



Community Living Society

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August 28, 2006

The Honourable Tom Christensen
Minister of Children & Family Development
P.O. Box 9048 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Christensen:

Re: Non-union Support Workers in Community Living – Wage Increases and Bonuses

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Minister for Children and Family Development. We welcome you to your new position and wish you every success.

I am the Board Chairperson for Community Living Society, a non-profit organization serving people with disabilities throughout the Lower Mainland for over 25 years. We employ 450 employees who, throughout the history of the Society, have chosen to remain non-union trusting that they will receive fair treatment once government funding for new collective agreements has been successfully concluded. Since April 1, 2006 and the Liberal government's successful series of public sector negotiations, we have become increasingly concerned about the wage disparity between union and non-union agencies in the Community Living sector and the impact on our organization.

Community Living Society employees chose to remain non-union throughout the 1990s when successive NDP governments, in collaboration with the unions, made a commitment to unionize the public sector. Various unions have made at least five attempts and, right now, we are very vulnerable indeed. It would be a costly embarrassment if we were to fall to the unions during the tenure of a Liberal government because wage disparities were not addressed in a timely manner.

This oversight must be remedied immediately. The agency is losing valuable well-trained employees and recruitment is a significant challenge. Our families are very concerned that this may mean the end of a model of support that provides flexibility and quality of life to their loved ones. Our employees are worried about the prospect of unionization and feel they are being discriminated against for their choice.

We understand that this matter is under consideration by your government. I urge you to place it at the forefront of your agenda.

Yours truly,

Community Living Society

Todd Stewart
Board Chairperson

cc: The Honourable Carole Taylor, Minister of Finance