

## PLANNING A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

What are you trying to say?

- Key messages
- Stories/strategies that build on those key messages
- Priorizing - what needs to be talked about first?

Who are you trying to say it to?

- Who is your intended audience?
- Might be government, policy makers, funders, your clients, their family members, other agencies, the broad public, people in your sphere of influence
- A different audience requires a different approach

What do they need to know? Want to know? Ought to know?

When is the right time to say it?

- Build on opportunities - e.g. STV funding cuts come out (and are ultimately reversed) as Oak Bay domestic murders in headlines
- Piggyback on other people's comments to build the debate, get your points in
- Hedge bets with "slow news days," slow times of year
- Strategic timing

How will you say it?

- TV, print, letters, face-to-face, social media, blogging, Web sites, "word of mouth," service-club presentations, standing committee, etc
- Pick forms that suit the audience you're looking to draw

Why should anybody listen?

- Shape strong arguments that cover different aspects (e.g. the economic argument, social justice, prevention, collaboration)
- Be clear, and remember that people outside your world won't know what you're talking about
- Bring it home - personal stories, self-interest of your audience, health of community, etc
- Use research and statistics to help make your case - if you can, use the arguments of your opponents

What do you want people to do with the information you're giving them?

- Always make the "ask" - what action do you want people to take?
- What can they do RIGHT NOW in response to your information?



# THE FEDERATION

of COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICES of BC

## ***Facts about Children, Youth, Adults and Families in British Columbia***

### **These are difficult times for B.C.'s children, youth and families**

- Only 71 per cent of B.C. children arrive at kindergarten meeting all of the developmental benchmarks they need to thrive both now and into the future: 29 per cent are developmentally vulnerable<sup>1</sup> and at risk of poor lifetime outcomes in their health, economic potential and criminal involvement.
- British Columbia's 2009 Strategic Plan commits to lowering this rate to 15 per cent by fiscal year 2015/16, and by a further five per cent by 2020. Currently, 93 per cent of B.C. neighbourhoods have vulnerability rates exceeding even the 15 per cent target.
- Approximately 140,000 BC children and youth experience mental disorders each year.
- More than 1,100 B.C. children experience abuse in a typical year.
- Child and youth mental health and addiction services in B.C. are "woefully inadequate for the numbers of young people who require assessment and treatment in these most crucial early years." (Budget 2010 submission, B.C. Association of Social Workers)

### **Poverty is hurting our province and country**

- More than 31,000 B.C. children and youth age 18 and under - almost 19 per cent - live in households with incomes below the low-income cutoff (LICO). While poverty overall has decreased in the last decade, B.C. has had the worst child-poverty rates in Canada for the last six years. Child poverty has worsened in B.C.

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<sup>1</sup> Measures for gauging vulnerability: child comes to school appropriately dressed, nourished and rested; is able to hold a pen, climb stairs and use the washroom independently; gets along with peers and can follow instructions; able to tell a story; knows at least 10 letters of the alphabet and how to write simple words.

regardless of whether LICO measurements are used or the much more conservative measures of “poverty” developed by the Fraser Institute.

- The gap between rich and poor is growing in Canada. The top 20 per cent of earners saw their earnings rise by more than 16.4 per cent between 1980-2005, including a 6.2 per cent gain since 2000. Those in the bottom 20 per cent saw theirs shrink by more than a fifth since 1980, with a 3.1 per cent drop between 1995-2005.
- A typical one-bedroom apartment in any of B.C.’s larger cities is more than \$800/month. A two-bedroom apartment rents for an average \$964. A single parent on income assistance with two children receives a shelter allowance of \$570/month.

### **Social investment now prevents larger problems and higher costs later**

- Reducing childhood vulnerability rates in B.C. starts with strong community-based social supports: pregnancy, health and parenting supports; early education and care services for families returning to work after maternity/paternity leave; co-coordinated early childhood development services supporting families with children from birth to age six.
- Social support is proven to protect single- and dual-parent low-income families, helping buffer the negative effects of economic distress on their psychological well-being
- Single mothers who receive higher levels of social support are more nurturing towards their children, feel less isolated and no longer feel overwhelmed
- Reducing neighbourhood disadvantage and promoting neighbourhood cohesion reduces child injury rates.
- Social supports for families and children at risk reduces criminal involvement. A survey of 137 youth in custody in B.C. found most came from chaotic and troubled lives, and were much more likely than other B.C. youths to have a serious physical/mental health condition or disability; a parent or family member with a history of substance use, mental health problems or criminal involvement; fewer social supports; and a poorer sense of connection with family, school and community.

### **B.C.’s social services sector is a vibrant part of our communities and our economy**

- The social-services sector employs more than 64,000 British Columbians.
- In conjunction with the health industry, the sector contributes six per cent to B.C.’s GDP - almost \$10 billion. That is forecast to rise to nine per cent by 2014.
- Almost 80 per cent of sector employees are female.
- The community-based, volunteer-enhanced work of the social services sector provides excellent value for money. The average wage in 2008 in B.C.’s social services sector was \$18.54/hour. The proactive work that the sector does

prevents their clients' personal challenges from developing into full-blown crisis requiring far more costly interventions.

**An ounce of prevention really is worth a pound of cure**

- Reducing B.C.'s childhood vulnerability to 10 per cent by 2020 would result in benefits to society over a 60-year period that outweigh costs by more than 6:1 (Hertzman). Among the benefits:
- productivity gains from accelerated labour supply, especially among women
  - productivity gains from reduced absenteeism as a result of improved work/life balance
  - health cost savings associated with improved work/life balance
  - health cost savings associated with poverty reductions
  - child welfare savings, as fewer children enter the foster care system
  - reductions in crime, and government expenditures on the justice system
  - economic stimulus, when invested during an economic recession

**Sources:**

- ❖ *15 by 15: A comprehensive Framework for Early Human Capital Investment in B.C.*, Business Council of B.C. in conjunction with the Human Early Learning Partnership
- ❖ *Journal of Child and Family Social Work, Fostering Family Resiliency*;
- ❖ Applied Research Branch for Strategic Policy, HRDC;
- ❖ Statistics Canada;
- ❖ *First Call 2009 Child Poverty Report Card*;
- ❖ Chris Sarlow, *What is Poverty?* (Fraser Institute);
- ❖ *A Review of Child and Youth Mental Health Services in B.C.* (2008); in partnership with the Ministry of Children and Family Development
- ❖ Victoria Foundation, *2009 Vital Signs*

## Connecting with Your MLA

The important work of the social-services sector is something that all levels of government in Canada share an interest in. But social services are primarily the mandate of the provincial government. That means that potential changes to any provincial budget - particularly with expectations of cuts this fall and next spring - are a strong signal that you should be informing your MLA and other key elected officials about any issues and challenges facing your agency and clients.

These are difficult times. While some amount of cutting is inevitable in times of recession, it's absolutely vital to our sector that we act to ensure our politicians are aware of the good community work we're doing and of the impact that a decade of "hold-the-line" funding has already had on our ability to deliver services to all the British Columbians who need them. We elect and pay our 77 MLAs in B.C. specifically to ensure our communities' interests are represented in decisions of government, so keep your MLA informed, now and into the future.

We've put together an alphabetical contact listing for all B.C. MLAs, and their cabinet posts where applicable. If you're not sure who your MLA is, find your riding in the listing first.

MLAs are busy people and may need up to a month's notice to schedule a meeting with you (particularly if they're cabinet ministers), so you'll want to act immediately to set up meetings to capitalize on the prospect of a new leader for the Liberal Party, as well as detail the impact you'd anticipate were there to be another round of cuts in the spring of 2011.

Here are some tips to consider when presenting to your MLA:

- Assemble key people for the meeting - the executive director, the board chair, a front-line worker, even a former client who can talk about the positive impact on his/her life of your services
- Know what you want to talk about: Identify the most critical 3-4 key messages that you want to bring to your MLA's attention
- Keep presentations brief and informal - no PowerPoint! Ideally, aim for a conversation rather than a presentation, because your MLA may have ideas for you around working more effectively with the province
- Clearly identify what you want your MLA to do for you. Don't just tell them about your problems - come with ideas, strategies and efficiencies.
- Bring a one-page summary of your issues to leave behind
- Consider a joint presentation with other agencies in your community facing similar challenges. This is both respectful of the MLA's time and an indicator of the scope of the challenge (much bigger than one agency, e.g.)
- Meet with all key politicians in your riding, regardless of party affiliation
- Make a plan to meet with your MLA on an ongoing basis, at least once a year

The following MLAs are members of the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth. These MLAs are presumably more aware of the issues and connected to the government process than other elected officials. If your MLA is on this list, consider a joint presentation from child/youth-serving agencies to raise their awareness of the particular issues facing children and youth in your community.

Joan McIntyre (chair)

Maureen Karagianis (deputy chair)

Stephanie Cadieux

Marc Dalton

Mable Elmore

Jane Thornthwaite

DouglasHorne

Leonard Krog

Claude Richmond

Nicholas Simons

John Rustad

And these MLAs are members of the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Governance, a committee that makes recommendations to government for budget priorities:

John Les (chair)

Doug Donaldson

Norm Letnick

Don McRae

Jane Thornthwaite

Michelle Mungall

Bruce Ralston

Bill Routley

John Rustad

John van Dongen

One final note: The official Opposition party in B.C. is the NDP. A well-armed Opposition politician can be very effective in getting the attention of government and the media. Meet regularly with New Democrat or Independent MLAs in your area to keep them informed about your work and the challenges faced by your agency and clients.

Here are some key names in the NDP caucus:

**Leader of the Opposition:** Carole James

- **NDP “shadow cabinet” MLAs:**
  - **Maurine Karagianis**, Children and Family Development
  - **Doug Donaldson**, Finance
  - **Robin Austin**, Education, Early Learning and Literacy
  - **Jagrup Brar**, Healthy Living and Sport
  - **Shane Simpson**, Housing and Social Development
  - **Adrian Dix**, Health
  - **Mike Farnworth**, Public Safety and Solicitor General
  - **Scott Fraser**, Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation

## **Alphabetical listing of B.C. MLAs**

*NOTE: For e-mail correspondence, all e-mail addresses of MLAs follow the same format: **firstname.lastname.mla@leg.bc.ca***

*Example: [George.Abbott.MLA@leg.bc.ca](mailto:George.Abbott.MLA@leg.bc.ca), [Robin.Austin.MLA@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Robin.Austin.MLA@leg.bc.ca)*

- **George Abbott, Shuswap, Education**- 250-833-7414
- **Robin Austin, Skeena** - NDP - 250-638-7906
- **Harry Bains, Surrey-Newton** - NDP - 604-597-8248
- **Bill Barisoff, Penticton-Okanagan Valley** - Lib - 250-487-4400
- **Donna Barnett, Cariboo-Chilcotin** - Lib - 250-305-3800
- **Patrick Bell, Prince George-Mackenzie, Forests** - 250-612-4194
- **Bill Bennett, East Kootenay** - 250-417-6022
- **Dawn Black, New Westminster, NDP** - 250-387-3655
- **Iain Black, Port Moody-Westwood** - 604-933-2312

- **Harry Bloy, Burquitlam, Lib** -604-933-2077
- **Shirley Bond, Prince George-Mt Robson, Transportation** - 250-612-4181
- **Jagrup Brar, Surrey-Panorama Ridge** - NDP - 604-501-8227
- **Stephanie Cadieux, Surrey-Panorama, Community, Sport and Cultural Development** - 250-952-7653
- **Gordon Campbell, Vancouver-Point Grey** - Premier - 604-660-3202
- **Ron Cantelon, Nanaimo Parksville** - Lib -250-729-7041
- **Ida Chong, Oak Bay-Gordon Head** - 250-472-8528
- **Raj Chouhan, Burnaby-Edmonds** - NDP -604-520-2756
- **Murray Coell, Saanich North and the Islands** - 250-655-5711
- **Rich Coleman, Fort Langley-Aldergrove, Solicitor General, responsibility for housing and gaming** - 604-607-6200
- **Katrine Conroy, West Kootenay-Boundary** - NDP -250-304-2783
- **Gary Coons, North Coast** - NDP -250-624-7734
- **Kathy Corrigan, Burnaby-Deer Lake, Lib** - 250-387-3655
- **Marc Dalton, Maple Ridge-Mission, Lib** - 1-866 370-6203
- **Mike de Jong, Abbotsford-Mt Lehman** - Attorney General -604-870-5486
- **Adrian Dix, Vancouver Kingsway** - NDP - 604-660-0314
- **Doug Donaldson, Stikine, NDP** - 250-842-2200
- **Mable Elmore, Vancouver Kensington, NDP** - 604-775-1033
- **Kevin Falcon, Surrey-Cloverdale** - Health Services -604-576-3792
- **Mike Farnworth, Port Coquitlam-Burke Mountain** - NDP -604-927-2088
- **Rob Fleming, Victoria-Hillside** - NDP -250-360-2023
- **Eric Foster, Vernon-Monashee, Lib** - 250-356-9574
- **Scott Fraser, Alberni-Qualicum** - NDP -250- 720-4515
- **Guy Gentner, Delta North** - NDP - 604-597-1488
- **Sue Hammell, Surrey-Green Timbers** - NDP- 604-586-2791
- **Colin Hansen, Vancouver Quilchena** - Finance -604-664-0748
- **Randy Hawes, Maple Ridge-Mission, Lib** -604-820-6203
- **Dave Hayer, Surrey-Tinehead, Lib** -604-501-3201
- **Kash Heed, Vancouver-Fraserview** - 604-775-2246

- **Spencer Herbert, Vancouver-Burrard** - NDP -0604-660-7307
- **Gordon Hogg, Surrey-White Rock** - Lib -604-542-3930
- **John Horgan, Malahat-Juan de Fuca** - NDP -250-391-2801
- **Douglas Horne, Coquitlam-Burke Mountain**, Lib - 1 800 691-9185
- **Rob Howard, Richmond Centre**, Lib - 604 775-0754
- **Vicki Huntington, Delta South**, Independent - 604 940-7924
- **Carole James, Victoria-Beacon Hill** - Leader of New Democrats -250-952-4211
- **Maurine Karagianis, Esquimalt-Metchosin** - NDP - 250-479-8326
- **Leonard Krog, Nanaimo** - NDP -250-714-0630
- **Kevin Krueger, Kamloops-North Thompson**, Social Development, responsible for CLBC - 250-314-6031
- **Jenny Kwan, Vancouver-Mt. Pleasant** - NDP -604-775-0790
- **Terry Lake, Kamloops North Thompson**, Lib - 250 356-3078
- **Harry Lali, Yale-Lillooet** - NDP -250-378-4802
- **Richard Lee, Burnaby North**, Lib -604-775-0778
- **Blair Lekstrom, Peace River South** - Independent-250-784-1330
- **John Les, Chilliwack-Sumas**, Lib - 604-702-5214
- **Norm Letnik, Kelowna Lake Country**, Lib - 250 765-8516
- **Margaret MacDiarmid, Vancouver Fairview** - 604 660-7061
- **Norm Macdonald, Columbia River-Revelstoke** - NDP -250-344-4816
- **Joan McIntyre, West Van-Sea to Sky**, Lib - 604 981-0045
- **Mary McNeil, Vancouver-False Creek**, Lib - 250 952-7634
- **Don McRae, Comox Valley**, Lib - 250 703-2422
- **Michelle Mungall, Nelson Creston**, NDP - 1 877 388-4498
- **Barry Penner, Chilliwack-Kent** - Aboriginal Relations -604-858-6202
- **Pat Pimm, Peace River North**, Lib - 250 263-0101
- **Mary Polak, Langley**, MCFD -604-514-8206
- **Lana Popham, Saanich South**, NDP - 250 387-3655
- **Bruce Ralston, Surrey-Whalley** - NDP -604-586-2740
- **Linda Reid, Richmond East** - 604-775-0891
- **Bill Routley, Cowichan Valley**, NDP - 1 877 715-0127

- **Doug Routley, Cowichan-Ladysmith** - NDP -250- 746-8770
- **John Rustad, Prince George-Omineca** - Lib -250-964-5650
- **Michael Sather, Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows** - NDP -604-476-9823
- **Nicholas Simons, Powell River-Sunshine Coast** - NDP -604-485-1249
- **Bob Simpson, Cariboo North-** Independent 250-991-0296
- **Shane Simpson, Vancouver-Hastings** - NDP -604-775-2277
- **John Slater, Boundary-Similkameen,** Lib - 250 495-4909
- **Ben Stewart, Westside-Kelowna** - 250 768-8426
- **Moira Stilwell, Vancouver-Langara** - 250 356-2771
- **Ralph Sultan, West Vancouver-Capilano** - Lib - 604-981-0050
- **Steve Thomson, Kelowna-Mission** - 250 712-3620
- **Diane Thorne, Coquitlam-Maillardville,** NDP -604-933-2001
- **Jane Thornthwaite, North Vancouver-Seymour,** Lib - 604 775-0803
- **Claire Trevena, North Island,** NDP -250-287-5100
- **John van Dongen, Abbotsford-Clayburn** - 604-870-5945
- **Naomi Yamamoto, North Vancouver-Lonsdale,** Lib - 604 981-0033
- **John Yap, Richmond-Steveston,** Lib -604-241-8452