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Kinship Caregivers Win Federal Benefits for Children Living with Disabilities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, March 3rd, 2022 - A positive step for children living with disabilities was recently achieved by a new organization of kinship caregivers, Fairness for Children Raised by Relatives.

On February 17th, the provincial government announced that a benefit intended for children living with disabilities is now available for certain kinship families that had previously been denied access. This decision follows a campaign, over the fall and winter, by Fairness for Children Raised by Relatives. The campaign encouraged the provincial government to recognize the unique needs of these children and pass on the Child Disability Benefit on to all children in kinship care arrangements.

The Child Disability Benefit is a federal benefit. It is for children living with impairments in physical and/or mental functions that are severe and prolonged (for example FASD, autism, ADHD, vision, hearing, and mobility impairments). Up to now, certain eligible children who were being cared for by kinship caregivers were not able to receive the benefit. These were children being raised in “Out of Care” options through the Ministry of Children and Family Development (or Delegated Aboriginal Authority).

The federal dollars (\$242.92/month) for these children is now being passed on to their families, rather than being kept by the province. Access to this benefit will make a tangible difference in the lives of children who receive it.

“My grandchild has learning disabilities in reading, writing and numeracy, and is struggling to keep up to her classmates in school. This money will allow us to obtain tutoring support for her, and will make a real difference in her future academic and working life,” says one grandparent.

Another grandparent points out, “I am excited that my grandchild is now able to receive this funding, however to qualify, I am going to have to get them assessed. There is a minimum 2-year waitlist to get this assessment done through our local school board and to do it privately costs nearly \$3,000.

The majority of children who come into the care of extended family members (kinship care) would otherwise be in government care. Most have experienced trauma, and have complex special needs.

“Our children have unique challenges, and what they need varies – from medical/counselling services to access to art and music programs. On top of this, many kinship families live in or close

to poverty and on fixed incomes. This funding will now help cover basic needs,” says Shari Monsma, kinship caregiver and President of Fairness for Children Raised by Relatives.

“While this decision is welcome, it does not begin cover all of the expenses their children face. In addition, these particular families do not have access to the Canada Child Benefit. There are still many inequities in the system, and our organization is working for fairness for all of the children we raise, says Monsma.”

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For more information about Fairness for Children Raised by Relatives, please see their Submission to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services attached and linked [here](#). Website <https://fairness4crr.com/>

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