



## **President's Report Annual General Meeting November 25, 2016**

### **A. Introduction**

Once again, as our Annual Meeting approaches, it appears that advocacy efforts to improve services and supports for people with developmental disabilities in BC have had little effect.

### **B. FamilyNet Goals**

Our goals for the society are as follows:

- To watch over policy and practice in community living in BC
- To focus on supports and services for older adults and the challenges of older parents and family members
- To liaise with other societies and organizations that have similar goals and interests.

### **C. Community Living Issues in 2016**

Over the past year, the following issues have arisen as important in the lives of the people we support:

#### **1. BC Benefits for Person with Disabilities**

People continue to live well below the poverty line because benefits to person with disabilities remain one of the lowest in the country. These benefits have not been meaningfully addressed for many years.

#### **2. Bus Passes**

While people were given an increase of \$77 effective September 2016, those who need a bus pass to travel to their daily activities will have \$52 per month clawed back to pay for their bus pass that had previously been provided at no cost. Exacerbating the situation, folks who do not use or need a bus pass were able to keep the full \$77 thus creating a disparity between those using the bus system and those who have other means of transportation at no cost.

Along with many other agencies and advocacy organizations, FamilyNet protested the unfairness of this decision by the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation – but to no avail. And while this unwise decision continued to be protested in person,

through letters and community protests over many months, there has been no move on the part of government to correct this unfair policy, or even to acknowledge the problem that the Ministry has created.

### **3. Home Share Concerns**

FamilyNet continues to have major concerns about several aspects of the Home Share model that appears to be the only service model being offered adults with developmental disabilities. And it appears that our concerns are shared by the Home Share Providers Association of BC, as stated in a letter dated February 15, 2016. Our concerns that were relayed to Seonag Macrae, CEO of CLBC in July 2016 are as follows:

- **Monitoring and Safeguards**

The safety and well-being of people living in a home share situation is paramount. A comprehensive monitoring and safeguarding program that includes formal and informal monitoring, unscheduled visits and the development of unpaid friendships for residents are all essential elements to ensure safety and security.

- **Careful Placement**

Time taken to ensure a desirable placement that respects the individual's wishes, with input from their family is critical.

- **Full Disclosure**

Home share providers must be provided with all the resident information needed to ensure the placement is successful in the longer term.

- **Training for Caregivers**

Over the past 30 years, agencies serving individuals with developmental disabilities have provided initial and on-going training for their staff. This has been an absolute essential to ensure quality support. The same is true for home share providers.

- **Caregiver Respite**

Even though there is the intention that a placement in home share will provide a family-like setting for the individual, caregivers will need a break. Just as families supporting sons and daughters in the past were always provided respite, so should Home Share providers be given respite. The lack of respite for caregivers will almost certainly lead to a breakdown in the placement, with the resident once again losing their home.

- **Emergency Support**

From time to time, crises will happen. Essential supports include immediate respite, medical and behavioural support on a 24 hour basis.

- **Increased Support as Needs Change**

As individuals age, so do their needs change. Re-assessment and additional supports will be needed when and if people develop dementia, behavioural issues or higher medical needs.

- **Recognize that Home Share is Not for Everyone**

We know that there are many individuals whose support needs are such that they are best served in a staffed residence. Just as group homes are not right for everyone, neither is the Home Share model.

## **D. Other BC FamilyNet Activities in 2016**

### **Community Living Stakeholders Meeting, Victoria**

In July, Cathie Waddington and I travelled to Victoria to attend a meeting convened by Inclusion BC. It was very evident that self-advocates and parents in Victoria have the same concerns as FamilyNet, and indeed are very upset about the state of community living in the province.

### **CLBC Goal-setting Discussion**

In September, Vice-President Maria Squance attended a meeting at CLBC where the CEO Seonag Macrae presented for comment, a draft planning document to a group of stakeholders. Major goals delineated were: Complex needs, improve family and individual experience, operational efficiency and enhance service provider relationships. It was clear that no new money was forthcoming and CLBC intends to lower expectations amongst families and individuals.

## **E. Liaison with Organizations with Similar Goals and Interests**

For many years now, BC FamilyNet has supported and maintained open communication with Inclusion BC. Most recently, we have agreed to also liaise with the Family Support Institute. To this end, we will share information and support the activities of these two organizations wherever possible, and work cooperatively with other such organizations.

## **F. Conclusion:**

As advocates for folks receiving community living support, FamilyNet members know that, sadly, our advocacy and monitoring of government and CLBC must continue. We will never become redundant. But we must believe that our small group of dedicated, informed and knowledgeable advocates – along with many others in the province – will one day see community living turn around and become what it once was, and what we all hope and believe it will be again.

Linda Derkach, President, BC FamilyNet Society