



Address to the Select Standing Committee on
Finances and Government Services – Budget Consultation
October 2, 2017

Presented by Doug Hayman, Chair of the Board Voice Society of BC

Part 1

Who we are:

- Board Voice is a network of board directors of community-based social service organizations from across the province.
- We are founded on the belief that board leadership is critical to supporting high quality social services and to making our communities better places to live.
- Board directors are community volunteers, business leaders, and community philanthropists who put their time, resources and reputations on the line to serve communities across BC.
- We represent 69 community-based social service organizations and roughly 700 individual board directors across BC providing services like day care and early childhood development; mental health and addictions; family support and child protection; assisted housing and employment; community corrections and specialized programs for women, children, youth and seniors

What we do:

- We bring the voice of board directors to decision makers to highlight our shared beliefs and values, to bring community voice to community challenges, and to share the impact of policies on our organizations and on citizens in our communities.
- We connect community-based social service boards together to better understand the issues facing communities and how we might build upon community assets.
- We champion strong governance practices that enable board directors to make choices that create the future for the communities they serve.
- We don't pretend to represent all boards of board members, but we do believe that we generally reflect the views of boards across the province.

Agency sustainability

- I want to bring forward two items to your attention today:
 - The first relates to a very long standing issue which has to do with sustainability issues faced by community services agencies. Volunteer board members are increasingly challenged by the demands placed on their agencies without the capacity to effectively respond. There are many related issues, some difficult to overcome, and always taxing for hard pressed community agencies trying to fulfill their responsibilities. For example, differential wages paid to workers doing essentially the same work, but funded through a different ministry. Our boards, in their fiduciary responsibilities, find it unacceptable that

workers hired and trained by their agencies are then quickly hired away to do the same work elsewhere. This is a drain on already precarious agency resources and creates ongoing service disruptions and poor service to people.

- Our view of the many agencies providing services in BC is that they are centers of professional support in our communities requiring stable funding, good governance, good management, equitable and living wages, adequate administration and well supported and trained staff. In many respects, these organizations are no different than hospitals and schools in their importance to the communities they serve. To adequately serve our communities, they need to be sustainable and recognized for their contributions.
- We think it is time to come to grips with the many challenges facing the community sector through a considered response to the issues that have been raised over the years by umbrella organizations like Board Voice, Inclusion BC and the Federation of Community Social Services.
- Agency sustainability is one of many irritants that in the long term, might better be addressed via a social policy framework or what we've called a *BC Framework for Wellbeing*, which is the main idea I want to raise with you this evening.

BC Framework for Wellbeing

- At its highest level, what we're talking about is an overarching framework of principles and values, social goals, roles and accountabilities intended to provide direction to all social ministries and their funded agencies and organizations with a goal of better outcomes for people. It would also outline and processes for monitoring progress.
- We see a framework as providing:
 - A lens for reviewing programs, policy, legislation, and mandates
 - A strategic planning and priority setting tool
 - A model for engagement and transparency
 - A common language and vision to collectively set our sights on
 - And a renewed call to action around innovation, collaboration, and outcomes.
- Board Voice has been actively tilling the soil across BC with respect to this idea over the past four years. First, we canvassed agency boards, then municipal councils and other organizations. In 2014, UBCM passed a resolution supporting a consultation process on this idea. This year, the BC Chamber of Commerce passed a motion of support for a social policy framework brought forward by the Surrey Board of Trade.
- Over this past year, we have been talking to British Columbians across the province about the kind of province they want for their future. The findings from this consultation will be presented at the board Voice conference in November.

- Most of these organizations recognize the need for a better way to get at the complex issues we face today and that these issues don't fit neatly into the mandate of any one ministry. Over the years, they have seen hoc responses to serious issues, reinventing how to work together each time.
- We have also seen report after report outlining the issues that stem from one part of the system not communicating appropriately with another, leading to disruption or disaster. We've also heard calls for more comprehensive community social planning. It's time for a better way.
- New systems and processes need to be built in to regularize and streamline the work across ministries and communities.
- Over the past year, we became aware that the BC public service was working internally on elements of a social policy framework for the province. We have not seen the results of this work as it has not been made public.

Board Voice is requesting:

1. That a team be established in government dedicated to the development and management of a social policy framework.
2. That funding be set aside to conduct a broad consultation to ensure that this framework is community informed.
3. That the government work with Board Voice, its partners (BC Government Employees Union, BC Association of Social Workers, Federation of Community Social Services of BC, Volunteer BC, BC Association of Community Response Networks, and the Union of BC Municipalities) and others to assist in making this idea a reality on the ground.

Social Policy Framework History in BC

2013-2017

- **June 2013:** a group of Board Voice members and executive directors created a document called *There is a Better Way*, calling for the development of a social policy framework. <http://boardvoice.ca/public/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/SPF-Statement-on-Letterhead-.pdf>
- **January 2013:** Presentation to City of Duncan Council about the possibilities of a social policy framework and why it would help municipalities
- **September 2013:** Union of BC Municipalities endorses resolution B123 requesting that "UBCM call on the Premier to begin a consultation on the development of a social policy framework".
- **August 2014:** Simon Fraser School of Public Policy and Board Voice release a report – Making the Case: A Social Policy Framework for British Columbia http://boardvoice.ca/public/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/MakingtheCase_FinalAug2014_web.pdf
- **April 2016:** Simon Fraser School of Public Policy and Board Voice release a report – Building the Case for an Explicit Social Policy Framework in British Columbia http://boardvoice.ca/public/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/BC-Priorities_BoardVoice_Building-the-Case.pdf
- **2016/17:** Board Voice was funded through the Vancouver Foundation to carry out a community consultation in 15 communities across BC related to the development of a BC Framework for Wellbeing. Thousands of BC citizens were asked about the future they wanted for BC. This project is drawing to a close and the findings will be presented at the Board Voice AGM in November. <http://boardvoice.ca/public/community-engagement/>
- **June 2016:** Board Voice representatives meet with assistant deputy minister to discuss value of a social policy framework
- **May 2017:** at the BC Chamber of Commerce Conference and AGM the following motion was adopted: *"That the provincial government implement a framework to deal with social issues similar to that of the BC Jobs Plan to recognize and achieve efficiencies across ministries and stakeholders."*

Part II - Sustainability

In the 2017 Confidence and Supply Agreement between the BC Green Caucus and the BC New Democrat Caucus, “fixing the services people count on” was a point of agreement. Community-based social service agencies deliver a large portion of those services. Yet, when services are discussed the focus is on health and education. The community social service sector is the orphan. Wages are not competitive for staff nor is infrastructure able to “safely and efficiently meet the growing demand for services” (BC Association for Child Development and Intervention – Position Statement – Funding for Capital Projects, 2017).

Board directors are charged with fulfilling their mission statements, most of which say something about meeting the needs of the people their organizations serve. It is impossible to do this without necessary human, financial, and physical resources.

Background

- Staff development / training – we are not funded for training /development/ continuing education costs for staff (especially challenging for our professional, registered staff such as Registered Social Workers and Registered Clinical Counselors physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech and language pathologists who require continuing education to register annually with their professional bodies)
- Recruitment for professional staff like social workers, physical, occupational, and speech therapists) - we pay less and are funded for less per Full Time Equivalent than other sectors (health care) – we are not competitive on wages/benefits. Also, there is no funding for things like qualifications differential (pay more for BA/Masters)
 - Front line staff, we are not competitive on wages/benefits. The shift differential (working nights/ weekends) – people working in residential facilities are paid less when folks are sleeping.
- Recruitment – front line staff – turnover and hardship issues for staff working - funding in many instances across the province is ‘below the living wage rate’ and is below \$20/hour for some roles (\$16.50 - \$19.31). It is difficult to employ and retain staff given housing, transport and living expenses. While the funding increase for the education sector is welcome, many employees of community social service organizations with the same training and job qualifications are leaving our sector to go to jobs with similar job descriptions but with better wage and benefit packages
- Leadership/management staff - salaries not competitive – we are paying \$10 - \$20K less for manager and director roles vs other government/public sector roles (health for example, where we are often competing with for applicants). Difficulties recruiting seasoned front line staff in to manager roles internally; have to structure roles creatively. We have great staff who we train, mentor, support and then they leave for a different part of the public service. Organizations have to repost management roles 3-4 times (6 month + timeframe to recruit) to try to garner qualified & interested candidates

- Benefits –high costs in this area mean our workforce (especially at the lower portion of the wage scale) experience large financial burdens to becoming regular staff because of pension and benefit (co-pay) costs. Staff who are making \$18 / hour prefer to stay casual or hourly.
- Healthy workplace – Opioid/ addiction crisis and rising acuity of mental health issues in the client populations we serve translates to increasing stress, mental health, addiction and compassion fatigue issues **for staff** – it takes leadership training, recognition, professional development and other things (not currently in our funding agreements with our funders) help to support staff in stressful work environments and again, some staff (hourly / casual) don't have sick pay or health benefits to help support in a time of acute crisis.

As board directors, we and others have addressed concerns with the Community Social Services Employer Association (CSSEA) before. Concerns date back to at least 1999. We have been told that parity will be achieved by 2019. However, the employee groups and unions in the education and health care sectors will be entering into negotiations and seeking higher wages and benefits. As a result, the community social service sector constantly lags behind.

Solution

- Government provide wage parity in the health, education and social service sectors
- Government provides agencies with long term contracts to allow for effective planning in meeting community needs

Funding Capital Projects/Operating Costs

Background

Demand for services is increasing and building infrastructure is not keeping up. Community social services rely upon fundraising and charitable fundraising. For example, in one community, the need for either renovations, expansions or new buildings faces at least five agencies. Even co-locating services is challenging, as there are no buildings that are large enough and some of the needs, such as a hospice are not compatible with a child development centre. As the BC Association for Child Development and Intervention points out, “government supports the building of hospitals and schools, yet does not consistently support capital projects for the agencies that effectively and efficiently deliver essential community based services” for children, youth and seniors.

http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/d8389a_a049475ba6d344cc869e27b14af7f8ec.pdf

Operating costs of electricity, transportation and food have increased. However, funding increases for these areas do not keep pace.

When approving budgets, board directors are faced with choices about cutting programs or reducing access to them.

Solution

- Government commit funding to capital project costs in the community social service sector
- Government index annual increases so agencies can meet increased operating costs without negatively impacting service delivery

Comparison: Wages

Community Social Services Employers Association April 2017	School District No. 79 Cowichan	Island Health
Adult/youth/child worker \$17.12 –19.93 per hour 4 step grid based on number of hours (0 to 6001 onwards)	Student support worker: base wage \$28.15	Mental health support worker casual employment \$21.85 – 23.69 per hour
Physiotherapist \$29.50 – 34.40	Not available	Physiotherapist \$33.14 – 41.35
Occupational therapist \$29.50 – 34.40	Not available	Occupational therapist \$33.14 – 41.35
Speech language pathologist \$29.50 – 34.40	Not available	Speech language pathologist \$32.39 – 40.40