

December 22, 2011

## BC Community Living Action – 2011 YEAR IN REVIEW

Greetings friends of the BC-Community Living Action Group (BC-CLAG):

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***“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” ~ Margaret Mead***

As the end of 2011 draws near, it's an appropriate time to reflect on our accomplishments over the past year:

- The crisis BC's community living sector has become one the most high profile social issues in our province
- Negative publicity concerning the provincial government and CLBC's failure to respond to the crisis has resulted in:
  - the appointment of a new Minister of Social Development
  - a Deputy Minister working group examining how individuals with developmental disabilities are being supported by government ministries
  - changes in senior management at CLBC
  - an internal audit of CLBC operations and finances
  - an announcement of \$8.9 million in funding to address the most urgent health and safety cases
  - an interim report released by CLBC, including an admission that the Crown agency had "lost sight of its core values"
  - recent reports that CLBC is responding to some of the most urgent family situations—particularly those featured in the media.

The problems plaguing BC's community living sector are not situational: they are systemic. BC-CLAG recently released a series of **recommendations**—practical and systemic solutions to address the crisis in the sector—calling for:

- (1) An immediate stop to CLBC's budget-driven cuts and "service redesign" plan
- (2) A comprehensive external review/public inquiry of CLBC's mandate and operations
- (3) Both emergency and operational funding to meet existing and emerging needs
- (4) An independent advocate representing adults with developmental disabilities in BC
- (5) Provincial legislation outlining the inclusion rights and support entitlements of British Columbians with developmental disabilities
- (6) Regulation of home sharing

Other work undertaken by the BC-CLAG include:

***\*\*Headings below correspond to sections of our website, [www. CommunityLivingAction.org](http://www.CommunityLivingAction.org):***

### **ACTION - Provincial Lobbying:**

- BC's community living crisis was debated in the provincial Legislature on more than 15 occasions this fall (Question Period and Estimates).
- BC-CLAG representatives met with Minister of Social Development Stephanie Cadieux in mid-October to discuss our group's recommendations.
- BC-CLAG representatives presented their case for increased sector funding at the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services in November.

### **ACTION/Advocacy - Municipal Lobbying:**

- To date, more than 26 Municipalities responded to BC-CLAG's request for action, issuing resolutions or formally endorsing our campaign by writing letters to the Premier, and the Ministers of Social Development, and Children and Family Development.

### **HOW YOU CAN HELP:**

- **BC-CLAG will be making a presentation at Delta municipal council's meeting on January 30<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. If any BC-CLAG supporter/Delta resident wishes to accompany our presenter and/or participate, please email me.**

### **ACTION/Information – Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests:**

- The BC-CLAG has submitted 9 FOI requests this year regarding CLBC and the Ministry of Social Development. Our website includes status updates on all of our requests, including information obtained.

### **ACTION – Social Action:**

- An independent grassroots group of self-advocates and families has been organizing rallies throughout the Lower Mainland to call attention to the issues in BC's community living sector. Please show your support by participating in these actions.

#### **UPCOMING RALLIES ORGANIZED BY CLBC STOP THE CUTS**

All Rallies begin at 11am, rain or shine, dress for weather

- **Surrey**-Sunday January 15, 2012
  - Location : starting at 9900 Block Skytrain station,SE
- **Burnaby**-Sunday February 12, 2012
  - Location : starting at Metro Town Skytrain Station
- **Coquitlam**-Sunday March 11, 2012
  - Location : starting at Coquitlam Bus Depot across from Coquitlam

### **Media:**

- BC-CLAG issued 8 news releases, 2 Opinion/Editorials, and 3 backgrounders this year.

### **In the News:**

- More than 275 print and broadcast media stories—articles, interviews, and commentaries—since late April have made BC's community living crisis one of the most important and widely covered issues in the province.
- We owe a debt of gratitude to the courageous families for sharing their stories and to the media for reporting with journalistic integrity and sensitivity.

### **HOW YOU CAN HELP:**

- **Please continue to monitor local and regional media for stories about BC's community living sector. Email letters to the editor and phone into talk shows to validate accurate reporting or correct inaccuracies. If you haven't done so already, consider coming forward with your own family story; reporters are still interested in new information on this issue.**

### **Looking Ahead:**

- While we've had considerable success exposing the crisis in BC's community living sector, there is still a great deal of work to be done. And we can't expect it to be all smooth sailing...
- It's not uncommon for high profile social issues like ours to be attacked or challenged. Opposition groups often do this to protect unsavoury information or maintain *status quo*. So, in the months ahead, we can probably expect: small groups of individuals or families publicly praising CLBC supports and services; well-known disability rights activists speaking out in support of the Ministry or CLBC's service redesign plan; editorials or news coverage making excuses for the current crisis (eg: lack of sector funding tied to the HST referendum); etc. These are well-documented strategies that are intended to undermine social movements. The media is often wise to them, and good reporters are more concerned with facts and personal stories than political tactics.
- Moving forward, our best approach is to continue to do what we've been doing: tell the truth; uncover the truth; collaborate and support one another; and ensure that the current and future needs of British Columbians with developmental disabilities remains at the front and centre of our collective actions.

We will continue to keep you up-to-date on our activities. In the meantime, best wishes over the holidays and for a happy, healthy new year.

### **Emet Davis**

For the BC-Community Living Action Network  
[www. CommunityLivingAction.org](http://www.CommunityLivingAction.org)