



# News from the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

## Getting help in a crisis

As part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy legislation, we have made two changes to help people on assistance facing a crisis:

- **Essential Utilities Crisis Supplement** – If you are at risk of having your utilities disconnected call the ministry for help. Contact: 1-866-866-0800.
- This supplement is provided in addition to B.C. Hydro's Customer Crisis Fund. Find out more at: [bchydro.com](http://bchydro.com), click "accounts", then "billing and payment", then click "way to pay your bill" and then click "customer crisis fund" located on the right hand side.
- **Crisis supplements for food** – monthly supplement has been increased from \$20 to \$40 per person.

## Reducing poverty

The B.C. government recently passed the *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act*. This commits us to:

- reduce the poverty rate by 25 per cent for all persons living in poverty and 50 per cent for children by 2024
- introduce B.C.'s first Poverty Reduction Strategy in early 2019

Read the news release: [news.gov.bc.ca/18173](http://news.gov.bc.ca/18173)

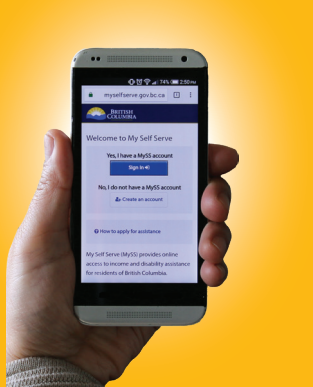
## Filing taxes can help you

If you are on assistance, there are free services that can help you get tax refunds.

If you don't have any other income, you can still get tax credits and benefits that won't affect your disability or income assistance payments.

### Free services

- **The Government of Canada's Community Volunteer Income Tax Program** – helps you file your tax returns. Contact: 1-800-959-8281 or [cra.gc.ca/volunteer](http://cra.gc.ca/volunteer).
- **Tax aid Disability Alliance BC (DABC)** – tax preparation for people with the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) designation or Person with Persistent Multiple Barriers to Employment status. They specialize in helping people who need to file taxes from previous years. They operate in Vancouver, Victoria, Kelowna and Prince George but can also provide support remotely. Contact: 1-800-663-1278 or [taxaid@disabilityalliancebc.org](mailto:taxaid@disabilityalliancebc.org).
- **British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (BCANDS)** – helps Indigenous people living with a disability who may be eligible for the Disability Tax Credit (DTC) or a Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP). Contact: 1-888-815-5511 or [bcands.bc.ca](http://bcands.bc.ca) and click on "access RDSP".



## Kick starting your Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP)

Access RDSP is a “one-stop-shop” for all things RDSP to encourage long-term saving. The program aims to increase the number of people who have a RDSP and help them take advantage of the benefits. Free services include:

- individual support with the DTC and RDSP
- Disability Planning Helpline: 1-844-311-7526
- RDSP resources and tutorial
- Indigenous navigation from BCANDS: 1-888-815-5511
- endowment of \$150 grants to jump-start RDSP savings for all children and low-income adults
- free RDSP and DTC workshops and information sessions throughout B.C.

The program is a partnership between the Plan Institute, DABC and BCANDS, with the support of the Vancouver Foundation.

Please note you must be under 60 to open an RDSP or apply for the Endowment 150 grant. You can receive federal government RDSP grants and bonds until the end of the year that you turn 49.

For more information visit:  
[rdsp.com/supports-and-services](https://rdsp.com/supports-and-services).

## Help for job seekers

- WorkBC Employment Services and WorkBC Centres are available to people who want help finding and keeping a job
- For more information and to find your local WorkBC Centre visit: [workbccentres.ca](https://workbccentres.ca)

## Save time, go online

My Self Serve gives you simple and secure online access to ministry services anytime. Using a computer or mobile device you can:

- receive and reply to messages from the ministry
- request services from the ministry
- submit your monthly report
- review, sign and submit your Employment Plan
- view and print your confirmation of assistance and tax information

For these services and more visit: [myselfserve.gov.bc.ca](https://myselfserve.gov.bc.ca).

## Signing up for direct deposit

You can get your assistance payment deposited to your bank account each month. This service is:

- safe – a bank or credit union is a safe place to keep your money
- convenient – no more lineups, access to funds 24 hours a day
- dependable – the money will always be put into your account

To sign up, contact: 1-866-866-0800.