



## AISH Action Plan

Community and Social Services is implementing an AISH Action Plan to improve the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped program and the appeals process. An internal committee is being formed to fix problems with the AISH program highlighted in report from Alberta Auditor General Merwan Saher in October 2016. Work is happening in phases throughout this year to make AISH more responsive, accessible, and client-focused. Government programs should provide Albertans with supportive, consistent experiences that focus on a person's needs. We are looking forward to seeing the Government's improvements to the AISH program.



The government has launched a web page for the AISH Action Plan. It features a video message from Community and Social Services Minister Irfan Sabir, an overview of the activities underway and planned, as well as the AISH Action Plan in PDF. You can visit [alberta.ca/aish-action-plan.aspx](http://alberta.ca/aish-action-plan.aspx) to learn more and follow progress as changes are implemented that will make a difference to Albertans with disabilities and their families.

## Disability Tax Credit

Many people are unaware they are eligible for the disability tax credit (DTC). The disability tax credit is a non-refundable tax credit that helps people with disabilities or their supporting persons to reduce the amount of income tax that they have to pay every year, but only those who earn enough to pay income tax can benefit.

The great benefit for people on low income is that by having the DTC they can open an RDSP (Registered Disability Savings Plan) where the federal government can deposit up to \$1000 per year in addition to matching grants. Contact Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (contact information below) to find out more about the RDSP or to book a presentation for a group of people.

## An Advocate for People With Disabilities in Alberta

Bill 205, introduced by MLA Sandra Jansen responds directly to something the members of the disabilities community and their advocates have called for. The position of an advocate for people with disabilities would be one that creates a more effective link between people with disabilities and the services they need. Currently a lot of people looking for information or transitioning through programs are falling through the cracks.

This bill would establish an Advocate for Persons with Disabilities in Alberta. The Advocate would report to, and advise the Minister of Community and Social Services, and would have a mandate to

1. identify and study issues of concern to persons with disabilities;
2. review programs and policies affecting persons with disabilities;
3. participate in processes in which decisions are made about persons with disabilities;
4. promote the rights, interests and well-being of persons with disabilities through public education;
5. provide information and advice to the Government with respect to any matter relating to the rights, interests and well-being of persons with disabilities
6. assist individuals who are having difficulty accessing services for persons with disabilities and related programs, including directing them to an appropriate resource, person or organization that may be able to assist them.

Your comments and thoughts on this proposed Bill can be submitted at <https://albertandpcaucus.ca/pwd-advocate>.





Website: [www.vadsociety.ca](http://www.vadsociety.ca); Email: [vad@vadsociety.ca](mailto:vad@vadsociety.ca)  
Follow us on Facebook and Twitter: @VADisabilities

## Pilot Project for Training Service Dogs in Alberta

Alberta families in need of autism service dogs say they're being left without options as wait lists at all four accredited training schools in Canada that provide dogs to the province were closed due to overwhelming demand. The schools say they're so overwhelmed by demand they can no longer accept new applications and those already on the list will have to wait years to get their service animals.

A new pilot project has been launched by the Alberta government to "allow more schools to train qualified service dogs, giving more Albertans opportunities to find a job, attend school and participate in their communities."

The pilot will see a number of service dog-training organizations be given money to train canines based on new standards that meet international standards. Once the pilot wraps up in August, the province plans to create a list of qualified service dog training and testing organizations.

The pilot will also see the organizations that receive funding certify dogs that have already been trained. "Service dogs previously trained at schools or by their owners can take a test administered by a school on the qualified list to become a qualified service dog in Alberta," the government said in a statement.

The government is distributing \$250,000 to Hope Heels, Service Dog Team Building Institute, Alpha K9 Canada, St. John Ambulance, Pacific Assistance Dogs Society, Omega Service Dog Testing & Consulting and Dogs with Wings Society Assistance Dog Society.



The investment includes funding for training and mentoring services from National Service Dogs, a school specializing in service dogs meant to help people with post-traumatic stress disorder.

## Save the Date

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities' AGM will take place on June 10, 2017, in Edmonton. Join us to meet our board of directors and learn more about our work. Call 780-488-9088 or 1-800-387-2514 for more information.

## Renew Your Membership for 2017-2018!

It's that time of year again! You can renew your membership with Voice of Albertans with Disabilities by completing a paper form or online at [www.vadsociety.ca](http://www.vadsociety.ca). Members enjoy benefits such as the opportunity to join us in assisting people with disabilities participate fully in society, attend our Annual General Meeting, receive updates on disability issues, bursaries and awards through our newsletters. We thank you for your continued support!

## Jooay: Check out a new APP

Jooay is an app that helps children with disabilities and their families to locate leisure opportunities that: are accessible, suit their needs and abilities, match their preferences, can help them develop and participate in society.

Participation in leisure is crucial for both healthy development and quality of life. This is a right of all children as stated by the United Nations convention on the rights of children. There are fewer opportunities for adaptive leisure and inclusive activities. Parents and youth don't know how or where to find this information.

Jooay is a growing community – you can suggest new activities that you know of and are not listed, you can flag activities that are no longer offered, or flag information that might be outdated. If you are an organization offering leisure activities for children with disabilities you can also send the information and they will add it upon review.



*Together, We Hold the Power!*

**Full Participation - Accessibility - Equity**