs in transition services
  - Strengthen planning and individualized service access for young adults and their families

**Total Investment:** ~\$1 billion/year

## Housing: Secure, Inclusive, and Accessible Living Options

People with disabilities or support needs remain significantly overrepresented in unsafe, inaccessible, or congregate housing—conditions that deny autonomy and perpetuate isolation. Inclusive, affordable, accessible housing is not only a human right; it is foundational to health, safety, and belonging in community.

Reports across sectors all source similar issues:

- [A Report on Inclusive Housing Needs in BC \(2020\)](#)
- [Reimagining Community Inclusion Impact Report \(2023\)](#)

## Key Barriers:

- Lack of universally designed affordable housing across BC
- Insufficient supported housing options for people with complex needs
- Overreliance on outdated group home or institutional models

## Recommendations:

- Invest in the development of **inclusive, universally designed housing** in partnership with non-profit and co-op housing providers in all regions of BC
- Provide individualized housing supports and funding streams to allow for choice and control
- Work with relevant Ministries to review and adapt current policies and allocate adequate funding to allow for family members to be compensated for providing direct support to their loved ones with disabilities—particularly in cases where this approach demonstrably enhances well-being, prevents crisis, and reduces the need for costlier interventions or emergency responses.
- Mandate annual tracking of:
  - Disability-specific housing needs by region
  - Availability of accessible housing units
  - Number of people with disabilities living in congregate vs. independent settings
  - Number of people with disabilities living at home with family
  - Number of people with disabilities living in long-term care

## Current Support

While some investment has been made through rental supplements and increases to disability assistance rates, these remain insufficient to meet the needs of people with disabilities—many of whom face barriers to affordable, accessible housing.

## Proposal

- Expand portable housing supplements to \$10 million annually
- Invest \$20 million annually in universally designed housing in partnership with non-profit housing providers

**Total Investment:** \$30 million/year

## Disability-Competent Mental Health Supports

People with disabilities—especially those with intellectual, developmental, or complex needs—face disproportionately high rates of mental health challenges. They are faced with services through their lives that are siloed, culturally unsafe, and lack disability-informed approaches. Yet, BC’s current mental health system is not designed to diagnose or meet the needs of this population.

Several reports have been done outlining the needs in this area:

- [RCY Towards Inclusion – the need to improve mental health services for children and youth with neurodevelopmental conditions](#)
- [RCY Too Many left Behind \(2025\)](#)

## Key Barriers:

- Mental health professionals lack training in disability competency and diagnostic overshadowing
- Inadequate cross-sector collaboration between health and disability systems
- Significant delays in psychiatric and trauma-informed care
- No data on accessibility of mental health services for people with disabilities

## Recommendations:

- Fund interdisciplinary, **disability-informed mental health teams** across all regions
- Require professional licensing bodies to include disability competency in their credentialing and continuing education requirements
- Fund culturally safe services for Indigenous children, youth, and adults with intersecting needs
- Mandate tracking of:
  - Mental health services available regionally in BC
  - Wait times for mental health services for people with disabilities
  - Accessibility and accommodation requests in service delivery
  - Outcomes and satisfaction of families and individuals receiving care

## Existing Investment

While BC has allocated significant funding for general mental health and addictions services, very little of that has reached people with disabilities or support needs. Lack of inclusive, coordinated care continues to lead to worse outcomes.

## Proposal

- Allocate \$50 million annually to create interdisciplinary, disability-competent teams that:
  - o Integrate mental health, developmental, and physical health supports
  - o Ensure accessibility across service models
  - o Provide ongoing training to ensure inclusive and trauma-informed care
- Mandate data collection to track wait times, service use, and outcomes

**Total Investment:** \$217 million/year

# #3

## Recommendation #3 Provincial Disability Data Infrastructure

### Mandate Provincial Disability Data Infrastructure

Across all systems - education, health, housing, mental health, and community living - BC lacks centralized, disaggregated, and publicly reported data about:

- Who is receiving services and who is still waiting
- Where culturally appropriate supports are (or aren't) available
- Whether investments are reaching those who need them most
- What outcomes individuals and families are experiencing

Without this data, services are harder to plan, monitor, or improve. And when we don't track what matters, inequities persist.

### Recommendation:

Build a cross-ministerial data system that includes:

- Number of people with disabilities or support needs by age, region, and type of support
- Individuals on waitlists and time spent waiting
- Access to culturally and linguistically appropriate supports
- Outcomes and satisfaction of those receiving services

**We urge the Ministry of Finance to allocate dedicated funds to build and maintain a cross-ministerial data infrastructure for disability services.** This will allow evidence-informed planning, transparency in public investments, and accountability to the people of BC.

### Rationale

A consistent barrier to effective service delivery is the lack of coordinated, province-wide data on individuals waiting for or receiving disability supports. Without standardized tracking, budget allocations cannot be equitably distributed, or outcomes properly measured.

## Proposal

- Initial development investment of \$10 million to design and implement a cross-ministerial disability data system
- Ongoing annual investment of \$3–5 million for system maintenance, reporting, and analytics

**Total Investment:** \$10 million startup + \$3–5 million/year ongoing

| Area                          | Current Budget     | Proposed Top-Up      | New Annual Total          |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Inclusive Education           | ~\$5B (K–12 total) | \$465M               | ~\$5.5B                   |
| CYSN / Early Intervention     | \$635M             | \$60M (avg)          | ~\$695M                   |
| CLBC & Transition Services    | \$825M             | \$130M               | ~\$955M                   |
| Accessible Housing            | —                  | \$30M (new)          | \$30M                     |
| Disability Mental Health      | \$167M (general)   | \$50M                | \$217M                    |
| Cross-Ministerial Data System | —                  | \$10M startup + \$5M | \$10M startup, then \$5M+ |

## Conclusion

We are calling for urgent, equity-based investments across systems that directly impact the well-being and rights of children, youth, and adults with disabilities or support needs and their families.

These investments must:

- Eliminate waitlists
- Ensure universal access to inclusive, culturally safe services
- Be informed by real-time, person-centered data
- Uphold the rights enshrined in Canadian and international law

No one should be denied their rights because the system is too rigid, too slow, or too disconnected to respond to their needs. We call on the Select Standing Committee to take bold, measurable steps to ensure **every British Columbian with a disability is supported to thrive.**

Respectfully submitted,



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