



PLAN hopeful investment in RDSPs could reduce poverty for people who have a disability

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While disability coincides with poverty for many people, a British Columbia-based advocacy group sees an opportunity to break the cycle.

If people invest in Registered Disability Savings Plans (RDSPs), there's a chance to change what has become a norm for too many people, says Jack Styan, executive director of The Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN).

He says people who have a disability "are going to be able to get ahead."

"For most people (who have a disability), poverty has been part of their reality. This suddenly begins to change that."

Styan is referring to a 2007 federal budget announcement that allows people who have a disability, their families and friends to make contributions for their future through an investment plan similar to Registered Retirement Saving Plans. Styan says modest investments over a lifetime can help people who have a disability live better lives. PLAN estimates the RDSP will help as many as 700,000 Canadians who have a disability and the federal government has budgeted \$115 million in matching Canada Disability Savings Grants and Bonds for 2008-09.

"The real key is to build that financial security" for people who have a disability.

PLAN, which led an eight-year effort to create a RDSP, is hopeful people will be able to invest in RDSPs by the year's end. The primary purpose behind RDSPs is to provide people with an easier, more affordable tool in which to invest, says Styan. As well, PLAN pushed the federal government to create a RDSP that allows people who have a disability and/or their families to determine how to spend the money and **the chance to make withdrawals as necessary**.

In B.C., the provincial government has exempted RDSPs as assets in determining eligibility for disability benefits. They have also exempted all income from RDSPs, allowing people to use the plan in whatever way they see fit without any penalties.

While other provinces, with the exception of Newfoundland which has similar legislation as in B.C., are still still working out the details, Styan is hopeful other provincial governments will follow suit.

"This is a bit of light at the end of the tunnel for a lot of people."

To learn more about RDSPs, bonds, grants and other details visit www.plan.ca/SocialPolicy_PolicyUpdates.php.

PLAN also hosts free RDSP telelearning seminars. Find more information here at www.plan.ca