



BC COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICES REPORT

March 2006

BC COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICES:

A Report on Bargaining and Policy Developments between 1999 and 2006

I. INTRODUCTION

On July 1, 2005, the Liberal government completed the most recent wave of its restructuring plan for community social services. The government placed about \$600 million in funding – provided to about 15,000 individuals and families across the province – under the authority of Community Living BC (CLBC).¹

This change represents a first major step in downloading accountability for government services to a “community authority.” But let us be clear, this is not about democratizing services. It’s about adding a buffer between the public and the provincial government. The buffer is particularly effective in putting space between the government and the cuts that result in fewer and inadequate services to the most vulnerable populations in this province—children, the homeless, women fleeing abusive relationships and persons with developmental disabilities.

BC residents who depend on community social services every single day have had a particularly difficult time since the year 2000. Since the Liberal government started planning this restructuring just after the May 2001 election, its record in the Ministry of Children and Family Development has been chaotic at best; scandalous and heartless at worst. Years of funding cutbacks have disheartened many community advocates. Brutal concessions forced on unions in bargaining have demoralized staff in a myriad of ways, making the Socreds’ anti-labour legislation of the 1980s pale by comparison.

For the last 4 ½ years, there has been a frenzy of activity in the Ministry of Children of Family Development – most of it embarrassing for the Campbell government. And it’s not over yet. In late 2005 provincial media were filled with reports of over 700 uninvestigated deaths of children in care, underlining a sorry state of disarray in regards to program accountability within the sector.

This paper chronicles the major developments in the sector during the last 5 years, both in bargaining and on the policy front, and, impact on staff and services. It examines the major gains achieved in the final years of the NDP government as a point of comparison to the Liberal record. Furthermore, it examines what the future may hold for this sector.

BC’s community social services

Community agencies deliver a wide-range of important social services to people and communities throughout BC. From assisting persons with mental and physical disabilities, women escaping violence in their homes, to work with immigrant communities and with the homeless, these workers bend over backwards to fill gaps in services and government policies. At the best of times, provincial funding for these

services has been precarious and the work has not been given the recognition it deserves.

There are about 15,000 unionized workers in community social services in British Columbia. CUPE represents about 2,000 members in more than 50 community organizations in communities across the province (see list in Appendix 1).

The real motivation behind restructuring

The Liberal restructuring agenda fulfills two major goals and neither advantage those for whom the programs are most important. For the Liberal government, the objective seems to be to put structures in place that privatize services and cut government costs. For certain community advocates and agencies, the objective seems to be to entrench “individualized funding” – and move away from unionized wages and working conditions. Both goals feed each other by driving down the standards of community care and the compensation practices in the sector.

Individualized funding has worrisome implications

Direct or individualized funding involves the transfer of money from government directly to individuals for the purchase of personal programs and services. It also refers to individuals being funded directly by government to manage and pay for their own care requirements.

This system raises many serious questions, such as who is the employer? Are the support workers individual contractors? If workers are denied the right to unionize under individualized funding, they will be destined to work for low wages, few if any benefits and extremely poor working conditions.

Without adequate safeguards for social service workers and service levels, individual funding leads to privatization, the divestment of government responsibility, and the erosion of unionized jobs.

CUPE sympathizes with the aspirations of persons with disabilities to gain control over their lives. But, we have seen this objective come into direct conflict with the rights of the workers hired to assist them. Certainly, much more dialogue is needed between the labour and the disability communities to find a common solution.

Community services at a crossroads

The community services sector in BC is at a definite crossroads, with the arrows pointing to more service reductions or stagnation. After years of restructuring by various players in the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), the community social service infrastructure is poised to buckle under the load of:

- The transfer of services to a provincial community living authority, with the prospect of budget and service cuts to programs serving the most vulnerable populations in the province;
- More budget reductions and restrictive funding to other community social service agencies;

- High expectations on the part of certain community advocates – especially in the area of individualized funding; and
- Greater demand for services from families and individuals resulting from cuts to welfare, social housing, health, education and legal aid.

II. SUMMARY OF KEY EVENTS IN BARGAINING AND ADVOCACY IN COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICES

1990s – A long and winding road towards equity

The road to wage equity in the social services sector is a long one. Community social service workers made major strides during the two NDP mandates in the 1990s. Coordinated bargaining first becomes a reality in the mid-90s when several CUPE locals joined together to bargain their first joint agreement.

The NDP creates the Public Sector Employers' Council (PSEC) and with it several sectoral employers associations. The Community Social Services Association (CSSEA) becomes the bargaining agent for more than 700 social service employers.

1999 – Province-wide strike finally yields major gains for community social service workers under NDP government

1999 is a landmark year. About 10,000 CUPE and other union members in the sector fight tooth and nail to achieve parity with community health workers in the province.

Following an 11-week strike that year, the valuable contributions made by community social service workers are finally recognized in a sector-wide collective agreement. The provincial contract provides:

- \$16.83/hr for Residential Care Workers (RCWs);
- 7.5% for equity adjustments for non-RCWs;
- common health and welfare benefits (medical, dental, extend and long-term disability) plans;
- a joint employer-union benefits trust to oversee the benefits plans;
- 3% Group RRSP pension plan;
- vacation improvements;
- a job security agreement backed by a \$1 million fund;
- successorship agreement to preserve unionized employment in the sector when employers amalgamated or contracts were transferred; and
- a breakthrough Letter of Agreement providing parity with community health workers².

May 2001 – Campbell Liberals campaign and win election on false pretences

“I don't believe in ripping up agreements...I am not tearing up any agreements³.”
Gordon Campbell interview, HEU Guardian, Nov/Dec 2000.

- Gordon Campbell's Liberals campaign shrewdly before the 2001 provincial election to attract unionized voters. In late 2000, Campbell promises to respect existing union contracts.
- But, just a year later his government passed Bill 29, reversing many of the hard won gains that community social services and health care workers had achieved over the previous two decades.

January 2002 – Bill 29 targets community caregivers

It's unprecedented that an elected government in a parliamentary democracy rips up contracts in the early hours of Monday morning after a 17-hour debate... Teachers, health-care and social-service workers were legislatively deprived of rights and working conditions they had collectively bargained, in some cases going as far back as 1966, when W.A.C. Bennett was Social Credit premier. *Bill Tieleman, political commentator*⁴

- Bill 29, the *Health And Social Services Delivery Improvement Act*, will go down in history as one of the most anti-worker laws to have ever been passed in this province, and in Canada. The bill is part of a bundle of legislation that strips the contracts of community social service workers, health care employees, as well as of school and post-secondary teachers.

Much is written about the impact of the law on health care workers. However, Bill 29 also inflicts heavy damage on community social service workers by:

- Giving employers free reign to reorganize, privatize their services, lay off employees and close facilities. The bill eliminates almost all the job security protections negotiated into contracts over the last 20 years.
- Eliminating the Benefits Trust Accord that had been set up to achieve costs savings and higher levels of benefits. This would have happened by creating a larger group to negotiate with benefit providers. Bill 29 says employers no longer have to participate.
- Taking away successor rights to protect workers when their contracts are transferred or returned to the Ministry.
- Removing the employment security provisions from CSS contracts.

September 2002 – CSSEA instructs employers to default on RCW increases

- CSSEA workers protest when that body directs employer members to violate the collective agreement, by refusing to pay about 8,500 residential care workers and 'equivalent' classifications their 50 cent an hour pay increase. Although residential care workers are now getting the October 1 increase, about 2,500 employees in other classifications are not.
- CSSEA amends its directive one week later, just as the government announces it has fired the CSSEA board and its executive director. Hundreds of

demonstrators gather at a rally and attempt to personally deliver the past due statement to CSSEA's new public administrator Peter Cameron but they are stopped by hotel security and the police.

March 2003 – Bill 61 forces unions to bargain together

- In May, the government passes legislation forcing CUPE members into a bargaining council where they are a minority.
- Among other things, Bill 61 gives employers within the sector increased opportunity and ability to use volunteer workers, thereby undercutting the rights and security of unionized employees
- CUPE members are concerned that Bill 61, *The Community Services Labour Relations Act*, will weaken collective agreements. "It threatens the creation of one union and the imposition of an inferior contract on social services workers," says Jack Bennest, president of Local 4595 in Oliver. "The people I represent have kids and bills to pay, but in return they are given fear that their jobs and security will evaporate."⁵
- The Union Bargaining Association (UBA) is created out of Bill 61. The UBA is an association of 13 unions representing 15,000 community social service workers across British Columbia. The largest union is BCGEU with some 8,000 members, followed by CUPE with about 2,000 and a slew of other unions, including Hospital Employees Union and the Health Sciences Association.

December 2003 – Unionized workers launch campaign to publicize cuts

- In December 2003, workers, clients, family members and advocacy groups launch a campaign urging the provincial government to restore \$100 million of funding that has been slashed from community social services over the previous two years. The biggest concern is that another \$70 million will be cut from the Ministry of Children and Families budget, threatening more services and adding to the 525 positions already eliminated.
- The cuts are having a devastating impact on the lives of BC's most vulnerable citizens and are creating even more instability in a sector that is already reeling from "endless administrative restructuring." The grassroots campaign focuses on mobilizing people in their communities to contact their local MLAs, asking people to sign petitions and postcards, and holding events that profile the impact cutbacks are having on local community social services.
- An interview with a CUPE local president tells a heart-wrenching story underlining the importance of these services. "I know a young girl who at eight years of age tried to name all of the people who had sexually assaulted her in her short life," says Eileen Podanowski, a CUPE child and family counsellor from Vernon. "When she reached her tenth little finger she looked at me with frustration because she had no more fingers to tell me the rest," adds Podanowski. Concerned about the impact these cuts will have on children across the province, the CUPE counsellor says, "Politicians seem to be more

disconnected than ever from the very real issues on the streets and in the homes of British Columbia.”⁶

February 2004 - Labour Relations Board (LRB) rejects CSSEA's attempt to nullify collective agreements

- CUPE and the other unions at the community social services bargaining table win a big victory with a Labour Relations Board Decision. LRB Vice-Chair Mark Brown disagrees with the Community Social Service Employers Association's (CSSEA) assertion that Bill 61, which established the union bargaining association, cancels all of the previous certifications and collective agreements – 250 in total – between the unions and the employers.
- The LRB also rules CSSEA does not have the right to impose terms and conditions of employment on workers. 'Such an action would not encourage collective bargaining, would not encourage co-operation and would not promote conditions favourable to the orderly, constructive and expeditious settlement of the current dispute,' says Brown.

March 2004 – Painful negotiations gut union contracts

- After months of gruelling negotiations, the BCGEU-dominated bargaining association recommends ratification of a concessionary agreement.
- More than 16 concessions are contained within the “agreement”, including a two-tiered wage structures for new, casual and renewed employees, reductions in sick leave, LTD provisions and benefits, as well as the loss of many extended health care benefits. Also, the 2.5 percent equity wage increases that were due in 2002 will not be implemented until 2006.
- Workers are now required to work for as little as \$11.05/hr. in demanding jobs with very little in the way of external supports. Some workers who have switched jobs within the CSS sector report wage reductions of up to 38%.
- The CUPE Community Social Services Presidents' Council, representing over 2,000 workers throughout the province, recommends voting against the provincial tentative agreement negotiated by the Union Bargaining Association (UBA). Two-thirds of CUPE social service members in BC voted against the agreement, but the majority of members that belong to the UBA, voted in favour.

2005/06 – Community social service workers back in bargaining

- It's back to the bargaining table. Since the Campbell government is re-elected with a reduced majority, it is not likely to be as brutal as in previous years. With a full opposition slate, the Liberals will be forced to defend their actions in the media and debate their legislation more in the Legislature.

III. GOVERNMENT RESTRUCTURING: SHIFTING RESPONSIBILITY FOR FUNDING CUTS TO SOCIAL SERVICE AUTHORITIES

"In June and July 2001, the finance minister announced tax cuts targeted at the wealthy and B.C.'s largest corporations totalling some \$2.2 billion annually or more than \$8 billion over the government's mandate...Having dramatically reduced revenues and created the largest deficit in B.C. history, Collins and his Treasury Board staff sought to slash government expenditures: their biggest target -- the Ministry of Children and Family Development." Adrian Dix, former NDP strategist, elected MLA (May 2003).

Since the 2001 election, the provincial Liberals broke many promises and ruined many opportunities, but they saved their best bungling for the beleaguered Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD).

July to December 2001 – MCFD commits itself to radical restructuring

- MCFD conducts a “core services review” as the first step in the cost-cutting exercise.
- It is later revealed by NDP MLA Jenny Kwan that key ministry players pushed the concept of “individualized funding “ right from the beginning. Kwan refers to August 2001 meeting notes (see quotes below) that reveal the government’s true agenda – to proceed towards individualized funding in the community services sector. This move is inexorably linked to cutting costs:

“The outcome of the meeting was positive. Ken Dobell (Deputy to the Premier) said that if the MCFD put forward a proposal for individualized funding, it would be well received in the Premier's office. He subsequently contacted the MCFD and expressed his support for an individualized funding approach....

"In summary, Doug Walls (the future scandal-plagued head of the Interim Authority for Community Living BC) and David Driscoll (future co-chair of the Community Living Transition Steering Committee) asserted that there is a clear window of opportunity for individualized funding that is linked to the core review and, as a consequence, will need to be organized very quickly. A first-stage proposal will need to be ready by September 15 (2001) with a more detailed proposal ready for October 15 (2001)."

"It was emphasized that the pressure on the ministry to cut up to \$160 million by February 2002 is real. The core services review will restructure the ministry. This crisis may also be an opportunity for families to reorganize, to put forward their own vision of how individualized funding could restructure the Ministry of Children and Family Development.⁷"

January 2002 – Ministry announces restructuring plan and austere budget and staff reductions⁸

- In 1998, then-Liberal Opposition Leader Gordon Campbell criticizes the NDP for not increasing the Ministry of Children and Families budget: “For two years we have listened to the premier of this (NDP) government pretend that he cares about the children of B.C. and yet not fund the ministry for children and families the way it had to be funded to make sure that children were protected.⁹”

- Once in power, Campbell's true colours emerge. On January 17th, 2002, the MCFD announces it will cut its budget of \$1.55 billion (or 23%) to \$1.19 billion with savings coming from reduced staff and lowering the number of children in government care.
- The ministry projects that 22 per cent of its full-time positions to 3,963 from the 5,076. Of the remaining 3,963 positions, an estimated 2,800 would be transferred to five regional authorities – funded by the province – that would provide front-line services under new community governance structures.
- The Campbell government passes Bill 29 (see above), stripping contract provisions that would have given equity increases to many community social service workers whose pay has lagged behind those who doing similar work in the health-care sector.

February 2002 – Cost of community social services to be downloaded onto families

- More details emerge about the proposed cuts to the Ministry of Children and Family Development. In its three-year service plan summary, MCFD says families will be "encouraged" to contribute to the cost of services for their developmentally-disabled, adult children. According to the plan, independent living and family care will replace staffed residences.¹⁰
- To encourage family contributions, the ministry says it will restrict eligibility criteria for special needs services for children and youth. In other words, the government expects families to pick up the financial slack.
- BC child and youth advocacy coalition, First Call, expressed concerns "that if the government implements these changes, the life chances of thousands of children will be impacted. ...When we deny our children, even the basics of life, we will end up paying dearly socially, emotionally and economically."¹¹

April 2002 – Government forms transition committee to recommend new community living governance structure

- The government appoints a 25-member Community Living Transition Steering Committee (CLSTC) to come up the transition plan to a new provincial community living authority "*including determination of all financial, staff and other resources and all assets consistent with the ministry's budget plan.*"
- Most of the Liberal appointees to the CLSTC are members of the Individualized Funding Family Coalition.¹²
- Apparently, the fix is in from the start. The government limits the committee's purview to working within the government's budget plan, which requires cutbacks in the order of about 23% of existing budgets.

Fall 2002 – Government transition committee recommends \$50-55 million in cuts, individualized funding and a semi-autonomous community living authority; government passes Bill 65, creating an Interim Authority.

- The Community Living Transition Steering Committee releases its report called “A new Vision for Community Living...a vision of choice and change” on October 28, 2002.
- The Report has more than 50 recommendations to change the way people with disabilities receive services. These recommendations follow the government’s direction to cut costs and services and hand over their responsibilities to an “arms-length” Community Living Authority.
- The new Authority will be given, “*the power to offer individualized funding and independent planning and support to all people with a developmental disability...*” The government will, “*transfer to the new Authority all of the funding, operational and capital assets, human resources and all other undertakings associated in any way with community living services.*” The changes will, “*end government’s role as a direct provider of community living services...*”¹³
- Individualized funding is a centerpiece of the CLTSC’s agenda. The government supports this initiative because it involves selling off group homes and with them the unionized wages and working conditions of the workers employed there. Individual funding (and hiring) will set the stage for the de-unionization of community social services.
- On October 29, 2002, one day after releasing the CLSTC report, the government passes Bill 65, *the Community Services Interim Authorities Act*. Bill 65 allows the government to establish 'interim authorities' that will take over community living and other functions from the Ministry for Children and Family Development until permanent community authorities can be established.¹⁴
- The Ministry’s planned reorganization involves transferring responsibility for child protection to five regional authorities, five aboriginal authorities and one community living authority, which will deal mainly with adults with developmental disabilities.¹⁵

November 2002 – Liberals take over CSSEA Board; government creates Interim Authority for Community Living BC (IA)

- In November, the Campbell government announces that the board of directors of the Community Social Services Employers' Association is being replaced by an administrator. CSSEA represents employers in 705 community social service agencies that provide a wide range of services, including help for people with disabilities, children and families in distress, sexual assault centres, immigrant services and childcare.
- This is part of the restructuring led by Children and Family Development Minister Gordon Hogg. The minister says the “removal of the CSSEA board was a necessary step en route to a new regional model of service delivery in BC.” Hogg

says that “the new model will put families first and has a goal of reducing the number of children in the care of the government.”¹⁶

- However, CUPE and other unions argue that real motivation for many of the changes is to cut costs by reducing services and driving down wages. They suspect many of the services provided by unionized non-profit agencies will be put out for tender by the new regional authorities and will be awarded to firms that will be able to win contracts by paying lower wages.
- At the same time, the government establishes an Interim Authority for Community Living BC (IA). The IA is responsible for planning and implementing the transfer of authority for community living services to the permanent authority—the future Community Living British Columbia (CLBC)¹⁷.

February 2003 – Throne speech announces Community Living BC

- Gordon Campbell’s throne speech heralds the creation of a new provincial authority called Community Living B.C. to oversee services to people with developmental disabilities – a job previously done by the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
- The new Community Living B.C. will now oversee adult programs, but the province signals there will be at least \$20 million less in adult community living funding for the next year.¹⁸

May & June 2003 – MCFD planned budget cuts elicit widespread opposition

“When Gordon Campbell was in opposition, he savagely attacked the NDP government over its spotty record on caring for vulnerable children...But what did Campbell do as premier? He cut the budget for the Ministry of Children and Families by 23 per cent over three years.” *Michael Smyth, usually Liberal-friendly Vancouver Sun columnist (May 23, 2003).*

- Widespread opposition coupled with a Treasury Board review of MCFD’s restructuring plan forces the government to backtrack from its proposed 23% cut to the Ministry’s budget.¹⁹
- A leaked government document predicts “catastrophic consequences” if the Liberals proceed with their original plan. Even supporters of restructuring believe that “forcing the new (regional) authorities to provide the same services with budgets that have been chopped by more than \$350 million is reckless and irresponsible.”²⁰
- The much-maligned Ministry plan expects regional authorities to perform the same functions at bargain basement prices – e.g., in 2002, “it cost \$28,000 to support a child in care - in a foster home, or institution. But the ministry budget expects the new authorities to do the same thing next year for \$5,000 less, an 18 per cent cut.”²¹ In other words, the primary motivation for creating regional authorities is to have contract agencies perform the same work for much less money.

- Legislation to create the new regional authorities is delayed until the fall, as the government is forced to revamp its MCFD restructuring scheme.
- Ironically, the government's bungled restructuring plan flies in the face of the Liberal New Era platform of the 2001 provincial election that promised to "stop the endless bureaucratic restructuring that has drained resources from children and family services."²² The government has already spent millions of dollars on the discredited restructuring plan.

Summer 2003 – Government signals that cost reductions to come out of community social service contracts

- MCFD Minister Gordon Hogg announces that he plans to reduce most areas of the ministry budget for \$70 million in savings in 2004-05 – amounting to a 12% cut (instead of the 23% originally planned).
- Hogg spins the news by saying the cuts can be made without putting children or vulnerable adults at risk. He indicates that half the savings will be found by cutting contracted services by \$40 million.
- The Minister tells cabinet that the government wants to reduce expenses, "including addressing labour costs in the agencies and looking for better ways to deliver the services." Other proposed cuts include: \$18.5 million in staff salaries, a \$6-million reduction in the money going to community living programs that provide day programming and residential services to adults with developmental disabilities and services to some children with special needs.²³
- The die is cast. Reading between the lines, the government is preparing to go after community social service workers in the upcoming round of bargaining.
- The Liberal government's restructuring plan is a shambles. Rumours abound that restructuring will be postponed for two years.²⁴
- The government hires consultant Doug Allen, a Sage Group consultant to review the ministry-restructuring plan. Allen was a former NDP deputy minister and oversaw the reorganization of the B.C. Ferry Corp. under the Liberals.²⁵

October 2003 – Sage consultants point out flaws in restructuring plan

"Consider the evidence. The ministry's regionalization plans were so over-optimistic and uninformed that the process is at least 18 months behind the schedule outlined only months ago. The reform central to the government's plans was faltering badly, and no one at the top knew."²⁶ *Paul Wilcocks, Nelson Daily News*

- The long awaited Sage Group report called "New Governance — Some Considerations" is released. It reviews the ministry's plan to devolve its operations over to 11 semi-independent authorities – based on the health authority boundaries – with both aboriginal and non-aboriginal authorities in each region. The 11th would be a province-wide community living authority.

- The report's main criticism is "the idea of simultaneously slashing the budget, changing the way services are delivered and handing everything over to new 11 authorities risked disaster."²⁷
- The Sage report recommends that four conditions be met before the restructuring plan can be completed – service transformation, budget stability, actual service delivery plans and a high level of trust needed to be established before the government establishes the regional authorities.²⁸
 - **Service transformation:** *"Identify clearly the service transformations required and over what timeframe they need to be achieved."* At this point, there is still no consensus about what services should be provided and/or changed by government and by when.
 - **Budget stability:** *"Move quickly and collaboratively with stakeholders to stabilize the budget within the new fiscal targets."* In other words, make the cuts before the authorities take over and stabilize the budgets for community agencies because they cannot make cuts and go through the restructuring at the same time.
 - **Actual Service Delivery Plans:** *"The plan must demonstrate how an authority will move from our current service system to a new service delivery vision."* Going from a concept on a drawing board to delivering services are two very different things. Needed services must be in place and working before the authorities take over.
 - **Trust Must Be Established Between Partners:** The Sage Report says the government should not proceed until a concrete plan is in place if it is to gain support from community partners. It recommends building trust by working together to build strategies, designing a project management structure and providing deadlines. This suggests that the MCFD restructuring plan has much less support from community agencies and advocacy groups than was widely known.

Three-member review panel to recommend when restructuring is to take place

- The Sage Report says the government will select a panel of three "experts" to measure the Ministry's readiness to move to full blown restructuring. The panel will assess whether service delivery plans will work and will decide when operations are to be handed over to the new authority. The new Authority for Community Living is expected to be in full force by June 2004. The remaining 10 authorities will be ready in 2005 or beyond. The government will have to pass enabling legislation for all these changes to take effect.

January 2004 – Restructuring plan in trouble as scandal plagues ministry

- The ministry's community living programs serve more than 9,000 developmentally disabled children and adults, and make up 40 per cent of its \$1.5-billion budget. Some of the people are institutionalized, and require

intensive care; others are in supported living or day programs; in other cases, the ministry just provides respite care for families.

- The review panel, recommended by the Sage report, finds major problems with the ministry's restructuring plan. They say the holes in the ministry's plans are so serious that unless they're fixed by the end of January, the June 1, 2004 transition date should be postponed.
- The panel says there's still no agreement on who will be accountable for what services, or how services will be delivered under the new model. There are concerns that there won't be enough money to provide services after more cuts required by the Liberals are made. (Note: Community living services cost about \$655 million in the Liberals' first full year. The government's proposed budget means the new authority will have about eight per cent (or \$52 million) less to spend).²⁹
- Community living authority CEO Doug Walls' resigns amid allegations of fraud. Walls, a B.C. Liberal insider and relative of Premier Gordon Campbell, quits after it is made public that a special prosecutor had been appointed to oversee an investigation into the bankruptcy of a Prince George car dealership. In a second scandal, an independent auditor is hired to find out why a company linked to Walls was forgiven a \$500,000 debt to government.
- This revelation leads to the resignation of Gordon Hogg as minister of children and family development and as well to the firing of the deputy minister, Chris Haynes.³⁰

February to June 2004 – New MCFD Minister delays handover to community authority

"We had a right to expect better. The Liberals called for more money for the ministry when they were in opposition. Their election platform promised an end to constant bureaucratic restructuring. Instead, they ignored warnings and launched a reckless, mismanaged plan to cut spending while totally restructuring the ministry. And children and families across the province have paid the price." *Columnist Paul Wilcocks, a frequent critic of the Liberals' MCFD restructuring process.*³¹

- In February, Christy Clarke is appointed minister. She promptly delays plans to turn over responsibility for community living services to the community living authority for at least one year.³² The government postpones plans for the aboriginal and non-aboriginal regional authorities until about 2007. Community planning committees for the five non-aboriginal authorities have been shut down; aboriginal committees have had their budgets cut³³.
- CUPE calls on the premier to fund the auditor general to conduct a probe into the \$500,000 loan scandal that led to the resignation of community social services minister Gordon Hogg.³⁴
- The government continues to play hardball in bargaining, determined to save tens of millions of dollars out of the meagre earnings of the front line workers in

community living. A concessionary agreement is reached with two-thirds of CUPE social service workers voting against the UBA deal.

- In June 2004, an independent audit, directed by the comptroller-general, unearths many procedural violations in contracts with Doug Walls. It finds the ministry's questionable decision to pick up the full, \$500,000 cost of a Walls-linked company's financial obligation to the government information technology branch.³⁵ The implications are clear to CUPE – while the government is crying poor and cutting the wages of community social service workers, it manages to find huge sums of money to help out Liberal friends.
- In July, service providers, service users and community advocates complain that budget cuts have reduced communities' capacity to provide needed services. They realize that the government's "talk of shared responsibility with communities is code for downloading government financial responsibility."³⁶

September 2004 to June 2005 – Turnover of key Ministry and restructuring players; pre-election budget restores some funding to MCFD

- In September 2004, MCFD Minister Christy Clark resigns from government "to spend more time with her family. "She is replaced by Stan Hagen.
- In October, Phil Goodman is appointed Assistant Deputy Minister for Community Living Services and CEO Designate for Community Living BC. Goodman is slated to become the permanent CEO for Community Living BC, the future community living authority. He steps down temporarily in December due to health reasons.
- In February 2005, Rick Mowles, CSSEA's chief executive officer, takes over the British Columbia government's troubled community living authority. (Note: Mowles is permanently appointed in August 2005)
- In the February 9, 2005 pre-election Throne Speech, the Campbell government pledges: "Over the next three years, funding for adult community living services will be increased by \$91 million. There will be new respite support for families caring for children and adults with developmental disabilities. An additional \$37 million will be invested over three years in programs related to children in the care of government."
- The Throne Speech neglects to say that the Liberals had slashed services in the Ministry of Children and Family Development by about 12% since they came to power. "The budget for Community Living Services went from \$677 million in 2001-02 to \$609.6 million. The budget for "child and family development" went from \$814.8 million in 2002-03 to \$661.7 million in 2004-05. As political commentator, David Schreck points out "(t)he Campbell government promised to restore a fraction of what it cut over the previous three years; that appears to be consistent with many recent funding announcements."³⁷

July 2005 - September 2005

- July 1, 2005, the official transfer takes place, and Community Living BC becomes a legal entity and is designated a Crown Agency under the Provincial Government's Crown Agency Secretariat.
- Some community activists are critical over the lack of consultation and absence of publicity surrounding the July 1st transfer. Dawn Steele, a vocal advocate and mother to a 12-year-old son with autism, says she is frustrated by the lack of consultation. "The first issue, in my eyes, is this is all going to happen July 1 and there's been no public announcement or discussion.... People are not aware of what's happening and the implications."³⁸
- A Crown Agency is an organization that is established or acquired by the provincial government that is outside of a ministry. Crown agencies:
 - are accountable to the government through a Responsible Minister; and
 - have assigned/delegated authority and responsibility from government, or otherwise have statutory authority and responsibility to perform specified functions or services.
- The CLBC is designated as a 'Service Delivery Corporation' within Government. It must follow strict reporting and financial regulations. It will have to develop a Service Plan and will be subject to review by a Select Standing Committee of the Legislature.³⁹

September 14, 2005 – Liberal government releases its first mini-budget of its second mandate

- The budget contains a revised MCFD Service Plan dealing with CLBC, its mandate and performance to date.⁴⁰ The Plan is couched in familiar rhetoric regarding how the “move to community governance shifts the planning and management of programs and services closer to recipients and increases the ability of those programs to respond appropriately to individual needs.”
- Notwithstanding this devolution of programming, the Service Plan asserts that “(t)he province continues to be a leader in developing community-based services for adults with developmental disabilities.”
- It also notes that “(t)he next phase for CLBC will be to review, carefully plan and implement service improvements. This will enable individuals with developmental disabilities to more fully participate in and contribute to their communities.”
- To this end, the province says it “will ensure that CLBC’s activities are monitored and that its obligations and reporting requirements are met.” In more specific terms, the Plan announces creation of “client management and contract management system that will enable the ministry to effectively link client information to services provided and expenditures.” This system, it is argued, will “improve the accountability of contracted social services.”

- In addition, the Ministry has announced its intention to develop “performance-based contracts with contracted agencies and community organizations to improve service quality and ensure the most effective use of available resources.” This will involve increased reliance on “quality assurance mechanisms such as accreditation, audits and reviews.”
- According to the revised Service Plan, the budget for this sector is to rise from \$524 million in 2005-06 to \$531 million and \$544 million over next two years. This represents annual increases of 1.9 per cent and 2.4 per cent respectively, or a total increase of 4.4 per cent over the two years. Increases of this magnitude may provide modest future inflation protection but make no provision for recouping the funding cuts of the previous period.

IV. IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT CUTS TO SERVICES AND STAFF

CUPE members have identified some of the consequences of the Liberal government’s underfunding of community social services:⁴¹

1) Cuts to services and the impact on our clients

Since the Liberals took power, our members report the following:

- The so-called “restructuring has meant budget cuts – it’s not about “more choice” because the process has been taken over by “bean counters” trying to save money.
- Due to social assistance cuts, women were forced into tragic situations – such as prostitution – to pay the monthly bills. Others have stayed with abusive partners because of fewer women’s programs and reduced funding to women centres.
- There has been a dramatic increase in the numbers of more vulnerable people within society living on the streets due to cuts to a number of social service agencies. Many people on the streets are Aboriginal, people of colour, and/or people with disabilities, including addiction-related challenges.
- Due to massive cuts in services including social assistance, legal aid, immigrant-serving agencies, women and their children have been forced to remain in abusive relationships. Despite these difficult choices, the MCFD continues to apprehend children from homes in instances of spousal abuse if mothers do not leave these situations.
- Children who require child protection are frequently placed in the ‘homes of relatives’ despite previous concerns that these homes may not be safe.
- Cuts in funding meant an increase in the client to staff ratio – resulting in much less attention being paid to individual clients. For example, before you could take a client in a wheel chair out for a walk. Now you have to take two people out by tying their wheelchairs together.
- Ministry of Health cuts translate into clients not getting as much Occupational Therapy and access to nursing care.

- Cuts to children's programs – as an example, the Children's Foundation closed four homes.

2) Cuts to services and the impact on CUPE members

Since the Liberals cut the MCFD budget, our members report the following:

- Our members are still hurting over the contract concessions forced upon them in the last set of negotiations in 2004. Cuts to wages, benefits and other entitlements have taken a real toll on the workers' morale.
- Because of dramatic decreases in wages in the CSS sector, many workers report major challenges with providing for themselves and their families, even as they are hired to support other vulnerable people within society.
- Those working in agencies deemed "General Services" report feel that the stress vulnerable populations are feeling is being extended to the workers themselves.
- In community living, violent behaviours toward staff are on the rise. Workers are "getting beat up more." The worst thing is that many workers are not properly trained to deal with these behaviours, and underfunded agencies are increasingly ignoring health and safety laws.
- Layoffs are on the rise since the Liberals cut Ministry budgets and shut down programs (e.g., the closure of Children's Foundation resulted in 75 layoffs).
- The work environment is much more stressful, resulting in higher sick leave usage. Many more CUPE members are also off on workers compensation claims as a result of the higher incidence of violence in the workplace.

V. CONCLUSION

CUPE members working in the community social service sector have borne collective witness to a six year process of restructuring and reorganization that has had many deleterious effects. These include:

- Large-scale cuts in funding which, despite recently announced increase, will still leave the sector well behind where it stood before the election of the Liberals in 2001.
- The tearing up of negotiated contracts by the provincial government despite public assurances by the Premier to the contrary.
- Contract stripping involving a loss of CUPE members' rights and protections.
- Imposition of an unwieldy bargaining structure designed to facilitate both reduced costs as well as the elimination of workers' rights.
- The implementation of an individualized funding model at nominal arms-length from government but with MCFD in reality maintaining tight financial control.

- Major cuts in wages, benefits and working conditions, leading to increased financial straits for workers as well as job-related stress.
- Increased employer difficulty attracting and retaining qualified and committed staff to work in the sector.
- Overall reductions in service quality standards, the collective product of cuts to funding, higher staff turnover, increased worker stress and declining levels of provincial responsibility and oversight.
- Announced plans to move further in the direction of performance-based contract evaluation with community-level service providers, despite all of the measures which have undermined the ability of these providers to guarantee quality in the way they deliver services.
- An unbroken string of scandals and crises in the sector, capped by last fall's announcement of government failure to prevent let alone investigate properly the deaths of more than 700 children in care in BC.

CUPE social service workers demand and deserve better, as do the people of British Columbia.

Bill 61 And CUPE Social Service Bargaining Units In BC

CUPE community social service members work in the following BC agencies:

Appendix “A” - Agencies that primarily provide Community Living Services

Local	Agency
L. 1936-06	Community Ventures Society – Port Coquitlam
L. 1936-07	Delta Community and Career & Living Society
L. 1936-08	Gateway Society for Persons with Autism
L. 1936-14	North Shore Disability Resource Centre Association
L. 1936-15	Richmond Society for Community Living
L. 1936-17	Sunshine Coast Association for Community Living
L. 1936-21	WJ Stelmachuk Ltd.
L. 3376	Nanaimo Association for Community Living
L. 3403	Port Alberni Association for Community Living
L. 3999-7	Creston Society for Community Living – Endicott
L. 3999-8	Cresteramics Society for the Handicapped – Creston
L. 3999-15	Cranbrook Society for Community Living
L. 3999-2	Nelson District for Community Resources
L. 3999-5	Trail Association for Community Living
L. 3999-9	Kootenay Society for Community Living
L. 3999-40	Comunitas– Castlegar
L. 3999-47	Sunshine Valley Community Services
L. 3999-17	Shuswap Association for Community Living
L. 3999-20	Kelowna & District Association for Community living
L. 3999-46	Abilities Community Services
L. 3999-31	Professional Alternative Resources – Smithers
L. 4595	South Okanagan Association for Community Living
L. 4601	Powell River Association for Community Living

Appendix “C” - Agencies that primarily provide services other than community living services and services to aboriginal persons

Local	Agency
L. 523	North Okanagan Youth and Family Services Society – CBS
L. 523	North Okanagan Youth and Family Services Society – Mara
L. 1936-01	Children’s Foundation Society
L. 1936-02	Langley Family Services Association
L. 1936-03	Battered Women’s Support Services
L. 1936-04	Tradeworks Training Society
L. 1936-10	VSI Information Services Vancouver Society
L. 1936-11	John Howard Society of the Lower Mainland
L. 1936-12	Little Mountain Neighbourhood House Society
L. 1936-13	Lower Mainland Purpose Society for Youths (employer defunct)
L. 1936-18	Touchstone Family Association – Richmond
L. 1936-19	Vancouver Supported Childcare Services (employer defunct)
L. 1936-20	The Vi Fineday Family Shelter Society – Vancouver
L. 2012-01	Terrace Women’s Resource Centre Society
L. 3841	Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Community Services Council
L. 3897	District 69 Family Resource Association
L. 3999-22	Family First Resources Society
L. 3999-30	Central Interior Family Foundation

Appendix “D” - Agencies not included in Bargaining Units contemplated by Bill 61

Local Agency

L.389	North Shore Neighbourhood House
L. 523	John Howard Society of the North Okanagan/Kootenays
L.1936-05	Collingwood Neighbourhood House Society
L. 1936-09	Hastings Community Association – Vancouver
L. 1936-22	John Howard Society – Fraser Valley

L. 2052-01 Paces Daycare Society

L. 3999-39 St. Catherine's Community Home – Prince George

Note: Appendix "A" and Appendix "C" attached is a list of the CUPE certifications by Bargaining Unit. Appendix "D" is a list of those agencies not included in a bargaining unit as contemplated by Bill 61.

¹ Brad Badelt, "Transfer of disability services to Crown agency angers parents," *Times Colonist*, June 18, 2005, p. C14.

² "Backgrounder: Community Social Services Bargaining," *CUPE – BC Regional Office*, October 15, 2003. Located at: http://www.cupe.bc.ca/files/backgrounder-social_services.doc.

³ In late 2000, the Hospital Employees' Union interviewed Gordon Campbell for its newspaper, *The Guardian*, in which these promises were made and subsequently broken. The interview is cited in the HEU provincial election website entitled "Deceive BC" at http://www.deceivebc.ca/articles/heu_interview.html.

⁴ Bill Tieleman "Sanctity of Contracts Shredded," located at: http://www.bcpolitics.ca/left_contracts.htm

⁵ CUPE BC, "Campbell violates free collective bargaining ... again," News release, (2003) Located on CUPE BC website at: <http://www.cupe.bc.ca/index.php4?do=printer&id=1520>

⁶ Cited in UBA "Campaign launched to protect services to vulnerable children and families," *BCGEU News Releas*, December 2, 2003.

⁷ Excerpted from the Official Report of DEBATES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (Hansard), MAY 19, 2004 (Afternoon Sitting), Volume 25, Number 17.

⁸ Petty Fong "No layoffs needed in family services," *Vancouver Sun*, January 18, 2002, p. A4.

⁹ Cited in Les Leyne "Children's ministry is behaving badly: Budget shuffling, delayed legislation show decentralization is off track," *Times Colonist*, May 8, 2003, p. A10.

¹⁰ "BC budget cuts hit family and children's services," *Canadian Business and Current Affairs*, February 18, 2002, p. 3. Even previous to this, the Ministry had determined that families would have to contribute to the cost of children in care. This is in spite the fact that the majority of children in care are apprehended as a result of neglect that is connected to poverty –related issues, and the majority of these parents are on income assistance.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² For a more detailed analysis, please see the CUPE BC Report from the Legislature "Radical Restructuring of Community Social Services," December 5, 2002. Located on the CUPE BC website at: http://www.cupe.bc.ca/files/rptblh_restructuring_community_ss.pdf.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁴ Bill 65, Community Services Interim Authorities Act (2002) is located at: http://www.legis.gov.bc.ca/37th3rd/3rd_read/gov65-3.htm.

¹⁵ Judith Lavoie "Children's ministry overhaul hits series of political snags," *Times Colonist*, August 29, 2003, p. A4.

¹⁶ Craig McInnes "Matthew Vaudreuil's legacy: A system still in turmoil: Eleven years after the boy's death, Victoria is again overhauling the child care bureaucracy as some question if children's needs can be met," *Vancouver Sun*, November 6, 2002, p. B13 .

¹⁷ Community Living British Columbia, "Our History," (CLBC, 2005).

¹⁸ Julie MacLellan, "Changes for developmentally disabled," *Coquitlam Now*, February 26, 2003, p. 9.

¹⁹ Les Leyne "Children's ministry is behaving badly: Budget shuffling, delayed legislation show decentralization is off track," *Times Colonist*, May 8, 2003, p. A10.

²⁰ Paul Willcocks "Too late, Liberals recognize looming disaster in ministry," *Peace River Block Daily News*, May 15, 2003, p. 4.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Vaughn Palmer "Liberal visions keep running into revisions," *Vancouver Sun*, August 28, 2003, p. A12.

²³ Paul Wilcocks "Hogg outlines \$70 million more in children and families cuts," *The Free Press (Fernie)*, July 2, 2003, p. 1.

²⁴ Judith Lavoie "Children's ministry overhaul hits series of political snags," *Times Colonist*, August 29, 2003, p. A4.

²⁵ Vaughn Palmer, *op.cit.*

²⁶ Paul Wilcocks Liberals children and families plan off the rails, *Nelson Daily News* Thursday, October 23, 2003, p. 4.

²⁷ Paul Willcocks "Reality sets in on sensitive ministry overhaul," *Vancouver Sun*, October 14, 2003, p. A14.

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- ²⁸ For a more detailed analysis, please see "Report from the Legislature: Sage Consultants Report", CUPE BC (October 2003). Located at: http://www.cupe.bc.ca/files/rpt - bh ->.css_restructuring.doc.
- ²⁹ Paul Willcocks "Disabled adults at risk in ill-planned ministry change," *The Free Press (Fernie)*, January 21, 2004, p. 4.
- ³⁰ Vaughn Palmer "Liberals charge ahead with the 'devolution' of a ministry," *Vancouver Sun*, January 31, 2004, p. A3 .
- ³¹ Paul Willcocks "Watchdog sounds the alarm," *Alaska Highway News*, July 26, 2004, p. 4.
- ³² Judith Lavoie "Organization problems stall services handover," *Times Colonist*, February 12, 2004, p. A7.
- ³³ Paul Willcocks "Watchdog sounds the alarm," *op cit.*, p. 4.
- ³⁴ CUPE BC, "CUPE calls on premier to fund AG probe of loan scandal," *News release*, February 3, 2004.
- ³⁵ Vaughn Palmer "More mismanagement found in Liberals' ministry makeover," *Vancouver Sun*, June 2, 2004, p. A3.
- ³⁶ Paul Willcocks "Watchdog sounds the alarm," *Alaska Highway News*, July 26, 2004, p. 4.
- ³⁷ David D. Schreck "Empty Promises - Throne 2005," *bcpolitics.ca*, February 9, 2005.
- ³⁸ Brad Badelt "Transfer of disability services to Crown agency angers parents," *Times Colonist*, June 18, 2005, p. C14.
- ³⁹ Community Living British Columbia "Our Transformation," (CLBC, 2005).
- ⁴⁰ BC Ministry of Children and Family Development, "2005/06 – 2007/08 Service Plan Update."
- ⁴¹ Notes from a roundtable discussion with members from several CUPE social service locals at the CUPE BC Convention in Victoria (April 2005).