



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

May 15, 2014

Disability assistance clients may be at risk of not having their basic needs met

VICTORIA – Auditor General Russ Jones’s latest report, *Disability Assistance: An Audit of Program Access, Integrity and Results*, examines the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation’s disability assistance program, designed to assist vulnerable individuals whose disabilities leave them financially dependent.

The audit found that the ministry has not defined the extent to which basic needs should be met by the program, and has limited information on how effectively the program is meeting the basic needs of its clients. This is concerning because people on disability assistance may be at risk of not having their basic needs met. The audit also found that the disability assistance program is not easily accessible.

The ministry would benefit from an enhanced understanding of its clients’ circumstances to better inform decisions about the amount and type of assistance it provides, as well as the impact that the program should have on people’s lives and their standard of living.

“Given that people with disabilities often experience a wide range of challenges, the disability assistance program should be simple and accessible. It is not,” states Jones. Currently, people often need support to navigate the system because information is not easy-to-find or understand, and the application process and requirements are complex.

Demand for services continues to increase yet funding is limited. The financial support rates for shelter and other basic necessities have not increased since 2007. A client’s financial status is checked regularly, but his/her health status is only checked when entering the program. Therefore, some recipients of disability assistance may not actually be eligible or may not be getting the services that they need. Ongoing eligibility checks are important to ensure those that need assistance receive it.

Jones also commented that “improving outcomes for people on disability assistance requires the efforts of multiple agencies and will take leadership from government as a whole.” The report contains 10 recommendations.

The full report is available on the Office of the Auditor General website at [Disability Assistance: An Audit of Program Access, Integrity and Results](http://www.bcauditor.com/pubs) (www.bcauditor.com/pubs). Auditor General Russ Jones will answer questions pertaining to the report via a news conference and in-person should a visual be required after the news conference.



OFFICE OF THE
Auditor General
of British Columbia

News Conference Date: Thursday, May 15, 2014

Time: 2 p.m. (Pacific time)

Dial-in Information:

From Vancouver: 604 681-0260

From elsewhere in Canada and the USA: 1 877 353-9184

Participant Pass Code: 44848#

During question and answer period, to ask a question: Press 01

During question and answer period, to exit the question queue: Press #

About the Office of the Auditor General of BC

The Auditor General is a non-partisan, independent Officer of the Legislature who reports directly to the Legislative Assembly. The *Auditor General Act* empowers the Auditor General and staff (known as the Office of the Auditor General or OAG) to conduct audits, report findings and make recommendations.

2014/15 Report: Disability Assistance: An Audit of Program Access, Integrity and Results - www.bcauditor.com/pubs

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