



**BC Association
for Community Living**

Supporting people with developmental disabilities and their families

For Immediate Release

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Disability Rights Organization pleased with Monitoring Brief from Representative for Children and Youth

New Westminster, BC - The British Columbia Association for Community Living (BCACL) commends the BC Representative for Children and Youth for her Monitoring Brief outlining the concerns about the system of support for children and youth with special needs. The frustration that is evident in the report is definitely echoed by families across this province who need and deserve a support system that is responsive, accessible and accountable.

Many of the systemic issues brought up in the Brief have been voiced by families of children with developmental disabilities in their efforts to navigate the system. BCACL has been urging the Ministry of Children and Family Development to resolve these issues to ensure the development of Community Living BC (CLBC) occurs in a timely and effective way.

While BCACL is pleased with the Brief and will await the outcomes from this report, we are also deeply concerned that the report does not meaningfully address the critical lack of resources needed to ensure that services and supports to special needs children and their families are in place. The programs have been grossly under-funded, waitlists continue to grow, and the lack of substantive increases to these programs in the 2008-09 Budget paints an even bleaker picture for the future.

"It is our collective responsibility as a society to ensure vulnerable children and their families are well served and supported," said Rory Summers, President of BCACL. "As a parent of a child with a developmental disability, I simply do not understand how we can accept children with special needs languishing on waitlists for 'Early Intervention Programs'."

BCACL has always advocated that CLBC would be created to ensure that supports for both children with special needs and adults developmental disabilities would be delivered with a family-centered approach throughout the lifespan. Despite repeated special reports and many "re-organizations", child welfare/protection has been the fundamental policy and practice driver for the Ministry of Children and Family Development. While that is critically important for children who need

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protection, it is unacceptable and unwelcome for families who are raising children with special needs or disabilities. BCACL emphasizes that the system should recognize and respect the strength and competence of families in their fundamental role in nurturing and ensuring the well-being of their child.

“Families who have children with special needs and/or developmental disabilities have told us repeatedly they neither want nor need the perspective of child protection on their family, just because of the presence of a disability or special need, and this has been a fundamental premise in the creation of CLBC,” said Laney Bryenton, Executive Director of BCACL.

“The Representative’s Brief highlights the need to address critical issues of philosophy, eligibility and waitlists that must be resolved to enable both systems to move forward and respond appropriately to all families. We hope that both the Minister and government will take this to heart and resolve them promptly. Families are counting on them.”

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