



BC Community Living Action Group (BC-CLAG)

A provincial network of service, support, and advocacy organizations, family groups, & other community living stakeholders

PRESS RELEASE:

BC-CLAG: \$70 M budget lift needed immediately to stem community living crisis, halt growing safety risks and restore public confidence

For immediate release: August 31, 2011

The BC Community Living Action Group (BC-CLAG) strongly urges Premier Christy Clark to act immediately to approve \$70 million in new provincial funding to stem the province's growing community living crisis.

A BC-CLAG analysis of Community Living BC (CLBC) projections shows that at least \$70 million is needed immediately to address the existing support backlog. Each year, hundreds of youths with developmental disabilities reach the age of 19 and turn to CLBC as they age out of supports funded by the Ministry for Children and Families. Despite this fact, CLBC's operating budget to serve this population has remained static from 2010 through 2014 at \$681 million annually. (*See attached backgrounder*)

The increasing gap has severely strained CLBC's system of community-based residential and support services, resulting in a growing number of troubling human crises as highly vulnerable young adults and families struggle to cope alone. CLBC has tried to address the budget crunch and growing waitlists through a "service redesign" initiative, with cost-cutting measures such as closing group homes and forcibly transferring residents to lower-cost alternatives. The BC-CLAG analysis shows these actions have cut \$20 million annually from existing services, but concerns over impacts on safety, human rights, and quality of life have sparked a public outcry.

"Public confidence has been severely eroded by the disturbing reports on the impacts of this budget gap," warns BC-CLAG partner Faith Bodnar. "The BC-CLAG analysis has provided credible and conservative numbers and we urge Premier Clark to take immediate action."

In addition to the immediate investment of \$70 million, further annual budget increases of \$35 million for the next two years (2012/13 and 2013/14) is required just to meet the needs of BC youths expected to turn 19 and qualify for CLBC supports. These estimates are based on CLBC's average per-person support costs of \$50,300/year. They do not include new funds to cover rising operating costs, many of which are provincially-mandated, such as the HST and higher MSP premiums. In BC, families fund and provide the vast majority of the lifelong supports that help adults with developmental disabilities live safely and with dignity in their communities.

University of Victoria Social Policy professor and BC-CLAG partner Michael Prince commented: "The financial evidence is clear: provincial funding for the community living sector has declined in real terms over the decade. In order for adults with developmental disabilities to have better opportunities and a safer, better quality of life, provincial investment in the sector must address—in a planned and significant way—this accumulating social deficit."

About the BC CLAG: *Community living stakeholders came together in an unprecedented consensus to form the BC-CLAG in 2010. Our provincial network of self-advocates, families, support staff and agencies who support adults with disabilities has been working to help resolve BC's community living crisis. In April, BC-CLAG issued a report offering practical solutions to the growing crisis in community living. We have repeatedly invited Premier Christy Clark and the Minister of Social Development, Harry Bloy, to work with us to address the crisis.*

For more, please visit <http://communitylivingaction.org> or contact BC CLAG representatives:

- Faith Bodnar, Executive Director, BC Association for Community Living, 604 777-9100
- Michael J. Prince, Lansdowne Professor of Social Policy, University of Victoria, 250 721-8043