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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
2021SDPR0024-000483  
March 16, 2021

Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

### **Permanent increase to assistance rates helps people in need**

VICTORIA – More than 300,000 British Columbians will benefit from the largest-ever permanent increase to income assistance and disability assistance rates and the first-ever increase to the senior's supplement.

Starting with payments issued in April 2021, individuals on income assistance and disability assistance will automatically receive a permanent \$175 per month increase – the third increase in rates since July 2017.

“This past year has been challenging for everyone, and especially so for those British Columbians already relying on assistance to make ends meet,” said Nicholas Simons, Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. “Now that we are seeing signs of some economic recovery from COVID-19, it's essential we provide the stability of a permanent rate increase for people and families, including 49,000 children who live in poverty.”

As well, for the first time since it was introduced in 1987, there will be an increase to the senior's supplement of \$50 per recipient. This raises the maximum rate for a single person from \$49.30 to \$99.30 per month, benefiting up to 20,000 more low-income seniors. It is the first increase to the supplement since 1987 and will support about 80,000 seniors.

For people on income assistance living in special care facilities, their comforts allowance will increase by \$20 to \$115 per month. The comforts allowance lets people buy basic personal items. The increased amount reflects the rising costs of goods since the allowance for income assistance was last increased in 2005.

“This increase – the largest that people on income assistance and disability assistance have seen – is a critical piece in working toward the fulfilment of our province's poverty reduction goals,” said Doug King, executive director, Together Against Poverty Society. “The permanent nature of the increase is critical in allowing those on income assistance and disability assistance to be able to rely on this support in the long term.”

Through TogetherBC, the Province's poverty reduction strategy, government remains committed to reducing poverty by putting people first. Supporting British Columbians is key to a strong, sustainable economic recovery.

#### **Learn More:**

TogetherBC, B.C.'s poverty reduction strategy: [www.gov.bc.ca/togetherbc](http://www.gov.bc.ca/togetherbc)

A backgrounder follows.

**Contact:**

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## BACKGROUND

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### Supports for people in need

- Effective April 2021:
  - a single person on income assistance will receive \$935 per month and a single person on disability assistance will receive \$1,358.42.
  - a couple on income assistance will receive \$1,427.22 per month and a couple on disability assistance will receive \$1,947.56 after increases of \$350 per month.
  - single parents with one child will receive \$1,270.58 if on income assistance and \$1,694.08 if on disability assistance, plus up to \$697 in federal and provincial child benefits.
  - couples with one child will receive \$1,611.06 per month if on income assistance and \$2,131.56 per month if on disability assistance, plus up to \$697 in federal and provincial child benefits.
- Income assistance and disability assistance rates were previously increased by \$100 per month in September 2017 and \$50 per month in April 2019.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, a temporary COVID-19 crisis supplement of \$300 per month was provided from April to December 2020, and a \$150 per month recovery supplement was provided from January to March 2021.
- Effective January 2021, the annual earnings exemption for people on disability assistance increased to \$15,000 per year and the annual earnings exemption for people on income assistance increased to \$6,000 per year.
- Effective October 2020, nearly 300,000 families began to receive the Child Opportunity Benefit, which will continue until the child turns 18, whereas previous benefits stopped at age six:
  - Families with one child receive up to \$1,600 per year
  - Families with two children receive up to \$2,600
  - Families with three children receive up to \$3,400

#### Contact:

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