

FAMILY PARTNERS: *Key Messages From Families*

November 2002(updated Jan. 2003)

While the work that went into the Community Living Transition Steering Committee (CLTSC) proposal is recognized, there are fundamental issues that need to be brought forward and addressed. The following is a summary of key issues as expressed by family members and family groups:

1. **Program and Service cuts:** There must be a commitment from the Minister that there will be no reduction of service quality, quantity or choice for any family or individual currently or potentially receiving services from this Ministry. Further, any savings should not be at the expense of other areas of service, for example services for children.
2. **Health and Safety:** Protecting the health and safety of individuals is of primary importance, particularly during a time of massive change. The Minister must spell out clear, effective and accessible mechanisms to hold the Ministry directly accountable for guaranteeing that the health and safety of its clients is protected during the transition, and under a new governance model.
3. **Broad provincial consultation:*** Information sessions were held during the TSC process, but many questions have not been answered. Indeed, many families have not been involved or even made aware of the proposed changes. The Minister is urged to initiate an independent and equitable consultation process, led by a broad cross-section of families throughout BC and including other partners, before proceeding to the next stage of implementation.
4. **Communication:*** Families and individuals require access to information in order to give input. The TSC report is on the Ministry's website with an invitation to comment by e-mail within 30 days. Many families without Internet access are effectively precluded from participating in the consultations. The Minister is urged to make hard copies available at all Ministry offices and through agencies. Ministry clients must be informed about how they can give input. Further, the review period must be adequate to permit all families to read the report and respond, and to permit thorough discussion of the recommendations and implications of the report. There must be a clear outline of how the input will be followed up and addressed.
5. **Planning and implementation:** Any restructuring should be objective, researched-based, and driven by the primary goals of improving service quality, efficiency, effectiveness and choice, within the overall vision and policy directions. Broad general directions need to be accompanied by specific implementation plans. Short- and long-term plans are needed, detailing how vision and principles will be put into practice, how proposed budget reductions will be achieved, and how programs and services will be impacted, before the proposals can be fully evaluated. The Minister must establish a reasonable timetable for the development of an implementation plan with achievable targets. International experts contacted by the TSC, although they had a short response time, indicated that to undertake such a major change in a time of fiscal restraint and without specific implementation plans would be a major barrier to success.

Families are united in their devotion and commitment to seeking quality of life and choice for their family members, and for those who do not have families and/or advocates. Change and challenge are part of everyday life for families of a child with special needs or adult with developmental disabilities. Any changes impacting children with special needs and adults with developmental disabilities must include a process that is equitable and inclusive of all those impacted.

**After meeting with families on November 14, 2002, Minister Hogg extended the consultation period, distributed hard copies of the TSC report at local MCFD offices and libraries and agreed to hold consultation sessions across the province early in the new year before making any final decisions.*