

To: Moms on the Move <momsonthemove@telus.net>
Subject: Budget news for CLBC and MCFD

Today was Budget Day in Victoria. Budget Highlights for MCFD/CLBC at a glance:

* Early Childhood Development, Child Care and Supports to Children with Special Needs will be cut drastically from \$535.3 million in 2006 - 07 to \$429.9 million in 2007 - 08. This \$105 million cut includes an adjustment for Prime Minister Stephen Harper's elimination of the national child care program.

(What can you say about that in a province with a \$2.8 billion surplus that just gave away 15(?) times that much in a tax cut that we citizens apparently didn't even ask for. Mine's going to beer and and a big bag of Cheezies to try to drown my despair, I can promise that right now.)

* CLBC receives a funding increase of \$35 million to a total of \$646 million for 2007 - 08. (Enjoy that moment of elation--it's all downhill from here on) However, only \$19 million of this is available to spend on expanding services--the remainder covers wage increases agreed to last year and other contractual obligations. CLBC estimates that it may (hopefully) save a further \$7 million due to "implementation of individual choices from the Residential Options Project". This is still significantly less than what CLBC said would be needed to start responding to the needs of the thousands of adults, youth, children and families who are currently on endless waitlists. In fact, CLBC's Service Plan states that "it is anticipated the waitlist will continue to grow in the short term." Development of a children's waitlist, meanwhile "will begin in 2007/08."

Based on current eligibility criteria (i.e. if we ignoring the Fahlman court ruling that said CLBC could not deny services to people with IQ over 70), CLBC says it expects demand for new and enhanced services will exceed the budget increase for 2007, given factors such as the extra needs of an aging population and the loss/retirement of aging family members who currently provide free care for the vast majority of adults with developmental disabilities at home, with no help from CLBC.

Implementing Individualized Funding and Direct Funding will help cut costs, CLBC hopes. Not by much, though, as the target is to get all of 50 folks onto IF (the centrepiece of the innovative new model) in the year ahead.

According to CLBC's Service Plan, "addressing this growing demand will require the successful implementation of a number of initiatives designed to utilize existing resources more effectively, including a shift to alternative residential models, improved planning support to avoid crisis, including more respite support (Great if they can do it--see caveat below), and improved contracting practices. In particular, much will depend "on the success of the Residential Options Project, which will be determined by: number

of individuals choosing to pursue an alternative residential model, level of service provider cooperation and participation in such a transition and ability of CLBC staff to expedite individual moves at a time of considerable change within CLBC operations."

"Key risks identified earlier in this plan may become more critical should service demand exceed CLBC's ability to respond (Note that they've already stated that's a given). Loss of support from individuals, families and communities could compromise CLBC's service re-design (I thought they'd already "successfully transitioned" to the new service model - see below) and reduce the effectiveness of initiatives to improve resource utilization and introduce such innovations as individualized funding. Inability to properly fund person-centred plans or provide respite support may increase the utilization of more expensive resources in response to crisis."

Worried?

"CLBC is committed to implementing a wide range of formal and informal safeguards that respect the rights of individuals and families" and to "maintaining a low risk approach." But since it will take "some time" to implement the "new information management system and business processes, and contractual relationships with providers that focus on outcomes that enhance quality of life and citizenship opportunities", CLBC does admit that a "key challenge is making the necessary changes to the way in which services are provided, while ensuring that the vulnerability of individuals served is not increased."

So safeguards are coming, but don't count on them in the short term while budget/demand pressures are forcing CLBC to try to make radical changes to cut costs, which they expect will generate a community backlash, thereby forcing them to fall back on more expensive crisis management modes.... Just like the not-so-innovative old system, except more so, and without the old safeguards.

An interesting sidebar note, given the recent outcry about efforts to push/keep people out of their group homes in an effort to cut costs, is that CLBC has dropped two key performance measures from its 2007 Service Plan:

"Percent of adults requiring residential supports who are offered and accept options other than the traditional group home model" and "Number of adults who choose and successfully move from a staffed residential arrangement to a more individualized option." The former, CLBC claims, "is a historical measure first used by MCFD in their 2005/06 – 2007/08 Service Plan that is no longer appropriate, as CLBC has successfully transitioned to its new service delivery model." (Now that's news!) Regarding the latter, the Service Plan states that "Adults with developmental disabilities will continue to be offered choices with respect to where they live, however, CLBC does not have any pre determined targets."

Sooo...., after all those good-hearted folks from community living delivered some 250,000-odd candy hearts to all those kindly MLAs in Victoria last week, CLBC's marching orders from Premier Campbell, Finance Minister Taylor and MCFD Minister

Christensen are pretty much the same for 2007/08: Try to push as many folks as possible into cheaper homes (just don't be so crass as to advertise that to the world by making it a Performance Measure); keep the rest on waitlists indefinitely; and talk a lot about proactive safeguards to make up for the fact that there's pretty much little or nothing actually in place yet even though they're needed now more than ever and there's little hope of that changing in the foreseeable future.

Maybe the housing activists who chained themselves together in the Finance Minister's office yesterday or threw eggs at the Olympic clock launch last week had more impact than all of us who laboured earnestly over letters describing our personal challenges, comprehensively researched Budget Committee briefs and presentations last Fall or joined BCACL's coordinated effort to get all those candy hearts delivered to our MLAs across the province last week. We succeeded in getting a roughly \$10 million increase in real dollars over what they'd already planned for community living after all those heart-rending stories of waitlists and crises, vs. a \$1.5 billion surprise for regular taxpayers. The young families are the ones who got seriously screwed, though. In the midst of this largesse, a \$100 million cut to Early Childhood Development, Child Care and Supports to Children with Special Needs--the very group that the Province highlighted just last year as so deserving of extra support.

OK, I really need that beer and that bag of Cheezies now to drown my depression. And I'm offering the "Militant Moms on the Move" brand free of charge to any young parents out there with the energy to do something more constructive about it.

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