



**BC Association  
for Community Living**

*Supporting people with developmental disabilities and their families*

February 12, 2008

Honourable Minister Christensen  
Minister of Children and Family Development  
Room 347, Parliament Bldgs.  
PO Box 9057, STN PROV GOVT.  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Christensen,

On behalf of the BC Association for Community Living, I'd like to thank you for meeting with us on February 1, 2008. I'd also like to take this opportunity to reinforce some of our key concerns and follow up on our recommendations that came out of our meeting together.

We believe that with continued stewardship and the appropriate level of funding, CLBC can and will, over time, be able to achieve its vision. That being said, we are committed to ensuring that the key structural elements that are essential to the design and ultimately to the outcomes, must also be maintained. CLBC was envisioned as providing life long supports for children and youth with special needs, adults with developmental disabilities and their families. The design was intentional -- to ensure increased accountability and equity of supports with an emphasis on flexibility and portability. Further the design was built on the belief in a family centred approach. We were pleased to hear your comments about resisting the urge to "tinker" with components of the design of CLBC at this time.

As we discussed our provincial board of directors will continue to meet regularly with the CLBC Board of Directors, and we appreciate their commitment to this.

**Children's Services**

We are particularly concerned that the children's agreement is still outstanding and are deeply troubled by the continued inability of the bureaucratic system to ensure the original children's agreement is implemented. As you know, families who have young children are becoming more and more confused about where to go for help. All of us who invested in the creation of CLBC, as an organization designed to meet the needs of individuals and their families with a life long family centered philosophy, share your frustration that this issue has not been resolved. When envisioned, considerable thought and intention went into the set of structural elements that were designed to work together to transform a huge system. Many believed this kind of transformation would take between five and ten years to achieve. However, this vision cannot be achieved without transferring responsibility for policy and budget of services for children and youth with developmental disabilities from MCFD to CLBC.

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We want to reiterate how critical it is that supports to families who have children with disabilities are provided through the lens of "disability supports", not one of child protection. CLBC should not play the role of the Director of Guardianship for children and youth with special needs who are in need of protection. The role of child protection must be separated from the provision of community living supports and should be maintained in the Ministry for Children and Family Development. We urge your leadership to resolve this issue promptly.

Asking MCFD and CLBC staff to prepare a report on next steps was a proactive move. Thank you for initiating that and for agreeing to meet with us once you receive those reports.

### **Community Living BC Budget**

We appreciate your comments confirming that CLBC will receive a budget lift this year and look forward to hearing more about those details in the coming weeks.

We agree that the crisis related to the budget overshadows innovation and the ability of CLBC to meet the needs of children and youth with special needs, adults with developmental disabilities and their families. CLBC simply cannot move forward with the transformation at a time of significant budget shortfalls. The crisis management approach has not only undermined the well-being of families and individuals; it has undermined their belief in the new system to better meet their needs.

It is important that individuals and families hear very clearly that CLBC will receive more money to go directly into providing new supports and services. On February 19<sup>th</sup>, we would like to find ourselves in a position to celebrate with you an announcement that CLBC will have more money to address the needs of children with special needs and adults with developmental disabilities and their families who are on waitlists in 2008-2009.

### **Respite Fund for Families**

During our meeting, we raised the issue of families across the province who are in crisis and need some supports immediately to prevent further family burnout and breakdown. Because CLBC has not had adequate funding to meet the needs of families this past year, the crisis is now worse than it has ever been. Families need your help.

We echo the concerns raised in the Ontario Ombudsman's Report "Between a Rock and a Hard Place." In our province, where we are experiencing unprecedented annual surpluses, surely government will not allow a system to be created and resourced in such a way that it forces families into giving up the care of their children as a mechanism to ensure their child receives supports as they transition into adulthood.

Again, we ask for your leadership and recommend that government, before the end of this fiscal year, make an investment in a \$20M respite fund for families waiting to access community living services. Not intended to replace an overall increase in funding for CLBC, we believe this gesture will signal to families, that you have heard their pleas for help and will step in to alleviate some of the pressure that has been so difficult for families.

If CLBC or MCFD is not able to hold a surplus at the end of the fiscal year, we urge you to work with others to find another way to a way to make this happen. We will do whatever we can to help explore how this could happen.

We are pleased that you agree with our comments that young adults requiring community living supports should not be forced into long term or extended care because CLBC does not have the funding to meet their needs. We urge continued vigilance by all parties on this issue.

In closing, we'd like to formally invite you to welcome delegates to our Annual General Meeting and Conference in Surrey this June. We'd most appreciate your participation as part of our Opening Plenary Thursday June 12 at 8:30am. If this time does not work, we can also incorporate your involvement into the Welcome Reception at 7:00pm that evening. We expect between 550 and 650 people to be in attendance at our conference this year, and this would be a great opportunity for you to address the many individuals with developmental disabilities, families, volunteers and service providers that are count on you for your support and leadership.

We look forward to continuing our dialogue and to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rory Summers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "S".

Rory Summers  
President, BCACL