

*Presentation to Richmond City Council
February 2004
Stephanie Seaman*

Your Worship and esteemed Members of the Council:

Thank you for allowing me to speak tonight. My name is Stephanie Seaman. I live at 2600 Wellington Crescent in Burkeville. My family and I have lived in the City of Richmond for six years.

I have come here tonight to speak on behalf of the community social service workers who live and work in Richmond, and for the people we provide those services to.

As an executive member of the Community Social Services Component of the BCGEU, and as a front-line worker in the field, I am gravely concerned about the impact that severe provincial funding cuts to community social service agencies are having in our community.

As each agency is required to find ways in which to cut costs, vital services and programs are being lost. I personally have learned of the closure of two community living group homes right here in Richmond, resulting in upheavals to the men and women who live there. I am unsure if you have imagined what this would be like for the residents living in these homes, but I would like to tell you what workers are telling me. Imagine, that to save money, your family is divided up in two; perhaps each family member would have to find a new home.

In these group homes, that is reality. Families are being split up to save dollars. Agencies that are being required to cut costs have to make these devastating changes. In some programs, staffing levels are being decreased, which increases the risks to both residents and staff.

All of this seriously sets back the work being done with such care at these homes, which are assisting developmentally disabled members of our community to become more self-sufficient and lead their lives with dignity and respect.

As you are probably aware, women's centres will lose 100% of their provincial funding as of April 1st and will face the prospect of either cutting their programs to the minimum or closing their doors altogether.

The BC Coalition of Women's Centres has reported that over 300,000 BC women relied on and used these services in 2001. According to the Government of British Columbia's own website, women's centres are *"the first place to go in your community when you need help in times of crisis. Women's centres provide a variety of services, including information and referrals, support groups, crisis counseling, job entry programs, child care services and housing registries."*

I have always been so proud that the City of Richmond was a community that had a women's centre. Now it's very existence is in serious jeopardy.

Stopping the violence programs and sexual assault response programs have also had their funds cuts. There is a reduction in funding for suicide prevention, crisis centres and 24-hour hotlines for people in distress -- all with serious ramifications to the health and well-being of our citizens.

Programs supporting new immigrant families to our city have been reduced, leaving many with nowhere to turn in times of confusion and anxiety.

This Council has taken a very pro-active position around youth and the challenges that can arise for our young people. But, as Richmond is looking to find ways and programs to assist our youth, provincial funding cuts are threatening the programs that are already in existence. As a mother of a teenage daughter and a pre-teen son, I am extremely concerned about the effects of these cuts to them and to their peers.

All of these cuts result in increased pressure on local communities throughout the entire province. When services are no longer available -- either at the provincial level or from the community agencies that receive provincial funding -- then the pressure is increased even further. This pressure is on individual families, but it is also on the community and their local government.

Community social services are, by their very nature, preventative. They are the programs that help a woman or child at risk from abuse to find safety before there is serious injury or death. They are the programs that help those struggling with addiction to turn their lives around. They are the programs that help very young children with challenges to their ability to learn in typical settings get the help they need to become productive learners and successes at school. When these and many other programs are removed from a community, a very high price is paid; policing costs, property damage and violent crimes all increase.

This is an issue that is being debated all over the province. The City of Vancouver recently held a community forum around this very subject and the message heard at that forum was very clear: community social services are essential to the health and well-being of any community. They are services provided right here, where we live, ensuring that our community continues to look after those who are often the least able to care for themselves.

That is why I am asking you today to adopt the draft resolution urging the provincial government to recognize the importance of community social service programs to the City of Richmond and to the people who live here.

Thank you.

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Community Social Services

Nearly 15,000 unionized workers in the Community Social Services Sector provide services to thousands of British Columbians in communities across British Columbia.

There are four subsectors: Community Living, Family and Children's Services, Services to Women, and Child Care.

Here are just some of the services provided in each of the subsectors.

Community Living

The Community Living movement took developmentally disabled people out of centralized locations, such as Glendale, Tranquille and Woodlands. The process improved the quality of these people's lives by transferring them out of institutional settings and into a more community-based model.

Services include:

- preparation of program plans for all aspects of care for all ages of clients (vocational and residential);
- performing health care and personal hygiene tasks;
- accompanying clients during activities;
- operating businesses with clients;
- facilitating relationships (family and friends).

Specific care includes:

- flossing and brushing the teeth of an individual with extreme cerebral palsy;
- guiding a four-year-old girl in her efforts to learn how to walk;
- cooking meals for residents;

- assisting developmentally disabled workers with preparing food to be served in client-run restaurants;
- implementing programs to ensure some clients can cope with their violent behaviours in a less destructive manner;
- ensuring medical emergencies (such as epileptic seizures) are documented;
- administering prescribed medications and PRNs with follow-up documentation.

Family and Children's Services

The Family and Children's Services subsector is the most diverse group in terms of the broad range of services offered.

Most families in British Columbia at some point will have a family member receiving services.

Services include:

- alcohol and drug counselling;
- sexual abuse counselling;
- counselling for family violence and teen mediation;
- residential youth care;
- counselling and referral to street entrenched youth;
- probation/justice system, sex-trade, homelessness and AWOL counselling and support;
- crisis lines, suicide intervention counselling;
- short-term crisis intervention;
- connecting clients to support services and follow-up referrals;

continued...

- life skill and and counselling to children with developmental issues as well as parental relief;
- parental guidance;
- assistance in locating housing;
- assistance to immigrant families trying to adjust to a new way of life;
- services to aboriginal families.

Services to Women

The Services to Women subsector includes a wide range of programs and services specifically for women and their children.

As the number of single women raising families in poverty increases and the economy and employment opportunities decline, more and more women are accessing services in this subsector.

Many of the women and children who receive services are or have experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence, or are suicidal and/or living in poverty, receive crisis intervention, counselling, support and advocacy.

Services include:

- women's centres;
- safe houses;
- transition houses;
- clothing exchanges;
- food programs;
- life skills including basic hygiene, computer skills, applying for a job;
- housing registries;
- support groups;
- crisis counselling;
- assistance in accessing legal aid, employment assistance or education options;
- assistance in finding appropriate child care;
- sexual assault response;

- sexual assault counselling;
- stopping violence programs;
- welfare advocacy;
- child care and assistance;
- health information;
- network and support.

Child Care

Licensed child care centres offer quality child care services for working families in communities around the province.

Studies have long indicated a direct correlation between the influence of a quality early childhood experience and high functioning adults.

This 'early intervention' translates into dollar amounts in relation to crime prevention, academic achievement and employment opportunities later in life. This subsector continues to play an integral role as more and more parents join the workforce.

Services include:

- infant/toddler care;
- pre-school age care;
- before and after school care;
- high adult to child ratios;
- stable, constant caregiving;
- small group sizes;
- caregivers who are well trained in early childhood development and school age care;
- adequate health, safety and physical environment;
- skills development and education;
- interaction with other children;
- indoor and outdoor activities;
- group outings and field trips;
- family support.

Protect
community
social
services
for children
in need.



IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

Protect
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IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

Protect
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people with
disabilities.



IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

Protect
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IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

Dear Premier Campbell:

Since 2001, your government has cut over \$100 million from services for women, people with disabilities, children, and families in need.

These cuts put children at risk, desert families needing help, and leave people with disabilities without support. You are abandoning abused women, adults with developmental disabilities, children in violent homes. People with nowhere else to turn.

These cuts hurt society's most vulnerable.

Families and communities deserve better. I demand your government restore funding cuts and bring stability to the system. Your New Era document says "government has an obligation to properly protect and provide for those most vulnerable in our society."

I agree. Protect community social services.

name _____

address _____

email/phone _____

signature _____

Please complete and send to:
500 - 4940 Canada Way
Burnaby, B.C. V5G 4T3

We will forward this message on for you.

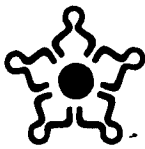
For more info, visit www.cssinfo.ca

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IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

Sponsored by:
BC'S COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICES WORKERS

COLUMBIA'S UNION



BCGEU

B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union

A component of NUPGE (CLC)

		INT
	JFM	
✓	DW	✓
	KY	
	AS	
	DB	
	WB	
✓	EA	

0150-01

February 13, 2004

David Weber
Manager, Legislative Services
City of Richmond
6911 No. 3 Road
Richmond BC V6Y 2C1

Re: Delegation Request

Dear Mr. Weber:

As per your instructions, I am writing to formally request to appear as a delegation before Richmond City Council. This delegation will be speaking on the effects of funding cuts to Community Social Services, as outlined in George Heyman's letter dated February 9th, 2004.

Members of Community Social Services in Richmond would like to appear as soon as possible and, as we understand the next city council meeting is held on Monday, February 23rd, we would like to request to be added to the agenda for this meeting.

Please find enclosed a copy of the draft resolution we will be asking council members to put forward and to pass.

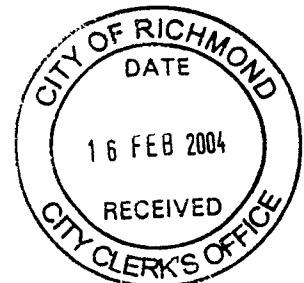
Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

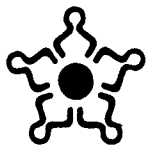
Stephanie Seaman
First Vice-Chair, Local 303
Community Social Services Sector

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recco021304

encl.



BRITISH COLUMBIA'S UNION



BCGEU

B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union

A component of NUPGE (CLC)

February 9, 2004

Evelina Halsey-Brandt
Councillor
City of Richmond
6911 No. 3 Road
Richmond, BC V6Y 2C1

Dear Councillor Halsey-Brandt

I am writing you with regard to the severe provincial funding cuts to community social services and the devastating impact this is having on families in your community.

Since 2001, the government has cut over \$100 million from vital community programs and services and is planning to cut an additional \$70 million.

These cuts have impacted a wide range of services to B.C.'s most vulnerable citizens. For children and adults with developmental disabilities, it's meant fewer programs such as community outings and skills development, and understaffing of group homes. For women, the cuts have resulted in the closure of six regional offices that administer women's programs, including stopping violence, sexual assault response, transition houses and safe homes. In March, 37 women's centres will close. Young people have fewer life skills programs like anger management and job hunting, suicide prevention and crisis centres. Immigrant families have less help adjusting to a new and different life. And families are finding it tougher to get counselling, parental guidance, child care, and intervention.

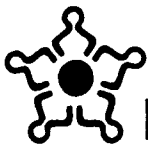
These closures and program cuts are on top of huge cuts to legal aid, welfare, home support and other health services, including the planned two-year limit on income assistance which, starting April 1, will push even more families into poverty.

I am sure you are seeing first-hand in your own community some of the effects of these cuts – bigger line-ups at food banks, more people sleeping in doorways, and a jump in violence and domestic disputes. What may not be so apparent is the despair and hopelessness that many families are feeling because they do not have the support and services they need.

Families deserve better. Communities deserve better.

I'm hoping the provincial government will recognize the serious effects that funding cuts to date have already had. Listen to families and communities who are crying out for help, and restore and maintain funding for much-needed programs. If not, families will be looking to their local governments to fill the gaps left behind by the cuts.





BCGEU

A component of NUPGE (CLC)

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I would very much appreciate hearing your personal views on this issue. I am also asking councillors to consider adopting a resolution, along the lines of the one enclosed with this letter, and hope that you will consider bringing it forward.

My mailing address is 4911 Canada Way, Burnaby, V5G 3W3, or you can reach me by e-mail at president@bcgeu.ca

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely

George Heyman,
President

GH/amm
opeiu 378

enclosures

PS Additional information about the impact of cuts to community social services is available at our website, www.bcgeu.ca.

SAMPLE RESOLUTION: community social services funding

Whereas community social services are vital to the health and well-being of thousands of British Columbians, especially women, people with disabilities, children and families in need, and the most vulnerable people in our society; and

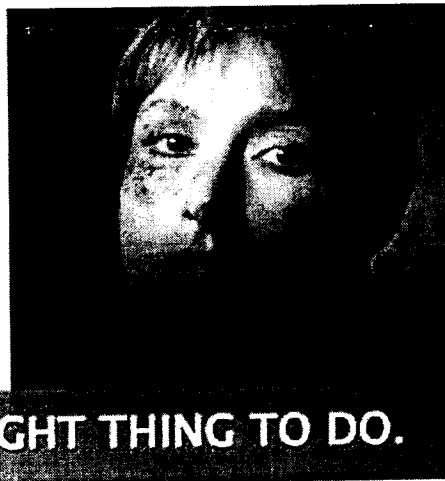
Whereas these critical services are dependent on adequate funding by the provincial government; and

Whereas the provincial government has already cut \$100 million from the community social services sector since 2001, and plans to cut at least \$70 million more before March 31 of this year; and

Whereas these cuts are having a devastating impact on families and communities;

Therefore be it resolved council send a letter to the B.C. government calling on Premier Gordon Campbell, Finance Minister Gary Collins, and Minister of Children and Family Development Christy Clark to put on hold any further cuts to community social service funding in the upcoming 2004/2005 budget, and to make every effort to restore program funding to the pre-2001 level.

Protect
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IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO.



City of Richmond

6911 No.3 Road, Richmond, BC V6Y 2C1
Telephone (604) 276-4000
www.city.richmond.bc.ca

FAXED

February 17th, 2004
File: 0150-01

VIA FAX NO. 604-291-6030

Ms. Stephanie Seaman
First Vice-Chair, Local 303
Community Social Services Sector
BC Government & Service Employees' Union
4911 Canada Way
Burnaby, BC V5G 3W3

Dear Ms. Seaman

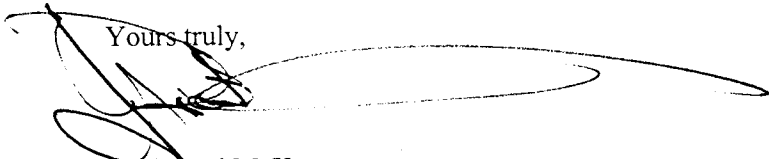
Re: Effects of Funding Cuts to Community Social Services

In response to your letter dated February 13th, 2004, this is to confirm your attendance as a delegation to Council regarding the above matter, at the Council Meeting scheduled for Monday, February 23rd, 2004, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, Richmond City Hall. Because this item is not on the agenda you will be heard at or near the end of the Council meeting.

Council procedures allow five minutes for you to make your presentation, not including any questions which Council members may ask. This five-minute limit is strictly enforced to ensure that all business for the meeting is dealt with.

Please conclude your presentation with a specific request on what you are seeking by appearing before Council as a delegation.

Yours truly,



J. Richard McKenna
City Clerk

fja


RICHMOND
Island City, by Nature