

November 30, 2007

To: *Community Social Services union members*

You know all about the important, heartfelt and sometimes back-breaking work that you do every day working in community social services. But how many people in your community really understand and appreciate the level of your commitment and contributions to our society at large?

Our unions are reaching out to members to get involved in our new *Community Social Services Matter* campaign. This is an important joint initiative of unions in the Community Social Services Bargaining Association (CSSBA). We intend to raise the profile of the community social services sector and build greater public support for the important work we do.

As part of this campaign, our unions are promoting March 2008 as *Community Social Services Awareness Month*.

You are asked to join with other union members to approach your municipal council and request that they designate March 2008 as *Community Social Services Awareness Month (or Week)*.

Attached is a guide to how you can arrange to get on the agenda of the first council meeting in 2008, or as soon as possible. This package of materials includes a model resolution and draft speaking notes for your presentation to council.

You are also encouraged to organize a related community awareness-raising activity in March. All local activities will be supported by our provincial campaign material such as posters and stickers.

Please contact your union steward, staff representative or area office for more assistance in working on the Community Social Services Matter campaign in your community. Please let your union know when your council presentation is scheduled and details of other activities you plan.

B.C. Government
and Service
Employees' Union

Canadian Union
of Public Employees

Hospital
Employees' Union

Health Sciences
Association of
British Columbia

United Food and
Commercial Workers
International Union

International Union
of Operating
Engineers

Construction and
Specialized Workers'
Union

United Steelworkers
of America

National Automobile,
Aerospace,
Transportation
and General Workers
Union of Canada
(CAW-Canada)

British Columbia
Nurses' Union

Canadian
Translators and
Interpreters Guild

Professional
Employees'
Association



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Arrange the presentation to your local municipal council

In order to have a week or the entire month of March 2008 designated for as *Community Social Services Awareness Month*, you should try to get onto your local council's agenda to make a presentation by their first meeting of 2008, or as soon as possible.

1. *Research when your municipal council meetings are scheduled*

Municipal councils have regularly scheduled meetings at which they hear delegations from the community. Call your local municipall hall to confirm meeting times and to find out how to get on the agenda, or look for this information on your municipality's website.

2. *Make your request to get on the agenda*

Many councils ask that you make a written request to schedule your presentation. Sometimes you can fill out an online form. You will need to link the delegation request to the work of your local council. Some of the points you may want to make are:

- ◆ Your presentation is about important services in the community.
- ◆ You are looking for council support to build awareness in the community.
- ◆ Many of the issues – such as housing, social services, crime and violence – that council deals with are affected by community social services.

3. *Follow up to confirm your presentation time, and process for material distribution*

Follow up on your request with a phone call to make sure your municipal council received the request, and find out when your delegation will get on the agenda.

Most councils have a procedure to follow if you want to distribute material. In the case of *Community Social Services Awareness Month* – you will be distributing a draft resolution and a questionnaire for council members (included here in the kit). You may need to give these materials to council staff in advance for distribution at the meeting.

4. *Other resources*

You or others who are organizing the presentation may know someone on council or someone who works for the municipality. You might want to talk to them to get their views on how to make the most successful presentation. Or, attend or watch a local cable broadcast of a council meeting to get a sense of the process, beforehand.



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(Draft municipal resolution)

March is *Community Social Services Awareness Month*

Whereas community social services are vital to the quality of life of all British Columbians; *and*

Whereas community social services in British Columbia include services to families and children; people with disabilities; people and families dealing with substance abuse; people in community justice services, including correction services and victim assistance programs; women and their families in transition houses or sexual assault centres; aboriginal peoples; individuals involved in community projects and employment training programs; as well as child care, multicultural, settlement and immigrant services; and more; *and*

Whereas the availability of these supportive services helps improve the quality of life for everyone, while making our communities stronger and more stable; *and*

Whereas greater recognition and understanding of the critical role these services play in our communities is needed to ensure their continued availability and improvement; *and*

Whereas awareness and support for these services begins at the local level;

Now therefore be it resolved that this council proclaim *March 2008* or a *specific week in March* as ***Community Social Services Awareness Month*** or ***Week***.



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Speaking notes - Why *Community Social Services Awareness Month or Week?*

Thank you for hearing from us today.

My name is _____.

I am a resident of _____ *name of municipality* and I work at
 _____ *name of agency*.

I am part of an important campaign to promote the value of Community Social Services in our community.

Before I talk about our request here today, I wanted to spend a little time dealing with what community social services are. I have a questionnaire that I am going to give each of you to keep. It is for your personal reflection only and asks you to think about how our many services have touched your life, or the lives of those you know, and the importance of these services to the quality of life in our community.

We know that every community and many families and individuals in B.C. rely on the many services we provide, including:

- ✓ staffing group homes for people with developmental disabilities
 - ✓ supporting families and youth in need
 - ✓ providing child care for children, including special needs children
 - ✓ supporting victims of violence
 - ✓ assisting those with substance abuse issues
 - ✓ offering a range of services for women
 - ✓ counselling and supporting immigrant families
 - ✓ supporting those dealing with physical or emotional abuse
 - ✓ working with those encountering job loss, life skill and decision-making problems
 - ✓ supporting those with emotional and mental health problems
 - ✓ assisting First Nations families
- and more.....*

You may be familiar with some of the agencies in our community that provide these kinds of services, including (_____ *name of your employer or other employers in the community whose workers are part of the campaign*).



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The *Community Social Services Matter* campaign is a broad province-wide effort aimed at raising awareness of the vital role these services play in our communities.

Workers like myself are leading our campaign. We are working with agencies, families and community partners to shine a light on community social services, and build support among community leaders, policy makers and the general public.

Despite their importance to individuals, families and communities, the community social services we provide and we all rely on, are often misunderstood and marginalized, or invisible. Sometimes this is because these services relate to the times or areas of life where we face problems and challenges. It is also partly due to the fact that the important role of these services are not often recognized.

Our goal is to work with you and others in our community to ensure these services are more visible and better understood. We hope that you will join us. We are seeking your support in designating (*either the month of March 2008 or a specific week in March*) as Community Social Services Awareness (week/month) in this community.

We believe that it is time to focus on the value of community social services for all citizens, and especially for those who are some of the most vulnerable members in our society.

In asking this council to designate (*either March 2008 or a specific week in March*) as Community Social Services Awareness (*week or month*) we have three major goals:

- ◆ to increase awareness about the value of community social services to the citizens of our community;
- ◆ to change and expand perceptions about the people who use these services and their importance to our community, and;
- ◆ to build greater public support for the services we provide and the work that we do.

Community social services at their best, are based on the belief that every person is a valuable member of the community and that all people deserve support and skills to deal with and surmount challenges they may face throughout their lives.

By designating the month of March 2008 (or a specific week) for ***Community Social Services Awareness*** you will help raise the profile of these vital services in our community.

We have provided a model resolution for your consideration.

Thank you for your time.



Note for speakers:

** If asked how Community Social Services Awareness Month is different from Community Living Month, which is a province-wide month designated in October, explain to council that the October month is an important initiative that promotes the full inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in our communities.*

Community Social Services Awareness (week/month) promotes the broad and diverse range of community social services that we all depend on to keep our community strong and healthy.

Questionnaire: *Community Social Services Matter*

We invite you to answer the following questions. This exercise is intended for your own personal reflection only.

This can help to determine how community social services may have supported you personally and to consider their importance in supporting the quality of life for others in your community, as well.

1. I have had experience, either personally or through my family/friends/colleagues with child care services. **Yes / No**

Child care services are important to the quality of life in my community. **Yes / No**

2. I have had experience, either personally or through my family/friends/colleagues with individuals or families dealing with a developmental disability. **Yes / No**

Services to support people and families living with developmental disabilities are important to the quality of life in my community. **Yes / No**

3. I have had experience, either personally or through family/friends/colleagues with an individual or family having difficulty finding safe, affordable housing. **Yes / No**

Services to assist individuals and families to find safe, affordable housing are important to the quality of life in my community. **Yes / No**

4. I have had experience, either personally or through my family/friends/colleagues with drug or alcohol addiction issues. **Yes / No**

Services to assist those dealing with substance abuse issues are important to the quality of life in my community. **Yes / No**

5. I have had experience, either personally or through my family/friends/colleagues with an individual or family dealing with immigration settlement issues. **Yes / No**

Services to assist individuals and families who are new immigrants are important to the quality of life in my community. **Yes / No**

6. I have had experience, either personally or through my family/friends/colleagues with physical abuse and/or domestic violence issues. **Yes / No**

Services to assist those dealing with physical abuse and/or domestic violence are important to the quality of life in my community. **Yes / No**

7. I have had experience, either personally or through my family/friends/colleagues with people dealing with mental health issues. **Yes / No**

Services to assist those dealing with mental health issues are important to the quality of life in my community. **Yes / No**

8. I have had experience, either personally or through my family/friends/colleagues with First Nations individuals and/or families who need assistance. **Yes / No**

Services to assist First Nations individuals and/or families are important to the quality of life in my community. **Yes / No**

9. I have had experience, either personally or through my family/friends/colleagues with people having difficulty dealing with job loss. **Yes / No**

Services to assist those having difficulty dealing with job loss are important to the quality of life in my community. **Yes / No**



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Planning events - *Community Social Services Awareness Month/Week*

When it comes to raising awareness about the value of social services in our communities, grassroots networking and outreach events are our best opportunities.

Whether or not your local municipal council designates a week or a month in March 2008 to support *Community Social Services Awareness*, our unions are targeting March 2008 as a key time for local members to organize community-based activities. Where possible, team up with fellow union members, people you support, their families, and employers.

Here are some examples of activities you can do in your community.

- Mount a display, using local and provincial campaign materials, in your local library, recreation centre or another community venue.
- Host a breakfast or lunch for community leaders active in social service agencies, faith groups, employer organizations, your local labour council, and so on.
- Work with your employer, where possible, to offer tours of agencies and projects in your community.
- Mount a photo exhibit at a local gallery or cafe.
- Organize a musical event, poetry reading or street theatre.
- Host a potluck or picnic.
- Set up an information table in your local mall or at another community event.
- Get in touch with your local media through letters, media events or news releases (see campaign material: *Working with the media*).
- Show a film or documentary related to one or more of the services we provide.

The possibilities are great. What's most important is that you choose activities tailored to your community and that provide opportunities to meet and connect with other members of your community. Start planning as soon as possible

Local union members are also invited to share your stories through the **www.CommunitySocialServicesMatter.ca** website. You will see profiles of fellow workers on the site. Personal stories and pictures of you, your community and your work are an important part of the *Community Social Services Matter* campaign.

All local activities will be supported by provincial campaign material such as posters, postcards and stickers. To get more information, material or other assistance, and to keep your union informed about what is happening in your community, contact your union steward, staff representative or area office.



[CommunitySocialServicesMatter.ca](http://www.CommunitySocialServicesMatter.ca)

Working with the media

Your local media can help to spread the word about the *Community Social Services Matter* campaign. Media are interested in local stories, and we have positive stories to tell. **Please contact your provincial union communications department for support in arranging local coverage.**

Story ideas

Whether it is our unions or your local municipal council designating March as *Community Social Services Awareness Month*, you can talk to local papers and other media outlets early to propose a story or a series of articles on related topics. Some of our members may also be comfortable having their work profiled – such as “a day in the life” kind of story. Our members care deeply about their work, and it is important to share these insights. Some of our agencies or workplaces may be comfortable with having their work profiled.

Local radio stations may be interested in scheduling community social services topics on talk shows during the month of March. Local radio or TV stations can also be asked if they will run public service announcements in support of Community Social Services Awareness month. Union communications staff can assist in writing up short PSA scripts and identifying talk show topics.

You should also consider using opinion pieces and letters to the editor both during the month of March, and on a regular basis.

You can organize events that are of interest to the media, and you can respond to issues that arise in the community or elsewhere.

Develop a list of local media

Start your planning by developing a list of all the local media outlets that serve your community - print, radio and television, and remember alternative, community and union media. Local unions and community groups often have newsletters and are looking for material. So remember to include everyone when you build your media list.

As part of your local media list, identify particular reporters, editors or talk show hosts that you have a relationship with or with whom you want to develop a relationship. Personal contact is very effective.



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Media briefing sessions, including informal coffee meetings where you give your local reporter some background information on your work and your services, can be an effective way of keeping local media contacts up-to-date on the issues facing community social services.

Media releases can be used when you are responding to an issue that has arisen or when you have a newsworthy story. Use clear simple language. Put the most important issues (who, what, when, where and maybe why) in the first paragraph. Have an identified contact at the bottom of the release and make sure that person is available if the media call.

All media releases should be followed-up by phone calls to the targeted media outlets and specific journalists whom you want to cover your story.

Some of the times in the campaign when you might want to issue a media release are: following the decision by your local municipal council to designate a *Community Social Services Awareness* week or month, and at the beginning of March to announce that *Community Social Services Awareness Month or Week* is coming up, and to announce any of the community awareness events that are planned.

Press conferences take a lot of time and energy. It is often more useful to make calls to individual media contacts. You might want to do a local press conference to announce the start of *Community Social Services Awareness Month or Week*.

On-air and print interviews. You will need to decide who (within your group of local union activists) should speak on particular issues and make sure that they have had a chance to be briefed on the major issues that will be covered in an interview. Reporters can also be briefed in advance.

Community cable – If you are organizing an event, make sure that you invite your community cable TV reporters to attend.



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