

## UPDATE TO FAMILYNET MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

### BC FamilyNet Society News Update

November 2006

#### To Our Members and Supporters From the Board of Directors

It's been a busy fall for BC FamilyNet, so far, with a series of initiatives to address concerns in community living. Here's a brief summary:

#### 1. Meetings and Presentations

Since August, BC FamilyNet representatives have met with the new MCFD Opposition Critic, Maurine Karagianis, with the CLBC Board and senior management, and with the new MCFD Minister, Tom Christensen, to brief them on issues and concerns in community living and to offer our support in resolving them. We are also still trying to schedule a meeting with the new MCFD Deputy Minister, Leslie du Toit. Minister Christensen appeared receptive to our concerns when we met with him in early October, but we are still awaiting his response to the issues we raised, as outlined in documents referenced below, and posted on our website (<http://www.bcfamilynet.org/>)

In September, BC FamilyNet was one of several groups from the community living sector that appeared before the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services in Vancouver, to make a presentation on the need for more funding to support adults with developmental disabilities, children and youth with special needs and their families

#### 2. Key Issues in Community Living

This document (at our above web link) sums up key current issues in community living, as brought to our attention by families and others. We began with a draft document in August, which we refined based on community feedback and answers provided during a meeting with the CLBC Board and senior management in September. We also grouped these issues under three over-arching themes: under-funding, the need for a clear mandate in community living, and problems related to organizational change. As the implementation of the new CLBC model continues to unfold, new issues may arise and/or others may be resolved, so we will update this document periodically, as necessary.

#### 3. Questions about Group Home Review

Given the previous MCFD Minister's role in commissioning and allocating a special budget for this review, we compiled the concerns being heard from families and others and brought them to Minister Christensen's attention at our meeting. We urged him to look into these concerns ([BCFN Group Home Review F.pdf](#)) and are awaiting his response. BC FamilyNet had also previously discussed the concerns with the CLBC leadership, and as a result a [Question and Answer response](#) has been posted on their website.

At this date, we hear that the project is well underway. The Review team has been contacting group home operators/agencies to make arrangements to meet with individuals and families. CLBC expected service providers to first identify and provide profiles on individuals and families who might be interested in exploring a residential alternative. We understand this plan was not well received. Some associations have chosen to invite the CLBC Residential Options Project coordinators to a town hall style meeting to make a presentation to families and self-advocates and respond to questions and concerns that are brought forward.

CLBC has recently announced that transformation grants up to a maximum of \$50,000 will be made available to service providers who wish to develop a broader array of residential alternatives for individuals or groups of individuals moving from group homes to other residential options. Also, a Service Accountability & Safeguards work plan has been developed, as well as a [draft Standards for Home Living Services for Adults for](#)

[unlicensed and unaccredited homes](#). One standard proposed by CLBC is a ratio of only 1 residential coordinator per 35 (approx.) individuals, and for respite services, one service coordinator per 50 (approx.) individuals.

#### 4. Budget Brief

BC FamilyNet presented a [comprehensive provincial budget brief](#) on challenges linked to under-funding of community living and other services for adults with developmental disabilities, children with special needs and their families. We provided a copy to the new MCFD Minister, and urged his immediate intervention with at least \$58 million in new funding from the current year's provincial fiscal surplus to immediately begin addressing the waitlists of over 3,000 adults awaiting CLBC services. We were also encouraged to see many other organizations and individuals from our sector submitting briefs of their own during provincial pre-budget consultations. A sampling can be viewed at the following links:

- BC Association of Child Development & Intervention (BCACDI) – Oct. 2006: <http://www.bcacdi.org/> (under Articles and Updates)
- B.C. Association for Community Living (BCACL): [http://www.bcacdi.org/documents/Budget\\_brief\\_-\\_Sept\\_29.doc](http://www.bcacdi.org/documents/Budget_brief_-_Sept_29.doc)
- BC Association of Social Workers "BCASW Urges Premier Campbell to Provide Immediate Cash Infusion to Address Community Living BC Waitlists – October 12, 2006" <http://www.bcasw.org/Content/News%20and%20Media/News%20Archive.asp?ItemID=26860>
- Parent Support Group for Families of Mentally Handicapped Adults Society: "[Transportation for People with Developmental Disabilities October 2006](#)"

#### Other initiatives

This past year BC FamilyNet has also directly or indirectly supported other advocacy initiatives, including:

- We Survived Woodlands Group's campaign, "Do the Right Thing: Government restitution for former residents of Woodlands School.
- Coalition of handyDART Users proposal: Making HandyDART a Translink Subsidiary
- Provincial Special Education Coalition to address concerns about Bill 33 introduced in April, setting a limit of three special needs students to a classroom.
- Campaign by The Community Coalition for the Implementation of Adult Guardianship Legislation to keep the Representation Agreement Act as British Columbia's ONLY legal tool for advance care planning (instructions for health and personal care).
- BC FamilyNet letter to CLBC recommending involvement of self-advocates in selection process for CLBC self-advocate advisor position, which resulted in a self-advocate being added to the selection committee.
- BC FamilyNet Submission to Ted Hughes BC Children & Youth Review (Independent Review of BC's Child Protection System)
- Online petition not to implement Education Ministry Policy going into effect in 2007 that would stop issuing school completion certificates (Dogwood certificates) for students with special needs who meet their Individual Education Plan
- BC FamilyNet hosted a booth at Autism Fair in Ladner

#### Other News & Events

January 13, 2006: **Our name was changed** - You may have noticed a slight change in our name this past year – we have added the word "Society". In fact our organization was incorporated as a nonprofit Society in 1995 under the name, BC Federation of Families Society. Over the years we have become better known as FamilyNet and more recently, BC FamilyNet. We were successful in applying for a name change following a resolution passed at our AGM last Fall, and are now officially named BC FamilyNet Society.

Nov. 9: **Child and Youth Advocate, Jane Morley released special report and recommendations:** [A Bridge to Adulthood: Maximizing the Independence of Youth in Care with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum](#)". Morley's recommendations include expanding CLBC's eligibility criteria to include individuals with IQ's over 70. This would have broader implications regarding the budget and new CLBC service model, as it would apply to others who have developmental disabilities, including autism, if implemented by government.

November 21: **New Federal autism research chair** announced by the Federal government to look at effective treatments and interventions for autism. Other measures include an autism surveillance program to shape research; a stakeholder symposium in 2007, and a new web page on autism on Health Canada's website.

Nov. 22: **New child and youth representative** - Saskatchewan Provincial Court Judge Mary Ellen Turpel-

Lafond has been selected for this position.

Wed., Nov. 29, 6:30-8:30 pm: Supported Child Development Program Family (SCDP) Meeting at BACI, 2702 Norland Ave, Burnaby - to discuss strategies that families can work on together to advocate for stable funding. This program is being threatened with funding cuts, meaning special needs children will lose their funding that currently pays for support staffing and child development consultants, allowing children to be part of inclusive child care centres, attend preschool, and receive after school care. Speakers: Lorraine Aitken, Prov. Advisor for the SCDP. MPs and MLAs from the Lower Mainland have been invited. For more info contact Jennifer Baumbusch, 604-290-6086, [scdpfamilies@gmail.com](mailto:scdpfamilies@gmail.com)

Thurs. Nov. 30, 7 pm: Free Mental Health Education Forum for the public on child and adolescent mental illness (ADHD, anxiety, etc.) Norman Rothstein Theatre, 950 W. 41st Ave (at Oak St.), Vancouver. For more information please call Ed 604-873-0103 or email [dabc@telus.net](mailto:dabc@telus.net). MDA- Mood Disorders Association of BC. [www.mdabc.ca](http://www.mdabc.ca)

### **Speaking Up**

BC FamilyNet has also been urging other groups and families to come forward and speak up to share their experiences of the negative impacts of under-funding and other problems in community living, as well as positive stories of success that can offer hope and inspiration to others. Many individuals have made the effort, in some cases sacrificing their family's privacy to explain the high personal costs of what many just see as statistics and budget numbers. We have established a [special section of our Web site to compile these stories](#), to ensure that families have a voice that is heard and to document their experiences in a way that is accessible to other families, the public, media and political leaders who wish to learn from them.

### **Media attention**

Increasingly, we have seen families prepared to go public and share their concerns with reporters and the media. This has helped generate significant media attention during October, especially about CLBC's waitlists and funding challenges. This public attention is critical if we want to generate public support and the resulting political will necessary to start looking at solutions. Even more importantly, some of the families who have come forward and shared their stories have found that the attention helped to resolve long-standing and serious issues.

### **Next Steps**

These include following up on our meeting with the Minister, reaching out to other community living groups and families to discuss shared goals, ongoing information sharing and advocacy efforts, and continuing to support family advocacy where possible. Fund raising needs to be addressed in order to maintain and expand BC FamilyNet activities.

In closing, we would encourage families and other organizations to support these initiatives and to build on the momentum by sharing their stories and concerns with BC FamilyNet, with the CLBC leadership, with the new MCFD Minister and Opposition Critic, with the media, and with their MLA's ([MLA contact info](#))

### **How you can help**

BC FamilyNet Society is run by our all-volunteer board of family members and self-advocates and our website is maintained by one of our parent members who is also a volunteer. You can help support our work by becoming a member and/or making a donation\*. Membership is open to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families and/or close friends (advocates), and families of children and youth with special needs. If you are not already a member, we urge you to join by filling out a membership application form, which can be submitted at our website or printed and mailed to us. Or just send us an e-mail at [info@bcfamilynet.org](mailto:info@bcfamilynet.org).

Thank you for your ongoing support. We wish you all peace and happiness throughout the upcoming holiday season and New Year ahead.

\* BC FamilyNet Society is a non-profit organization incorporated under the Societies Act, but does not as yet have a charitable tax number.