

UPDATE TO FAMILYNET MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

December 2004

UPDATE TO OUR MEMBERS & SUPPORTERS

Since our last update to you we held our Annual General Meeting on September 16th and were pleased to welcome two new Board members. Cathy Grant comes with a wide experience as a self-advocate and her service on the original Interim Authority Board of Directors. Maria Squance, from Fernie, B.C. is a past board member of BCACL, is President of the Elk Valley Association for Community Living, and is a knowledgeable voice for that region of the Province.

We regrettably accepted the resignations of Patti Van Pelt and Dawn Steele and extended our many thanks for their contribution over the past year.

The past year's full [President's report](#) can be seen on our website at www.bcfamilynet.org. While we have been against any funding cuts from the start, we note that players such as BCACL and the Community Living Coalition now echo our steadfast call for increased funding. However, many other issues still need to be addressed. These include wait-lists, fragmentation of services for children with special needs, the closure of group homes, changes to services without consent of individuals and families, erosion of services, inadequate communication, the status of individualized funding and the permissive wording of the Community Living BC (CLBC) legislation.

CLBC Legislation - Self-Advocates on the Board of Directors

A motion was passed at our September Annual General Meeting that read as follows: *"BC FamilyNet supports meaningful involvement of self-advocates and families in decisions affecting their lives and in directing policies of the Community Living Board."* It was also agreed that should self-advocates be appointed to the board, there should be a minimum of two. Lack of representation of self-advocates on the CLBC board of directors had been one contentious issue of the draft legislation. We were pleased to learn in early October that the following clause was added regarding composition of the board: *"... 2 of the directors must be individuals with a developmental disability."* This was the sole amendment, however, when the legislation was passed, despite many other serious concerns raised. We had urged government to resolve these before any new governance model became law.

In case you missed the notice regarding applications for the two self-advocate positions on the CLBC Board that must be submitted by Jan. 15, information is available on the government website at www.gov.bc.ca at the Board Resourcing and Development Office page found under Central Agencies.

Meetings and News Regarding MCFD and CLBC

We are pleased to welcome Stan Hagen as the new Minister of the MCFD and trust that he will be returning to his duties as soon as possible after cancer treatment. His support during the eighties when deinstitutionalization began is remembered and we feel he brings to this portfolio a history that is important to community living movement. We hope to arrange a meeting with him early in the New Year.

In early October we had a very encouraging meeting with Phil Goodman, the newly appointed CEO of the CLBC interim board and looked forward to working closely with him over the next months. We were sorry to learn this month that he is taking a leave of absence to look after some serious health problems. The Ministry plans to identify an Acting Assistant Deputy Minister/CEO Designate as soon as possible, and states this will not delay the changes they are making to current Community Living Service operations to reflect the Authority's vision for future service delivery.

CLBC monthly board meetings are held at their offices in Vancouver and are open to the public, except during in camera sessions. Several representatives of our board attended on December 7 to observe, and we plan to try to attend these meetings on an ongoing basis. Based on the discussions at that meeting, it seems the CLBC board is facing an enormous task with all the work there is to be done within expected timelines and budget limitations.

One of the topics of the Dec. 7 meeting that raised our concern is a research project being planned to look at different models of service in other provinces that would possibly further reduce costs of service delivery in B.C. The areas to be focused on are: alternatives to staffed residences (such as group homes), achievement centres (day programs), supported care options for ageing individuals, and family care models. The government Treasury Board is to provide \$350,000 to fund this project, which they want completed by March 31.

CLBC has announced their new website is now up and running at <http://interimauthorityclbc.ca>. They recently e-mailed their new Quarterly Report newsletter to community organizations to circulate to their networks. We are checking with CLBC to see if their newsletter can be mailed out to families and individuals who request it who don't have access to e-mail. If not, they may wish to request a copy from their local MCFD office or service provider.

Recent Supreme Court Ruling on Autism Funding

Our understanding of this ruling is that autism treatment therapy such as Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) is not covered under the Canada Health Act. This leaves the responsibility to provincial governments to determine autism funding and treatment needs. Early intervention is vital to the future development of children with disabilities and we will continue to urge our provincial government to fund appropriate treatment as needed. To not do so will inevitably cost much more in the long run.

Advocacy and What You Can Do

Thank you to all of you who have shared your concerns with us, and encouraged our efforts this past year to advocate on behalf of families and individuals. We again urge our members and supporters to share your concerns with us regarding restructuring of MCFD and its effect on you directly. Your feedback regarding the government's increase to disability benefits of \$70 per month would also be appreciated (We have already heard fears that rents will increase shortly and gobble up any increase). We look forward to receiving your comments, stories and any related news article from your community, by e-mail, by fax or through our website at the at the "Your Feedback" page.

It's important that we continue to build our network throughout B.C. Bridging with families, individuals and groups in all regions of the Province will help keep us up to date on the needs and concerns of families and individuals in the various communities. This is crucial if we are to continue to be a strong, credible voice on their behalf. One suggestion is that we consider holding a meeting in the New Year for our members and supporters. Another idea is to invite family members and individuals to become BC FamilyNet liaisons who would keep us informed on issues in their communities. Any support or suggestions from you will be greatly appreciated. Your membership and annual membership renewals are important in confirming to us that you support our ongoing efforts to be an independent provincial network and voice for children and youth with special needs, adults with developmental disabilities, and their families. We also depend on membership fees and donations to cover costs of mailing supplies, postage, phone charges, and other necessary expenses. Every little bit helps.

Please contact us if you or others in your personal networks wish to join BC FamilyNet, and/or to receive our updates (see contact info at bottom of this page). You can also submit a form through our website for membership application, membership renewal, and/or donations (go to the "Join FamilyNet" page).

If you have moved, or have a new e-mail address, please let us know so that we can update our mailing list.

The Board of Directors of BC FamilyNet is committed to advocating on behalf of our loved ones, and we plan to raise awareness of our concerns during the coming provincial election year. Currently, a group of family members and members of our board carry out all the work of our organization on a voluntary basis, and we have no paid staff. Our web site was also created and is maintained by a parent volunteer. As always we could use more help. Specifically, we would like to broaden the board composition to include a family member who has a young child with special needs, a family member who has special expertise such as a lawyer, and a family member who has computer software skills. Please let us know how you might be able to contribute even if unable to join the Board.

With the holiday season of Christmas, New Years, and other traditional celebrations upon us, we send our warmest wishes to you all for peace, happiness, and good times with the special people in your lives.

Sincerely,

Anita Dadson,
President

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