



# BC Community Living Action Group (BC-CLAG)

A provincial network of service, support, and advocacy organizations, family groups, & other community living stakeholders

- March 16, 2012

The Honourable Christy Clark  
Premier, British Columbia  
Box 9041 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

**Via email:** [premier@gov.bc.ca](mailto:premier@gov.bc.ca)  
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Hon. Stephanie Cadieux  
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## Re: Government's Response to the Status of B.C.'s Community Living Sector

Dear Premier Clark and Minister Cadieux,

When the government released a series of reports on Community Living British Columbia (CLBC) on January 19, you both publicly acknowledged the crisis faced by adults with developmental disabilities in our province, and agreed that trust in CLBC – the Crown corporation that provides funding for services and supports for adults with developmental disabilities in B.C. — has been badly shaken. The onus is on government to restore that trust, you said. We agree.

The BC Community Living Action Group (BC-CLAG) is a unique coalition of self-advocates, families, support staff and agencies that support adults with disabilities across the province. For the past 18 months, we have been advocating on behalf of adults with disabilities and those who support them, and helped raise broad awareness and understanding of the importance of community living. Through our efforts, numerous families, self-advocates, and support workers came forward to share their stories, resulting in over 350 media stories focused on CLBC in the last twelve months.

Today, we are writing to reinforce the conclusions of the recently released government reports that the community living system in our province is battered, bruised and broken due to chronic underfunding, executive and fiscal mismanagement, and budget-driven service redesigns. BC-CLAG is thankful that the government has finally recognized the crisis in community living, and the recommendations regarding CLBC represent a positive first step. However, they fall short of what is truly needed:

- Regarding **CLBC funding**, we welcome the \$18 million annualized investment in CLBC, while noting that half of these funds were announced last September and earmarked for emergency health and safety needs. Another \$12 million is to support caseload increases. We expect this will help alleviate some of the backlog of supports and service requests at CLBC, but the recent reports acknowledge further program and service cuts will continue. Community living advocates conservatively estimate that another \$70 million is needed to serve youth transitioning to adult care in the next two years alone, and this does not begin to resolve outstanding needs due to past cuts and waitlists.



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- The CLBC reports place great emphasis on **employment programs for adults with disabilities**, including \$10 million in funding through the Ministry for Social Development. BC-CLAG believes in the full participation of people with developmental disabilities in all aspects of community life, including employment when possible. However, effective employment programs require individualized, person-centered supports and real work deserves real pay. We caution that this renewed focus on employment must not represent another attempt to cut supports and download responsibility for people with developmental disabilities.
- We are encouraged that Mary Ellen Turpel Lafond, the representative for children and youth, will now have responsibility for some youths with disabilities while they transition to CLBC services. We do not support the decision to restrict that mandate only to transitioning youths who were supported by the Representative's office before turning 19. We maintain the urgent need for an **independent advocate for all adults with developmental disabilities, with a broad mandate similar to that of the Representative for Children and Youth**. Many older CLBC clients have no relatives to help them advocate in crisis situations. Adults with developmental disabilities deserve the same protection as BC seniors and youth.

The reports and action plan do not address other key BC-CLAG concerns and recommendations to fix the crisis in community living. Government must **cease CLBC's budget-driven cuts to services and supports**, which have created unreasonable stresses and risks for adults with disabilities and their families, and denied their rights to choice and self-determination. The action plan will not resolve the crisis without a government commitment to adequately fund critical support needs. We urge government to **work with community partners to develop provincial legislation setting out the inclusion rights and support entitlements of adults with developmental disabilities** in B.C. The reports and action plan also fail to address the urgent need to **regulate home sharing services** in community living.

The BC CLAG recommendations emerge from a broad community dialogue launched in 2010 by all major community living partner groups, including families, self-advocates, service providers and unionized support staff. The important results and recommendations from these consultations were distilled into our March 2011 *Reaching Out: Weighing In* report, which we sent to you.

Government's failure to engage with community partners or respond to the growing crisis in a timely manner led to a serious erosion of trust, prompting our calls for a full independent inquiry. We believe the government's recent internal review, audit, and funding announcement represent important first steps. But critical issues remain unaddressed and the BC-CLAG maintains that an independent review is still one of the necessary courses of action towards restoring trust and embarking on meaningful reforms.

If government is genuinely committed to person- and family-centered models of support, it must restore trust and meaningfully engage families, self-advocates and other community living stakeholders. Such collaboration is key to building a sustainable, person-centered system. BC-CLAG wants to be part of the solution, but has unfortunately been excluded from any meaningful consultation to date. We have solutions to offer and would prefer to work cooperatively with you.



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For most of us, community living has been a lifetime commitment. Families have no choice in making community living a lifetime obligation. Your attempts to restore trust will be futile if you do not take into account the voices of the people receiving and delivering community living services – including the adults who are impacted by government policies every day.

We hope that you will hear us and understand that much more still needs to be done.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Dyson, Executive Director  
**BC Coalition of People with Disabilities**

Faith Bodnar, Executive Director  
**BC Association for Community Living**

Darryl Walker, President  
**B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union**

Cyndi Gerlach & Dawn Steele, Co-administrators  
**Moms on the Move**

Anita Dadson, President  
**BC Family Net Society**

Alanna Hendren, Executive Director  
**Developmental Disabilities Association**

Michael J. Prince, Lansdowne Professor of Social Policy  
**University of Victoria**

**About BC-CLAG:** The BC Community Living Action Group (BC-CLAG) is a network of self-advocates, families, support staff and agencies who support adults with disabilities. BC-CLAG includes: BC Association for Community Living, BC Coalition of People with Disabilities, Moms on the Move, BC FamilyNet, BC Government and Service Employees' Union, Developmental Disabilities Association, Michael Prince (University Victoria), Health Sciences Association of BC, Hospital Employees' Union, and the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

More info: <http://communitylivingaction.org/>

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