

**President's Report  
Annual General Meeting  
November 24, 2017**

**A. Introduction**

As our Annual General Meeting approaches, there is some optimism that advocacy efforts to improve services and supports for people with developmental disabilities in BC may be having some 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 2017**

Over the past year, the following developments have arisen as being central and important in the lives of the people we support.

**1. New NDP Government**

With the election of a new government in British Columbia, we have seen some important improvements in the lives of people with developmental disabilities.

- **BC Benefits**

Effective almost immediately following the NDP taking office, people receiving PWD Benefits received an increase of \$100 per month. This is very welcome news.

- **Bus Passes**

The bus pass fiasco of 2016 is now a distant memory. Previous policies that saw individuals paying \$52 per month for their bus pass has been reversed. Bus passes will be reinstated to all who need them at on the cost of \$45 per year for registration.

**2. Meeting with Shane Simpson, Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction**

FamilyNet was very fortunate to be granted a meeting in October with the Hon. Shane Simpson, Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. This meeting was attended by Maria Squance, Judy Carter-Smith, Cathie Waddington, Anita Dadson and Linda Derkach.

We felt welcomed and attentively listened to, and feel that our concerns and suggestions were heard. We had a frank and open discussion on a number of issues, including service delivery and improving the Home Share service system.

We believe that the Minister is very sincere in his intentions to improve services, supports and systems to the benefit of the people that it is intended to serve.

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More specifically, we outlined what our experience tells us are the elements of an effective and responsive service system:

- **Respect** for families and **inclusion** in planning and decision-making
- **Accessibility** in that the system is simple and understandable
- **Openness and Trust** that all relevant information is clearly communicated in a timely way
- **One point of contact** such as a case manager
- **Proactive Planning** for times of transition
- **Safeguards** built into the system, and
- **Accountability** to the individual, family, and government.

We emphasized the need for multi-level safeguards for some of BC's most vulnerable people, and expanded on many of the points above with real stories and situations where individuals or their families were not served well at all.

We thank the Minister very much for listening and engaging with us in a discussion that we hope will lead to further improvements in community living services.

### **3. Inclusion BC Provincial Family Advisory Committee**

Faith Bodnar, IBC Executive Director, invited Linda Derkach to represent FamilyNet on this advisory committee that identifies and discusses issues of mutual concern for family members. The committee is comprised of representatives from all over BC.

At our meeting on October 13, 2017, we learned about new initiatives with the new NDP government coming into power. We also learned that the issues and problems that FamilyNet has identified over the years are being experienced throughout the province by many other families and individuals. Inclusion BC has established a Community Inclusion Advocate position that fields calls from folks needing information and support. Tina Dam is the new advocate in this position. As well, the Family Support Institute responds to thousands of calls each year - 3,000 alone on transitioning issues. Without these supports, families would be in the dark in terms of where to go for supports, what is available and how to get supports for their family members.

### **D. Conclusion**

As autumn takes us into winter, services and supports in BC continue to be woefully inadequate, with many problems and challenges for parents and family members to take on. It is the hope of FamilyNet that the spring of 2018 will start to see some improvements for people with developmental disabilities and their families, and especially for self-advocates, many of whom do not have families or advocates to stand with them. We hope that British Columbia can start to do better.

Linda Derkach, President  
BC FamilyNet Society