



Community living and family service programs may be cut as government fails to provide promised bridge funding

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Services for vulnerable families may be cut across B.C. following the government's failure to provide bridge funding for a 1.5 per cent wage increase that was negotiated for frontline workers earlier this year, the Community Social Services Bargaining Association says.

Family service workers provide vital community-based social programs for vulnerable children, struggling youth and families across British Columbia. Community living workers provide programs and supports for people with developmental disabilities. Three-quarters of British Columbians have used community-based social services delivered by not-for-profit agencies across the province.

"This is unacceptable. There shouldn't be any further cuts to programs or services due to a lack of bridge funding," said CSSBA Chair Patsy Harmston who is also Community Social Services Chair at the B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union, the largest union in the sector. "We negotiated the 1.5 per cent wage increase in good faith and found savings in our collective agreement to pay for it."

"We upheld our side of the deal. The government should do the same," said Harmston.

The following community-based social service agencies are not paying the 1.5 per cent wage increase or may be cutting programs and services because they have not received proper funding:

- John Howard Society - across British Columbia;
- Prima Enterprises - Kamloops and Prince George;
- Okanagan Boys and Girls Club - Kelowna, Vernon, Penticton;
- Abilities Community Services - Victoria;
- Interior Community Services - Kamloops;
- Bernard C Vinge & Associates Community Living Services - Burnaby;
- Richmond Society for Community Living;
- North Okanagan Youth and Family Services - Vernon;
- South Okanagan Association for Integrated Community Living - Penticton.

Pay raises were negotiated and ratified within the government's so-called "co-operative gains" bargaining mandate, which identified cost savings to fund the pay raises that were to take effect April 1, 2013.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development has failed to provide bridge funding to cover the payroll increase until the cost savings can be achieved in two to three years. By contrast, the Ministry for Social Development has provided the same funding for the much larger number of community-based social services that it funds.

"Why are some programs being treated differently than others? This discrepancy amounts to program cuts by stealth and bad faith bargaining," says Harmston.

The Community Social Services Bargaining Association bargains on behalf of 10,000 unionized community-based social service workers that work with vulnerable British Columbians. The bargaining association includes HSA, BCGEU, CUPE, HEU, and six other unions.

Topic:

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