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MAR 26 2015

Ref: 185606

Stephanie Smith
President
BC Government and Service Employees' Union
4911 Canada Way
Burnaby BC V5G 3W3

Dear Ms. Smith:

Thank you for your letter dated March 4, 2015, regarding the funding increase for Community Living BC (CLBC) caseload over three years and the need for an independent public advocate for persons with disabilities. I am pleased to respond, and also thank you for your warm wishes on my appointment as Minister of Social Development and Social Innovation.

Demand for CLBC services are assessed prior to the start of each fiscal year and funding decisions are made accordingly. As you stated in your letter, Budget 2015 provided an additional \$69 million for services. This was in addition to the increased funding for services of \$100 million announced in Budget 2014 and as a result, CLBC is receiving a total of \$169 million in increased funding to address anticipated services demand over the next three years. This significant funding increase is in addition to maintaining the supports for the more than 17,000 individuals that CLBC currently serves.

In your letter you also state the need for the establishment of an independent public advocate for persons with disabilities. Although there are no current plans to create a new advocate, you may be interested to know that there are a number of government and independent offices that provide advocacy and oversight for persons with developmental disabilities, such as:

- The Advocate for Service Quality has been in place since 1992 and is appointed by the Minister of Social Development and Social Innovation to help adults with developmental disabilities and transitioning youth with special needs.
- The Representative for Children and Youth's mandate was expanded in 2013 to allow the RCY to continue to advocate on behalf of young adults (ages 19-24) with developmental disabilities who are moving from child services to adult services with Community Living BC.

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- The Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation's Integrated Services Support Team is available to individuals and families with concerns about services provided by CLBC or any other government organization supporting individuals with developmental disabilities.

In addition and where appropriate, the Ombudsperson or the Public Guardian and Trustee can act to ensure the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities are protected.

Thank you again for writing. I appreciate your interest in CLBC, the work the employees you represent do in CLBC and community-based agencies throughout the province and your advocacy for the community living sector.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Stilwell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michelle Stilwell
Minister



B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union
A component of NUPGE (CLC)

March 04, 2015

Hon. Michelle Stilwell, MLA
Minister of Social Development and Social Innovation
PO BOX 9058, STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Stilwell,

On behalf of the 67,000 members of the BC Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU) please accept my best wishes on your appointment as Minister for Social Development and Social Inclusion. I know that budget estimates have come very quickly after your recent appointment.

I would like to first of all commend the government for its new investment in CLBC over the next three years. The BCGEU has consistently called for a robust, multi-year funding plan that is need driven and designed to provide individuals with developmental disabilities and their families with authentic choices on a continuum of services. The 2015 budget is a step in the right direction.

However, we remain very concerned about a number of outstanding issues that warrant your attention.

The increase in funding of \$69 million for services, though welcome, does also not appear to fully address the current and anticipated wait lists for services. We believe that CLBC is underestimating the anticipated demand for services over the next three years. Given that the public's confidence in CLBC to deliver needed services in a timely and appropriate manner has been shaken in the last few years, we feel strongly that an independent public review and audit of the crown corporation's budget, expenditures and service delivery model is necessary.

Lastly, the BCGEU continues to call for the establishment of an independent public advocate for people with disabilities that is accountable to the legislature modelled on the Representative for Children and Youth. This recommendation has been endorsed by a number of stakeholders, including the BC Community Living Action Group (BC CLAG). There is no provision for such an important oversight mechanism in the budget or mention of it in the throne speech.



As you may know, the BCGEU represents about 400 workers at Community Living BC and approximately 6,500 workers in community-based agencies providing frontline services throughout the province. We have also long been a strong and thoughtful advocate for the community living sector. We would like to reiterate our commitment to working with you and others to meet the needs of our province's individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, just as our members work every day to provide supports and services in the community.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephanie Smith
BCGEU President

JC/gg
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cc: Hon. Jenny Kwan, MLA, Opposition critic for CLBC