

Reaching Out. Weighing In.



**Report on the Skills & (Dis)Abilities Meetings to
Address the Community Living Crisis in B.C.**

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Prepared by: BC Community Living Action Group (BC-CLAG)

BC Association for Community Living
BC Coalition of People with Disabilities
BC Government and Service Employees' Union
Moms on the Move
BC FamilyNet
Developmental Disabilities Association
Health Sciences Association of BC
Hospital Employees' Union
Canadian Union of Public Employees – BC Division

With special thanks to:

Panelists and participants at the Vancouver and Victoria Skills & (Dis)Abilities public forums
Sylvia and her family
Christette and Tara Cromarty
Tim Beachy, United Community Services Co-op
Michael Prince, University of Victoria
Kaye Kennish, Garth Homer Society
Sue Elrington, Garth Homer Society



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"I have a deaf son with numerous additional special needs, now age 19 years. Currently, and with much frustration, our son is 'at the top of the priority list' in the eyes of CLBC, but there is no funding. None! I've been told by my social worker that my financial analyst is currently swamped with work, I'll have difficulty contacting him and getting a reply as he has been mandated to review all those in my area who are currently getting funding. The point of the review is to see if they continue to qualify and to make cutbacks as necessary as there are so many others on the waitlist who are getting nothing.

I've been told to seek out our own home share family (or individual), as CLBC has no resources to seek out qualified individuals who sign (American Sign Language) fluently and have the additional qualifications to accommodate our son. To seek out my own home share is daunting: I don't know where to start.

I am not alone in this endeavour. I know of a few other families with deaf adults in the same dire situation. In fact, I've been probably one of the luckier ones as we've managed to continue to hold our family together and tough it out, almost. There is simply not enough funding to CLBC and the social workers are getting burned out and stressed in the process."

- Sylvia, Parent



Sylvia and her family

The service and support needs of adults with developmental disabilities are not being met in British Columbia. In order to recover \$22 million from its 2010/2011 operating expenses, Community Living BC (CLBC) is mandating budget cuts and “service redesigns” across the sector. Currently, provincial government funding levels are insufficient to meet demand for services, waitlists are long and are projected to grow, day programs are being cut or eliminated, group homes are being closed, and support options are being reduced. Change is occurring rapidly, in many cases without the input or consent of individuals and families.

The sector has reached a crisis point.

This report outlines the proceedings from two public meetings that took place in Vancouver and Victoria in late 2010. The meetings were organized by a network of family groups, service agencies, unions, and advocacy organizations. The events were widely promoted in an effort to attract a diverse array of participants. Over 300 people attended these meetings, including self-advocates, family members, support workers, and other key stakeholders; together, they expressed concerns, shared information, generated ideas, and proposed solutions.

Recommendations

A key outcome arising out of these meetings was a set of 10 recommendations to ensure that adults with developmental disabilities have the options, services, and supports that they need:

- **INCREASE FUNDING:** Increase provincial government funding to meet the support needs of adults with developmental disabilities, and allocate the funding equitably and strategically.
- **CREATE AN INDEPENDENT ADVOCATE:** Establish an Independent Officer of the Legislature with a broad legislated mandate to improve supports and outcomes for adults with developmental disabilities through oversight, advocacy, accountability, and review.
- **RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS:** Through public education, community outreach, and political advocacy, raise public awareness about the crisis in B.C.’s community living sector.
- **LISTEN TO INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES:** Re-centre the community living support system around adults with developmental disabilities and their families by promoting choice in service options and inclusion in planning processes.
- **CONSULT AND COLLABORATE:** Expand the range of participants in decision-making and planning processes to meaningfully include service agencies, front-line workers, disability advocates, and other stakeholders with key knowledge and expertise.
- **INTRODUCE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION:** Establish a new statutory framework setting out the inclusion rights and support entitlements of adults with developmental disabilities.

- **IMPROVE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY:** Ensure that decision-making and planning processes in the community living sector are open and transparent, and implement measures to ensure the government's system of community living supports is held to account.
- **DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A PLAN:** Through consultation with key stakeholders, develop and implement a comprehensive, multi-year provincial Community Living Plan for eliminating waitlists, transitioning youth to adult services, meeting rising demand for supports, and addressing other key priorities.
- **REGULATE HOME SHARING:** Develop and implement a provincial framework for home sharing, covering matters such as service standards, training, and oversight.
- **PROTECT GROUP HOMES:** Stop cost-driven group home closures and service reductions, so adults with developmental disabilities can access their chosen residential support option.

This report is a call to action for British Columbia. Political leaders and decision-makers must respect the rights of adults with developmental disabilities and act quickly to protect and improve their supports and services. 🏠



British Columbia’s community living sector is in crisis.

Adults with developmental disabilities are at risk, as is the residential services and community inclusion infrastructure that supports them. Many service and support options are being reduced. Many individuals and families are not being consulted.

In response to this crisis, a diverse group of approximately 200 self-advocates, families, workers, and other key stakeholders filled the auditorium of the Ukrainian Orthodox Centre in Vancouver on October 25, 2010, for the *Skills & (Dis)Abilities Public Meeting: A community response to provincial budget cuts and service redesigns in B.C.’s community living sector*.

One month later, on November 30, 2010, a similar meeting was held at the Garth Homer Society in Victoria, attracting over 130 participants.

Attendees at both the Vancouver and Victoria meetings travelled from various areas of the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island—and from several points beyond, including communities in the Interior and the North. They came together to learn from one another, share experiences, and to make recommendations to ensure that adults with developmental disabilities have the options, services, and supports they need in British Columbia. They reached out, and they weighed in.

This is a report on those proceedings.

Background

Community Living B.C. (CLBC) is a provincial government agency mandated to provide supports and services to adults with developmental disabilities and their families in British Columbia.

The number of individuals eligible for CLBC-funded services is projected to grow by at least 15 per cent, or over 2,000 individuals, between April 2011 and March 2014. Provincial government transfers, however, are frozen over that period. As a result, CLBC is seeking approximately \$22

million in cost savings for the 2010/11 fiscal year.

To achieve these savings, CLBC is requiring its contracted agencies to identify immediate service level reductions and proposed service “redesigns” to reduce costs. The service redesign is focused on reducing staffed residential resources (group homes) and expanding other lower-cost residential options, including home sharing placements, where an adult with a developmental disability shares a home with his or her support provider.

Group home closures and service reductions

As of November 2010, roughly 25 group homes have been closed across the province, impacting residents, their families, and the people who support them. Approximately 30 more closures were expected by March 31, 2011.

According to CLBC's 2005 and 2006 service plans, moving from higher cost group homes to alternative residential options is one of several "strategies to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of service expenditures" and free up financial resources. Despite increasing demand for residential supports, referrals to group homes have virtually stopped, to allow greater opportunity for consolidations and closures to reduce costs.

Thus, in the context of growing waitlists and inadequate provincial government funding, service redesign has been driven in large part by a need to find cost savings—not by client preference. Indeed, a 2006/07 CLBC review found that over 90 per cent of individuals living in group homes were not interested in exploring other residential options.

In addition to group home closures, community inclusion programs and family supports (such as respite services) are being cut, and staffing levels are being reduced in residential and daytime services.

Many families and support workers have felt excluded from decision-making processes relating to the current changes—both at the individual support level, and at the broad policy development level.

Home sharing

Home sharing (where an adult with a developmental disability shares a home with his or her support provider) may be a viable support option for some individuals, and many home sharing providers offer excellent support to the adults with whom they live. Still, the rapid move to the home sharing model has raised a number of concerns among families, service providers, and other stakeholders.

In particular, many concerns regarding home sharing have centered around a lack of provincial standards and safeguards and the absence of a system of independent oversight. Although CLBC and some community living agencies have developed standards and policies for home sharing, these measures are not universally applied or independently enforced.

In addition, research on the cost and quality outcomes of home sharing is limited. As a result, the Community Living Research Project's 2008 study of home sharing in B.C. (*Home Sharing: A Review of Current Practice and Policy with Recommendations*) found an urgent need for clear outcome measures and information on service quality. The report also noted that home sharing may not be suitable for adults with greater and more complex support needs. Further, a number of serious concerns with the home sharing model were identified, mostly related to the safety and well-being of individuals in placements.

Finally, the movement to home sharing raises a number of questions for support providers, agencies, and staff. Do home sharing providers receive sufficient funding,

support, training, and respite? What are the implications for the sector of losing well-trained, professional group home staff? Is the home sharing model sustainable over the long term? Agencies have identified the inability to recruit qualified, trained home sharing providers as a problematic feature of this support model.

Needs assessments

To facilitate some of the government-driven cuts and changes described above, CLBC is reviewing individual funding levels using a relatively new assessment tool—the Guide to Support Allocation (GSA).

There have been reports that GSA assessments are being conducted without the awareness of families, and with inadequate consultation with agency staff. Families have said that their concerns, the wishes of their loved ones, and other key considerations are being ignored in the GSA assessment process. As a result, funded-support levels of adults with developmental disabilities are being reduced, based on inadequate or incomplete evaluations of their needs.

In addition, recent studies have recommended the review, revision and/or phasing out of the GSA. For example, a government-commissioned study of CLBC's service delivery model (Queenswood Consulting Group, 2008, *Review of the CLBC Service Delivery Model*) outlined transparency issues and operational challenges related to the GSA, and recommended revisiting the option of switching to one of the more established assessment tools operationalized and tested in other jurisdictions. 🏠

In response to reports of group home closures and service reductions, as well as concerns related to home sharing and needs assessments, family groups, advocacy organizations, unions, and service agencies came together to coordinate public meetings in Vancouver and Victoria to share information about, and explore solutions to the urgent situation in B.C.'s community living sector.

In total, 330 people participated in the two meetings, including self-advocates, family members, front-line support workers, and other concerned citizens.

Panel presentations

Both meetings featured brief presentations from panelists representing diverse organizations and perspectives.

BC Association for Community Living (BCACL)

The BCACL is a provincial association of individuals, families, and over 70 local associations, dedicated to promoting the participation of people with developmental disabilities in all aspects of community life.

Executive Director Faith Bodnar's presentations focused primarily on the issues of service redesign and waitlists in B.C.'s community living sector.

Bodnar took the position that change in residential supports may be positive. However, she argued, transparency, consistency, equity, and openness are essential. Further, she stated, changes must be for the right reasons, and should not be financially-driven. She explained that,

in response to concerns that have been brought forward about the current service redesign process, CLBC has established a Service Redesign and Quality Assurance Committee. BCACL is co-chairing this committee, which is meant to provide "a table for an open and transparent dialogue on service redesign and best practice."



"People with developmental disabilities must have a decisive role in all decisions that involve their lives, including where and with whom they live."

Faith Bodnar, Executive Director of BCACL

With respect to waitlists, Bodnar advised that the number of individuals eligible for CLBC-funded services is projected to grow by roughly six per cent per year, yet no new funds have been committed. She emphasized that service redesign is not an effective strategy to address increasing demand for services and growing waitlists; rather, she said, it is a short-sighted, unsustainable approach, and represents poor fiscal planning.

BC Coalition of People with Disabilities (BCCPD)

The BCCPD is a provincial cross-disability organization that supports people with disabilities through direct services,



Jane Dyson, Executive Director of BCCPD

community partnerships, advocacy, research, and publications.

In her presentations, Executive Director Jane Dyson reviewed the early history of group homes and discussed the current situation of closures and relocations. She noted that group homes replaced institutions as a result of tireless advocacy on the part of families, and that many group home residents have lived together, as families, for years. Tragically, however, over the last year some group home residents have been forced to move and their families have been torn apart.

Recent group home closures and relocations of residents can be attributed, Dyson explained, to a 2008 Ministry of Housing and Social Development report (*Review*

of the CLBC Service Delivery Model) that outlined an intention to move adults from group homes into home sharing in order to cut costs.

Dyson raised concerns about home sharing, specifically with respect to quality, capacity, standards, and oversight and stressed the importance of having a range of residential options.

BC Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU)

The BCGEU represents over 5,000 workers providing community living supports and services in British Columbia.

Both presentations made by James Cavalluzzo, Chair of the Community Social Services component of the union, described the rapid changes in B.C.'s community living sector, and the exclusion of front-line workers from providing input into the redesign process. In spite of the fact that



James Cavalluzzo, Chair of BCGEU Community Social Services Component

workers are intimately involved in the daily lives of the adults who they support, they have been shut out of decision-making processes around the current changes.

Cavalluzzo outlined a number of concerns related to the government's cost-driven push towards home sharing, including what he described as "asset stripping" in the sector. Group homes are community assets, he explained—a form of social housing—with demand by far exceeding supply in B.C.; further, group homes closed today will be difficult to recover down the road. He also questioned where individuals currently in home sharing placements will go if they require staffed residential supports in the future.

Cavalluzzo called for greater accountability and oversight in the sector, stating that adults with developmental disabilities need a strong, independent officer of the provincial legislature to protect and promote their interests.

Moms on the Move (MOMS)

MOMS, a volunteer network connecting over 1,000 B.C. parents, organizations, professionals, and service providers, advocates for families of children and youth with special needs and adults with developmental disabilities.

Dawn Steele—parent, advocate, and volunteer coordinator with MOMS—spoke at the Vancouver meeting. Her presentation examined the service redesign process to date, through the lens of the original vision of CLBC—a Crown agency that promised increased choice, respect, inclusion, consultation, and empowerment for adults with developmental disabilities and their families—but failed to deliver.

With respect to the promise of increased choice in services and supports, Steele described draft policies and guidelines that restrict options for adults with

developmental disabilities. In terms of consultation and empowerment, she noted that service redesign and decisions have been carried out without consulting individuals and families.

Steele emphasized that planning in the community living sector has been budget-centred, not person-centred. She noted that there is no independent oversight or monitoring of home sharing placements, and stressed that although the home sharing



"Instead of person-centred services, what we have seen is budget-driven process. Everything is driven by how much it costs."

Dawn Steele, MOMS Volunteer Coordinator

model may work for some individuals, flaws in its implementation are undermining confidence in a service option that may be appropriate for many adults.

Cheryl Magnussen spoke on her own behalf at the Vancouver meeting and represented MOMS at the Victoria event. Magnussen is a parent and disability advocate whose adult child has multiple and complex support needs. She shared, with much anguish, a personal story illustrating the failure of CLBC to meet its stated objectives around community living and support.

Magnussen explained that, after residing in a group home for many years, her adult child was advised that the home would be closing. Initially, relocation to another group home was coordinated, but shortly thereafter, her child was determined ineligible for group home support and relocation to a home share placement was recommended.



Anita Dadson, BC FamilyNet Co-founder

Magnussen explained that a group home is the best, most appropriate environment for her adult child, with staff that have the necessary training and expertise to deal with complex support issues, including violent behaviour. Magnussen has been actively engaged in lobbying and advocacy to ensure that her child can live in a suitable staffed residential setting.

BC FamilyNet

Originally formed as the BC Federation of Families, BC FamilyNet is an independent provincial network that provides a voice for children and youth with special needs, adults with developmental disabilities, and their families.

BC FamilyNet co-founder Anita Dadson described the closure of institutions and the work of self-advocates and families to open group homes as an extremely positive development in the history of services for adults with developmental disabilities. She described the high hopes that accompanied the establishment of CLBC in 2005, and the promises of choice, family-centred planning, and lifelong supports. She lamented that these hopes and promises have not been fulfilled.

Dadson spoke about the pressures that cutbacks and funding shortfalls place on families. She also spoke about the importance of group homes, and the expertise of staff.

Dadson called for increased funding for community living supports, and insisted that governments must prioritize services for adults with developmental disabilities.

Developmental Disabilities Association (DDA)

DDA provides over 50 community-based programs to children and adults with developmental disabilities, and their families in Vancouver and Richmond.



Alanna Hendren, Executive Director of DDA

"We have to put the people we support back into the centre of the system again—not misplaced faith in an ideology that is so clearly ineffective in reality."

Executive Director Alanna Hendren, spoke at the Vancouver meeting about the history of residential services for adults with developmental disabilities in B.C. She described how families came together to open group homes as an alternative to institutionalization. When institutions closed, the general consensus for a residential alternative was the government-funded group home model.

Hendren explained that the cost to operate group homes has risen, and that governments are looking to reduce spending on social services. As a result, adults with developmental disabilities are being moved into less costly residential options, and out of the licensed group home system that was created to assure their health and safety.

Hendren also described the increasing financial burden that is being placed on parents and families, and explained that this shift in responsibility is a result of a lack of any legislated government requirement to provide comprehensive funded supports to adults with developmental disabilities.

Hendren also emphasized the importance of group homes and community inclusion programs, the short-sightedness of cutting these supports, and the importance of putting families and individuals back at the centre of the community living support system.

Garth Homer Society (GHS)

GHS is a non-profit society that provides daytime services for more than 130 adults with developmental disabilities in the Victoria area.

Executive Director Kaye Kennish provided a brief history of GHS' programs and an



Kaye Kennish, Executive Director of GHS

explanation of the evolution of day services for adults with developmental disabilities in B.C. over the past three decades. She noted that front-line staff at agencies like GHS provide a range of services and supports—despite remaining among the lowest-paid workers in the public sector.

Kennish emphasized the importance of honesty and clarity in government decision-making with respect to service changes during difficult economic times. Unfortunately, she said, changes in the sector are not being carried out this way. For example, despite proclamations of choice in supports, options are limited or non-existent. Despite instructions to pursue progressive initiatives, project funding is not forthcoming.

Kennish listed a number of negative impacts arising out of these conditions, including increased uncertainty among families and service providers, increased stress on staff, less careful planning, wasted time and resources, and unfairness in resource distribution.

In calling for a direct, honest, and complete explanation of the goals of service redesign, Kennish challenged the government to admit and respond to the fact that the economic rationale driving current changes will reverse some of the progress made in the community living sector.

Participant dialogue

Following the panel presentations at both events, participants broke out into several small brainstorming groups to discuss the following question:

What can we do to ensure that adults with developmental disabilities have the options, services, and supports that they need?

The dialogue process for each group was collaborative and solution-oriented. Group members shared their personal experiences and listened to each other's views and concerns.

In the end, groups were asked to report back on their top five solutions to the brainstorming question.

In both Vancouver and Victoria, many groups called for increased efforts to raise public awareness of issues affecting adults with developmental disabilities and their



Participants at the Skills & (Dis)Abilities forum in Victoria

families. Suggestions included: letter-writing campaigns, media and community outreach, consultations with elected officials, advertising and public education campaigns, and public protests. Groups emphasized

the importance of sharing personal stories and conveying the real life experiences of individuals and families.

Many groups recommended increased monitoring and oversight in the community living sector, particularly in relation to home sharing. They called for more transparency and accountability in government policy decision-making, a better legislative framework for community living supports, and increased government consultation with self-advocates and families.

Groups also recommended increased and more equitable government funding for community living supports, using revenues raised through a fairer taxation system. They demanded better long-term, strategic planning for the community living sector, and called on stakeholders to work together to protect and enhance services for adults with developmental disabilities and their families.

The next section of this report outlines the top 10 recommendations put forward by participant groups during dialogue sessions at both the Vancouver and Victoria meetings. Participants were asked to contribute five recommendations per group; responses were collected, and the data was compiled and ranked on the basis of key recurrent themes. 🏠

"As CLBC de-funds more and more residential and community inclusion programs, we will lose the professionalism and the expertise of our employees who will move on to other sectors. I don't think anybody understands the efforts we have to put into employee retention because our staff are the lowest paid in the public sector and they have been for many, many years. Believe me, these are people who work in our sector because they are dedicated, and they work with their hearts."

-Alanna Hendren, Executive Director, Developmental Disabilities Association

"Group homes are not right for everyone and the home share model works for some people. It's important that the allocation of resources is carefully monitored. Assessments are appropriate and should result in positive change, but not changes that force unwanted living arrangements on people with disabilities. Group homes may cost more: but people with developmental disabilities' safety, personal preferences, well-being and quality of life must come first."

-Jane Dyson, Executive Director, BC Coalition of People with Disabilities

"Waitlists are unacceptable and critical—families and their sons and daughters are waiting. It is estimated that this year alone 600 people with developmental disabilities will become newly eligible for CLBC funded services and next year another 600. At a rate of six per cent per year, with no new funds, the waitlists are growing quickly. We know that service redesign is not an answer to addressing the funds needed for those who are waiting for service.... It is a short-sighted, poor, and harmful excuse for fiscal planning... (and) completely unsustainable."

- Faith Bodnar, Executive Director, BC Association for Community Living



Panelists from Skills & (Dis)Abilities forum in Victoria

What I know from our members and the folks that I talk to—and I feel this myself—is that we're very eager to be part of a discussion about how best to design and provide services for people with disabilities. And that includes improving and expanding services, not limiting services. We think experienced and dedicated workers in the sector deserve some fairness and respect.... But most importantly, we believe that all citizens—especially people with disabilities—deserve quality public services.

- James Cavalluzzo, Chair, Community Social Services sector component, BCGEU

We have particular concerns with the new home share model, because there are no checks and balances; because there is no independent oversight; because there is no licencing.... This is not acceptable. And it's unfortunate, because home share is a model that could work very well for some people, if it was implemented properly, with a proper framework, that could establish trust in the community. But that hasn't been done. And it has tainted public perceptions around the whole model that could be a very valuable and useful model. And it won't be: until we address those challenges, and that's including independent oversight, proper standards and licencing.

- Dawn Steele, Volunteer Coordinator, Moms on the Move

“What we are seeing currently, however, is that “doublespeak” ... is finding at least partial expression in the workings of CLBC. At the same time that we are assured the values I have mentioned are primary, and must be observed by service providers, the means required to put (these) core values into practice are being systematically removed. At the same time as we are told individuals and families have the right to choose, they are being presented with limited or non-existent options upon which to exercise that supposed choice. At the same time as service providers are told they should pursue progressive endeavours such as Customized Employment, the financial and human resources inherent to their success are withheld or even reduced.”

-Kaye Kennish, Executive Director, Garth Homer Society



Christette and her daughter Tara

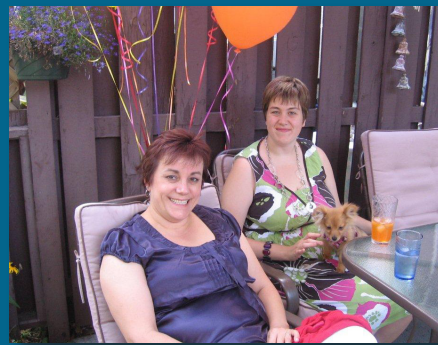
“There are not enough good, trained care providers available to meet the exclusive and many needs of the individuals that are supported. There are many things that home share providers need to consider, the unique needs of each individual along with things such as self-care needs, medication needs, assistance with all activities of daily living, health care needs, behaviour needs, socializing needs, community support etc... Who is able to do all that? Who is able to meet these needs? It takes a community!

It is my opinion that the home share model for those individuals with high needs will not

work. Where is the accountability? Where is the monitoring of the care? Where is the record keeping? In a group home situation, all of this is monitored, staff complete their shifts and leave for the day. The burnout rate is lower, the staff person is able to walk away from the situation. For the home care provider, this is a 24/7 job, who can work 24/7 and still do a good job?

With a group home situation, it is the individual’s own home. Everyone has a right to a home. The individual stays put in their own environment. With the home share model, the individual is living in some else’s home (the care provider). What if the care provider becomes ill? What if the care provider burns out? I believe that (home sharing) is a cost-saving measure placed on the backs of individuals who are vulnerable and are not able to speak for themselves.”

- Christette Comarty, Parent



Christette and Tara

What can we do to ensure that adults with developmental disabilities have the options, services, and supports that they need?

The following recommendations emerged from open and inclusive dialogue between self-advocates, family members, support workers, service providers, disability advocates, and concerned citizens at community meetings held on October 25, 2010 in Vancouver and on November 30, 2010 in Victoria:



Increase funding

Increase provincial government funding to more effectively and inclusively meet the service and support needs of adults with developmental disabilities in British Columbia, and allocate that funding equitably and strategically.



Create an independent advocate

Establish an Independent Officer of the Legislature with a broad legislated mandate to improve supports and outcomes for adults with developmental disabilities through oversight, advocacy, accountability, and review.



Raise public awareness

Raise public awareness about the crisis in B.C.'s community living sector, through public education, community outreach, and political advocacy.



Listen to individuals and families

Re-centre the community living support system around adults with developmental disabilities and their families, by:

- providing choice in service options and funding for appropriate models of support, respecting that there are no “one-size-fits-all” solutions and that adults and their families know best what works for them;
- ensuring meaningful inclusion of individuals and families in decisions impacting their personal supports, as well as matters such as policy development, planning, and service design.



Consult and collaborate

In addition to including individuals and families at the centre of decision-making and planning, expand the range of participants in these processes to meaningfully include service agencies, front-line workers, disability

advocates, and other stakeholders with key knowledge and expertise.

Introduce provincial legislation

Establish a stronger and more comprehensive legislative framework for community living supports, which, among other things:

- provides adults with developmental disabilities with a right to the services and supports required for their full participation in society;
- guarantees the full inclusion of adults with developmental disabilities and their families in decision-making and planning processes; and
- provides for an effective system of independent oversight for the community living sector.

Improve transparency and accountability

Ensure that decision-making and planning processes in the community living sector are open and transparent, and implement measures to ensure the government's system of community living supports is held to account.

Develop and implement a plan

In consultation and collaboration with self-advocates, families, service agencies, front-line workers and other key stakeholders, develop and implement a comprehensive, multi-year provincial Community Living

Plan, with clear targets and timelines, covering matters such as:

- eliminating the waitlist for supports and services;
- transitioning youth with developmental disabilities to adult supports and services; and
- meeting rising demand for residential supports and community inclusion programs.

Regulate home sharing

Develop and implement a provincial framework for home sharing, covering matters such as service standards, health and safety, respite, training, and oversight.

Protect group homes

Stop cost-driven group home closures and service reductions, renew funding and support for individuals who choose group homes as their preferred service option, and remove administrative and other barriers to this service option.

The crisis in B.C.'s community living sector is a human rights issue.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognizes the importance of individual autonomy, independence, and choice. It recognizes that persons with disabilities should be actively involved in decision-making processes that affect them. And it affirms the rights of persons with disabilities to choose their place of residence and living arrangement, and to access necessary supports. However, the current process of service reductions, group home closures, and service redesigns in British Columbia violates these essential principles. At the same time, waitlists and underfunding in the sector sustain long-standing inequalities.

This cannot continue.

Participants attending the Vancouver and Victoria Skills & (Dis)Abilities public forums called for immediate changes and outlined short and long term solutions to address the challenges faced by adults with developmental disabilities and their families in British Columbia. Families and self-advocates demanded increased service levels and quality, choice in support options, independent oversight, and a central role in decision-making processes. Service agencies, support workers, advocates, and concerned citizens called for increased transparency and accountability, and a more consultative and collaborative approach to service planning and policy development.

The onus is now on the provincial government and CLBC to respond to these recommendations, so we can all move forward together, committed to respecting the rights of adults with developmental disabilities by ensuring that they have the options, services, and supports that they need. 🏠