



## **Province invests \$4 million in Communication Assistance for Youth and Adults program**

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The Province is committing an additional \$4 million to help improve technology and services for British Columbians who are without functional speech.

Communication Assistance for Youth and Adults (CAYA) is receiving the funding, which will be used to make life easier for people with communications disabilities who depend on its devices and services to interact with others.

CAYA supports adults and youth aged 19 years or older who need assistive communications technology due to severe disabilities that affect their speech. This can include conditions such as cerebral palsy, stroke, Parkinson's disease and ALS, among others.

Since 2005, CAYA has assisted more than 2,300 British Columbians who need communications technology and professional support to participate to the fullest of their capabilities in adult life. CAYA offers a wide range of technology based on individual needs that give people the opportunity to socialize, talk on the phone, order food in restaurants, use Skype and participate in group discussions, and communicate important life decisions.

The one-time grant supports CAYA's ongoing delivery of assistive communications technology to new clients and helps CAYA replace dated technology for existing clients.

Since 2005, the Province has provided CAYA with nearly \$27 million to support people with complex communication disabilities.

Providing speech technology for people with communication disabilities builds on Accessibility 2024, B.C.'s 10-year action plan to become the most-progressive province in Canada for people with disabilities.

## **Quotes:**

### **Michelle Stilwell, Minister of Social Innovation and Social Development –**

“Speaking aids help reduce social isolation for people with communication disabilities and help them participate more fully in their communities. The people who depend on CAYA’s services deserve to be able to communicate with others, and I’m happy that our government is able to continue supporting the program so it can help even more people find their voices.”

### **Jeff Riley, program manager, Communications Assistance for Youth and Adults –**

“This additional funding builds on over a decade of important work assisting people with severe communication disabilities across B.C., and ensures they will continue to have a voice in the future. On behalf of the many clients supported by CAYA, a sincere thank you to the Government of B.C.”

### **Neil MacDonald, CAYA client –**

“It’s wonderful to be able to talk to family and loved ones and friends. You have a new sense of confidence when you go into the bank or go to the pharmacy and any time you deal with the public. It’s made a difference in my life. I have something that gives me confidence. It speaks for me. CAYA are doing wonderful work. They are giving a voice to people who have lost their voices. They’re building confidence in people who’ve lost confidence and giving the hope that comes from communication. More important they’re giving hope to the people who have lost their dignity and sense of pride.”

## **Quick Facts:**

- CAYA clients have either never had, or have recently lost, the capacity for functional speech due to problems at birth or early life (cerebral palsy) or genetic conditions (Down's syndrome) or acquired conditions (traumatic brain injury).
- Between April and December 2016, CAYA provided assistive communication technology to 139 adults.
- As of December 2016, an additional 176 adults were in the process of being assessed and fitted for assistive communications technology, and 1,088 adults were eligible for followup support and repairs to their equipment.