

BULLETIN

Children & families urgently need adequate funding

November 1, 1999

The Report: November / December 1999 vol.20 num.4

by REID JOHNSON

In the spring of this year, the provincial Minister of Health, the Honourable Penny Priddy, announced to the HSA Convention that the Ministry of Health had added \$615 million new dollars to the health budget for British Columbia.

This revelation was welcome news to those members of HSA whose employers are funded by the Ministry of Health.

However, for HSA members whose employers are funded through the Ministry for Children and Families, this information was of little comfort.

Earlier in the year, the Honourable Lois Boone, Minister for Children and Families, directed organizations that are funded by MCF - including those that provide health services - to cut their budgets by 1.5 per cent.

Just for the record, the issue of whether these employers are CSSEA or HEABC members is irrelevant.

Many HEABC employers now receive their funding from MCF as a result of restructuring of that Ministry as mandated by the Gove report. These agencies provide services to children as well as adults with disabilities.

Earlier this year, representatives from the agencies that provide "health services" to children and disabled adults met with Ms. Boone and pointed out the glaring discrepancy in terms of how health services are being treated between the two ministries.

Ms. Boone tersely responded that in her capacity as Minister of Highways, keeping roads in good repair so ambulances could navigate was just as much a "health" issue as the one that the delegation was identifying. In my view, this level of insight and compassion on the part of a cabinet minister representing the interests of children, disabled adults and families is inexcusable.

I would like to see Ms. Boone explain to the four year old girl with spinal muscular atrophy that the physiotherapist who provides chest physiotherapy in the child's home, or the occupational therapist helping the girl learn to steer her power wheelchair at the local community centre, or the speech therapist helping the girl learn to master her limited breath support for speaking, or the social worker supporting the family to cope with the probable death of their child, work with "social" issues and not "health" issues.

I would have preferred that this particular girl could have driven her wheelchair into Ms. Boone's office to discuss her situation, but she can't.

She died.

The little girl didnt die from a "social" issue. She died from a "health" issue.

The Minister of Health appeared to understand the fact that our members providing healthservices under the Ministry for Children and Families, and the clients receiving thoseservices, deserve the benefit of those \$615 million new dollars.

HSA President Cindy Stewart met with Ms. Priddy on this funding inequity and she agreed toraise the issue with Minister Boone. HSA will also be meeting with Minister Boone aboutthis inequity as we continue to address the governments 1.5 per cent cut to MCFfunded agencies.

In the meantime, each HSA member can do their part by contacting their MLA and supportingthe various advocacy groups lobbying the government.

In time, our collective efforts may convince the government to fund health servicesequally, regardless of which ministry provides the funds.

Reid Johnson is a Social Worker at The Centre for Ability, and represents Region 5on HSAs Board of Directors.

Type:

[The Report](#)

- [Print](#)
- [PDF](#)

180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

Telephone 604-517-0994
1-800-663-2017