

### Essential But Forgotten (EBF) Campaign Update (January 2023)

ADWA's intention when launching our Essential But Forgotten (EBF) campaign was to encourage and engage our community in the advocacy work necessary to be noticed and NOT to be forgotten. Part of our professional role as sector workers is to advocate for the people we support. We can use these same skills to advocate for our own work and values. This is why ADWA created the tools you needed to advocate for our sector and workforce; these tools are publicly available at [www.adwa.ca](http://www.adwa.ca) so that as many people as possible could, and have, added their voices to our advocacy efforts.



Thank you to the many people who took on the challenge. You showed your support of our campaign in various ways; by filling out the original survey on compensation; which helped us to design our EBF campaign; to the hundreds of written letters, meetings with MLA's, a petition, poems, songs, and numerous other expressions of support. Some grabbed the challenge with gusto; others were quieter in their approach. It is everyone's contributions coming together that made the difference. We are no longer forgotten. Once again, **ADWA thanks you for showing your support!**

While we have achieved some success, we are only part way there. Funding increases announced on December 21<sup>st</sup>, by Minister Nixon, for frontline, direct-support workers will likely be less than the 10% currently expected, due to the way the government funding will be rolled out and the cost of employee benefit cost increases, etc., which will need to be absorbed in this funding. As you can see this will not be as simple as you think, the process is more complex. We need more than this to ensure long-term sustainability of our workforce. While the details of the increase have yet to be fully outlined, we do know that not all workers in the sector will be included, and that even for those who have been included, this is not enough.

The first phase of a campaign is often the easiest to achieve a result. We are now entering an election period in Alberta, where our efforts need to turn towards all candidates and political parties, not just the government currently in power. This is where we will work to get commitments from different candidates and parties vying to be elected to support our sector in a more sustainable way. None of the promises they make at this time are guaranteed, but support is more likely if the commitments have been made publicly, and especially if the commitments are included in their party's policy platforms. Support is also more likely if they know who we are, both as a sector and as people in their communities. This is a key part of our next strategy. As with the first phase, there is need for everyone to show support and be a part of advocating for change.

## **GET INVOLVED IN THE ELECTION PROCESS**



Voting in any election is a basic right of all citizens of Canada. Hopefully, many of you will be helping the individuals you support to vote and involve themselves in every aspect of an election if they chose to do so.

The process starts with seeing if you are registered to vote. Here's the link where you can see if you are already registered, and, if you are not, where you can register to vote [Voterlink - Home](#). If you are not eligible to vote (i.e., you are not a Canadian citizen, not 18 years of age or older, and not formally living in Alberta), you can still get involved. If you support the position of a political party, you can help out the party by volunteering your time or in other ways. Please visit [Elections Alberta | Chief Electoral Office](#) for the information you need about voting in Alberta.

As the election campaign heats up, candidates will be coming to your door. Keep checking our website to find resources that you may find useful. Ask them what support their party has committed to for the Community Disability Services Sector. Share your story. The more people they are hearing from, about this sector, on the doorsteps, the more they will recognize this is an issue for their constituents. It is hard to forget things you keep being reminded about.

There will be opportunities to talk with candidates in your community. Attend events and forums, ask a question about their commitment to support our sector. Don't waste an opportunity to let them know your concerns. You don't have to have all the details. Simply asking them how they are going to support our sector and where you can find information on their party platform will let them know we are here and we will not be forgotten again. If you are a member of any of the political parties, attend events or write to them and ask them the same questions.

Also, remember that until an election is called, you can contact people currently in office regarding our sector concerns. Contact your MLA and say thank you for the current decision to give some workers raises and to support agencies with some administrative costs. Then outline what you think still needs to be done. Tell your story.

### **Broader sector work**

ADWA will continue our work of gathering and sharing members' concerns with the sector and the government. We are asking all political parties to document and share their vision for our sector to help workers and others to make informed decisions when they vote. We will continue to produce information to support this advocacy.

ADWA will be continuing our work in developing and honing the professional identity of the workforce in our sector. Encouraging your advocacy skills is part of that work. Another element is telling the story about the work we do. Given our work is so broad, varied and often unseen, over the next while we will be collaborating with members to figure out how to best describe our profession. Your work deserves to be valued and treated with dignity and respect. Part of that process is telling the story of what you do.

There is also the ongoing sustainability work of the sector being led by ACDS under the banner of “Project Blueprint.” We are looking forward to the opportunities for ADWA and workers to participate in this process.

Over the last few months, we have heard clearly from workers about what they value:

- connection to community,
- networking,
- supporting and being supported by each other,
- sharing a vision of the direction we want to pursue,
- having a strong sense of purpose in our work.
- being our best when we are part of strong teams,
- being active in broad networks and
- collaborating with others to fulfill our purpose.

Let us continue that vital, collaborative work. We know we are essential. We will no longer be forgotten.

