

Stories and Letters outlining concerns and impact of funding and service cuts:

Received December 30, 2003

Honorable Gordon Hogg,
Ministry for Children and Family Development,

The Sunshine Coast Association for Community Living held an emergency meeting on December 11 and authorized our Executive Director to sign the attached letter prepared by a small group of representatives from both the non-profit and private sector, subsequently referred to as the budget reference committee. Accompanying the letter was a proposal to detail the manner in which cuts would be carried out, and was also an attempt to obtain a consensus that would hopefully resolve the budget impasse between MCFD and Treasury.

The Board agreed to the signing primarily because not to do so would appear to leave our agency open to reprisals that would be certain to negatively impact the lives of our individuals, families and service providers. We felt we had no choice.

This whole process is unfair to what paragraph 6.3 of the "Agreement" refers to as "smaller agencies". With a budget of \$1.2 million, we certainly qualify as a smaller agency yet no consideration is given to that fact. For years we have cooperated with every government initiative to economize, to restructure, to be cost effective. We were one of a very few agencies province wide to be formally audited in 2001 and we did so voluntarily in order to demonstrate our collaborative position. Our administrative staff consists of the E.D. plus one (not full time). We provide adult residential services for less than the three other agencies included in a Ministry report of the Coast / North Shore agencies dated August 2001. How much less? \$18,000.00 less per person per year than Powell River and \$27,000.00 less than the North Shore. Currently we are providing Day Program services to many more individuals than contracted for, with new inquiries on a regular basis. And yet we are expected to take the same percentage cuts as agencies with multi million dollar budgets. Something is wrong with this picture.

Referring again to paragraph 6.3 of the December 5 "Agreement" it states "including all service providers in 2.3 and 2.4 (across the board reductions) will likely raise anxiety and result in some negative and potentially public reaction from some service providers particularly smaller agencies". How true. We sincerely hope that this letter will make all addressees aware that there are limits to arbitrary budget targets and ways of achieving them beyond them beyond which no sane wish to venture.

In closing the Board wishes to heartily endorse the views expressed in the FamilyNet letter dated December 22 to Minister Hogg and David Driscoll. The passages referring to the arbitrary nature of reductions speak directly to our experience as a small rural Community Living agency.

On behalf of the Board, I remain,

Yours Truly,

Robert Ware, President

Pc: Laney Bryenton, Harold Long, Anita Dadson

Received December 28, 2003

I have a handicapped sister who is 51 and living in a group home in (lower mainland city). She is very, very happy there, her care-givers are wonderful! She is between 2 and 3 mentally and physically sound.

I, as her legal committee [along with my daughter and a nephew] are very concerned about what this present govt. might do. A friend has mentioned that your group is involved. Would you kindly send me any information that you can? I would be grateful.

Joyce

Received December 24, 2003

Thank you for the good work you and others in the organization are doing. I will keep you posted on the situation here regarding my brother who has supports through the Ministry of Community Living. The impending cuts are making us nervous because my brother has just achieved a sense of safety balanced with maximum independence with the people that provide these services. A disruption would be devastating to his emotional and physical health.

Thanks again for organizing us to fight for him and others with disabilities to maintain their dignity and sense of belonging in their communities with adequate supports.

Linda Lund

Received December 18, 2003

Dear Mr. Driscoll,

I am greatly disturbed by government's bullying tactics in obtaining Community Living compliance to its incessant budget reduction demands, and by the IA's response. I don't believe that the losses of service, choice, and safety experienced by families and individuals across the province are justified by the small numbers who will benefit from individualized funding, or by the uncertain and intangible future benefits of a new governance structure.

I know that the IA is in a difficult position. However, the way out is surely not to support more cuts that, as BCACL states, puts "the risk to individuals and families, both served and unserved ... at an all-time high." And pressuring service providers to agree to service reductions which they know put people at unacceptable risks is surely unconscionable.

I believe that if the IA, Coalition, and BCACL said NO with a united voice, they would have the support of families, self-advocates and service providers across the province. On the present course, however, government will have met its budget objectives with the manipulated support of the very organizations who purport to speak for the majority of families and individuals--the same people paying the price.

I urge you to take a strong leadership position with BCACL and the Coalition to say Enough is Enough.

Yours sincerely
Maria Squance, family member

Received Thursday, December 18, 2003

Subject: Recent cuts

Please keep me advised of events as they unfold. I feel the decisions that have been made by this government regarding the most vulnerable people in our society disgraceful. Please let me know if there is anything I can do.

Carol Simpson
mother of two special-needs boys

Received December 20, 2003

While I do not have current needs for support for my family, I support your efforts to end the reductions being imposed by the BC Liberal government. I am appalled by their behaviour as they eliminate vital support to our province's most needed people.

Please let me know how I can help support your work.
Sincerely,

Catherine
North Vancouver

Received December 18, 2003

I have only recently learned of your organization. I am disturbed at what is happening and how the recent changes made by the Liberal government will affect my 16 year old son who began living in a group in June 2003.

May I please hear from you.

Louise and John Tait