



## BOARDS ONBOARD

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### Welcome to Spring!

Welcome to the Spring Edition of Boards Onboard for 2012! This promises to be a very interesting year for community social services.

Recently the Ministry of Child and Family Development launched a new community planning process with the Union of BC Municipalities to begin to address poverty issues.

Starting in seven municipalities, community conversations will lead to local solutions to help people escape poverty. Time will tell whether the resources required to actually make headway in this difficult area will be forthcoming; however, the idea of community members coming together to first understand and then develop some ideas in this area is important. We hope that Board Voice members will find ways to engage in this process and that the process is actually useful. Although there isn't much written on this yet, you can read more about the initiative at [http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news\\_releases\\_2009-2013/2012CFD0017-000455.pdf](http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/2012CFD0017-000455.pdf).

Of course, this next 12 months will be a ramp up to the next election twelve months from now. Time to be out talking to politicians of all political stripes about community social services.

Here at Board Voice, our board has been planning for the year and will be talking further with our members about some projects we hope to build on in the coming year, such as the two exciting community development events stimulated by Board Voice you can read about in this issue. It's great to see and experience local community organizing! Stay tuned for activities in your community.





**Most of the Board Voice board at the recent Strategic Planning session in Richmond.**

On March 24 and 25, the Board voice board came together for two days of strategic planning. Our strategic goals are supplemented by 15 key objectives and a workplan that the board will pursue this fiscal year.

### **Vision:**

High-quality social services and strong, vibrant communities supported by a clear and effective voice for volunteer community-based boards.

### **Mission:**

The members of Board Voice are champions of healthy communities who promote the value of collaborative, high quality, community-based social services to governments, communities and the social services sector.

### **Strategic Goals**

1. Governments are advised about the aspirations and concerns of the sector from a community perspective.
2. Collaborative cross-sectoral thinking, innovation and planning at the community and provincial levels are evident across the province.
3. Community social services are better understood by the general public as critical to the social fabric of our communities.
4. The governance capacity of boards is renewed and strengthened.
5. Board Voice is a financially sustainable organization, widely known and respected for its support of the community social services sector.

## Op-Ed

## Higher Price Tag - Safer Streets?

The Safe Streets and Communities Act should be of concern to Canadians for a number of reasons. While it is a given that all citizens want and deserve safe streets and communities, it is much less obvious whether this act, which received Royal Assent on March 13, 2012, will accomplish either.

The Safe Streets and Communities Act is the short title for an omnibus act comprised of nine individual acts, which fundamentally change our justice system, but do nothing to make us safer.

The enactment the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and changes to the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and others are too numerous to detail here, include the establishment of mandatory minimum sentences for a variety of offences, reduction of options for the use of conditional sentencing, and toughening of the criteria for

parole and early release programs. The effect of these amendments will be the building of new prisons in every province and territory simply to house the additional number of inmates. Prisons are very expensive to build and very expensive to staff. The costs will be borne by the taxpayer. The tax bill will rise exponentially if Corrections Canada actually provides rehabilitative programs to its inmates.

Our federal government is incurring these costs at a time when our neighbour, the United States, the world's most incarcerated country, is repealing mandatory sentence legislation and closing prisons strictly based on economics. The projected cost increase, which ranges from \$5 to \$13 billion; (no budget has been provided) also comes at a time when crime rates in virtually every category are, in fact, decreasing in Canada. In every segment of our society there is a call for accountability based on clear empirical data. On the criminal justice issue the data is clear; crime rates are

down; prisons do not reduce crime. Why is the government choosing to ignore the research to build unnecessary prisons? The irony of the situation is made more obvious when one considers BC where two juvenile detention centres have recently closed as a reflection of the declining juvenile crime rate. Why is the opposite being done at the adult level?

An even more troubling concern is the lack of provision in the Safe Streets and Communities Act of any form of rehabilitation. Research again shows that prisons are an efficient place to punish bad behaviour and to remove from society those who act badly, and there is no disagreement that there are those who must be removed from society. Prisons do little or nothing, however, about rehabilitating, reducing recidivism, or making society safer.

It is the firmly held belief of Board Voice that in the area

of criminal justice, as in many other areas of social services, money spent on preventative programs is much more effective than money spent after the fact. The way to really make our streets safer is to build communities where opportunities for employment, education, housing and food are available to all.

The federal government's goal of safety for its citizens is laudable. The Safe Streets and Communities Act is not the way to achieve it.

Board Voice is a newly formed society made up of the Boards of Governors of approximately 75 societies throughout the province committed to building healthy communities. For comment or more information contact Board Voice at [www.boardvoice.ca](http://www.boardvoice.ca)

**Dave Stigant & Terry Moist**



**Dave Stigant**

**Terry Moist**

## Profile - Doug Hayman



Doug can rightfully be described as the “godfather” of Board Voice—he says the society was birthed over a bottle of “grape juice” in a discussion between him and a few other movers and shakers in the social service field about potential ways of leveraging the assets of our sector. Their “aha!” moment came when they realized that the most valuable and under-utilized asset was the volunteer board members.

One discussion led to another and finally to a meeting chaired by John Nielsen and attended by representatives

from around the province. Delegates agreed that an organization that harnessed the talents, abilities and influence of society board members to work with government on a governance-to-governance basis was a wonderful idea.

The idea caught fire with Anthony Osler, former chair of Family Services of Greater Vancouver, and Doug immediately offered him the opportunity of heading up an organizing committee. The rest is history, and interestingly enough, many of the people who bought in to the idea at that first meeting are still actively involved in Board Voice.

Although Board Voice is made up of volunteer board members, there is absolutely no doubt that Doug is the glue that holds the whole thing together, the backbone if you will. The Federation of Community Social Services embraced the Board Voice concept from the beginning

and has supported us both financially and with in-kind services.

We are immensely grateful to them for subsidizing the secretariat services Doug provides, which include: ensuring written materials documenting the agency’s structure and functions are in place; planning, organizing and coordinating meetings and functions; informing directors of new research, studies and reports and notified them of any concerning activities; supporting development activities and personally facilitating discussions; ensuring minutes are taken and recorded for meetings; informing members of the agency’s activities through e-mails, newsletters and the website; and much, MUCH more.

If Board Voice can be said to have a voice, Doug Hayman is the one who facilitates it. The eloquent and elegant language that describes everything we do arises from his immense abilities

in that critical area.

Doug’s background in social service is extensive and his practice has taken him all over BC and through much of Ontario. He reached the dizzying heights of Assistant Deputy Minister before leaving MCFD; and the relationships he established as a public servant have stood him in good stead with FCSS and—obviously—Board Voice.

When asked about his involvement in Board Voice, Doug says that, at this time in his career, it is a joy to work with this group of people for the good of our communities. He’s excited about the potential of Board Voice, and says in some ways, he sees his contribution as a legacy to a field he loves. He says, “I’m a social worker. Ever since my ‘misspent’ youth studying yoga in India, I’ve always wanted to make a better world, and I’ve never lost that.”

**Judy Hayes & Lyn Policha**

### What can you do?

In an organization like Board Voice the only progress that happens, happens when individuals and groups decide to actually do something. Without the doing, the best idea in the world dies. But the question is what can you do, in your community, beyond your responsibilities as a board member? What BV asks is that you take some action, large or small. Talk to your friends or neighbours about your agency. Have a chat with your local MLA. Write a letter to the editor with regard to a pertinent social issue. Join a meeting to discuss how services are organized in your community. Find out a little more about the social infrastructure supporting the people in your town. Take on a leadership role. Our lives are immeasurably enriched by having services and supports in our communities to help people through difficult times and situations. To evolve, we all must think about what we have and how we can improve things. Every small action counts.

## Move, Moving, Movement!

Board Voice has completed its second complete fiscal year. We ended the year with a small surplus to carry us in to 2012/13 and hope to secure several new grants, in addition to our membership fees, to continue to grow the organization and make further strides in our efforts to improve services in B.C. communities.

Recently, the Board Voice board of directors came together for two days to develop operational plans for the coming year. This was an important opportunity for everyone to wrestle with the big issues facing the sector and consider how an organization of volunteer governors can positively affect the conversation in the province. How can we leverage the assets sitting around all of the board tables in the province to make a difference?

This is no easy task. Everybody is busy. Board members are already volunteering; how much more can we expect of them? Why is this important anyway?

In the pages of this Newsletter you've heard us talk about the social determinants of health –

that how and where people live, work and play will affect their health outcomes. We have preached the value of investing in the community and in community services as a way of offsetting the much more expensive services in the acute care health system and corrections services. We know that investing in early childhood development and childcare will have enormous benefits to the children involved, their families and their communities. We will all benefit from these investments, even business. (See

<http://www.vancouversun.com/life/Surrey+Board+Trade+benefits+Squeeze/6446162/story.html> )

Why then, is it such a struggle to get governments to listen to this news? Why do we continue to have welfare policies that keep recipients in a box that's very difficult to get out of? Why do we continue to support a piecemeal childcare system that creates huge barriers for families wanting to raise children (children we need, by the way, to support the B.C. economy in the future)?

We all know that there is always a battle around the cabinet table for resources. We also know that sometimes politicians do listen to what the public is saying. So how is it that when it comes to resource allocation, what we usually hear is how much the health and education budgets need to expand? Why is it that we're asked to invest in more prisons and prison infrastructure when the crime rate is going down and has been for years? Why aren't we hearing more about the Families First agenda?

The thing about community social services is that it is a complex system supporting people from cradle to grave. The scope of services is quite astounding and they tend to fly under the radar of many people's consciousness (until needed that is); and aren't generally blessed with huge lobby interests like the Canadian Medical Association, the pharmaceutical industry or the teachers union. There aren't big lobby groups supporting children and

adults with mental health problems or seniors needing home support, or families struggling to get by on welfare rates that haven't changed in five years.

In any given community you will find community services squeezed by years of neglect, with no increases for cost of living. It's not like the costs of goods and services have stayed stable for a decade. Wages in this sector are also low. It is truly a testament to the good management of agency managers and boards that years of neglect have not led to a complete breakdown of the system.

This is why it's important to get better organized on behalf of the people served by community social services. And who better to stand up for them than the board governors across the province already committed to this sector?

Join us in this movement. Another provincial election will occur in 12 months. Let's make sure that social services issues are on the agenda of every party!

### Welcome to New Members!

A big welcome to three new members boards that have joined Board Voice since January 2012!

**B.C. Families in Transition** <http://bcfit.org/> – Victoria

**B.C. Community Response Network** [www.bccrns.ca](http://www.bccrns.ca) - Surrey

**Community Options for Children** [www.communityoptions.bc.ca](http://www.communityoptions.bc.ca) - Victoria

## Cowichan Boards Meet Boards Initiative - Update

**“Citizens, in their capacity to come together and choose to be accountable, are our best shot at making a difference.”**

**Peter Block in Community—the Structure of Belonging**

In response to a “Dotmocracy request” from our June 2011 gathering, Boards Meet Boards brought Tracy Smyth and Tammy Dewar of RTV Consulting to Duncan on October 15, 2011. Co-authors of **Raising the Village**, Tracy and Tammy led 29 participants from 11 agencies through an active exploration of the nature of collaboration skill-sets and perspectives. They introduced us to the SCARF model for looking at both collaboration-readiness and barrier identification in communities. This was an enjoyable and educational workshop which reminded us that a) there are multivariate factors to be considered in joint efforts and that b) even the best relationships require work and effective communication to thrive.

On 28 February 2012, 33 board directors and executive directors from 13 community service agencies gathered. It was our good fortune to have Doug Hayman, Secretariat for the Board Voice Society BC, once again in Duncan. Doug delivered an environmental scan of current trends affecting the Social Service sector. This insightful presentation can be found in the Boards Meet Boards section of the Volunteer Cowichan website.

Doug Orr, Executive Director of Clements Centre Society, then briefly reported on a memorandum of understanding that has been signed by five Cowichan Valley Boards which commits the

signatories to aggressively seek opportunities for co-operation and collaboration. Although this pilot project is early in its development, it was offered as an example of an attempt to translate need into action.

Leslie Welin, Board Voice director and local Boards Meet Boards lead, then hosted a Conversation Café among the 33 participants. Folks were asked to identify opportunities and issues in response to the following question: “Given that social innovation and collaboration are directions coming from the provincial and federal governments for social service agencies, what opportunities/issues come to mind for you, as a board director, in relation to the health and well-being of our community?”

Briefly, it seemed people were really interested in moving ahead with finding ways to collaborate and to address the complex issues that the community social services sector is facing; there was an expression of readiness to move forward with the development of a work plan. This task will form the primary agenda for the 5 June 2012 gathering of Boards Meet Boards.

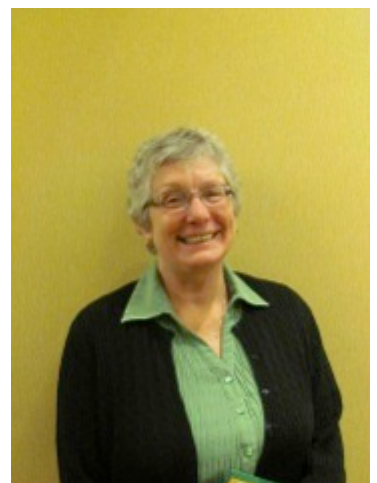
In the June conversation, we will attempt to narrow down specific areas in which different segments of the

community services sector can create realistic action plans based on community need, even while we continue to explore and refine our understanding of the nature and limits of our collective vision and will.

The organizing committee of Boards Meet Boards has expanded with three additional members, and is tasked to produce a few key statements about Boards Meet Boards.

We continue to believe that we are a non-partisan volunteer group which functions to convene conversations in and about the community services sector of the Cowichan Valley, and that we do this on behalf of the vulnerable in our community.

**Richard Neil, Cowichan Organizing Committee**



**Leslie Welin, chair of the Clements Centre Society and Board Voice board member.**

**We're On the Web at**  
**[www.boardvoice.ca](http://www.boardvoice.ca)**  
**and on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/boardvoicebc) at**  
**[@boardvoicebc](https://twitter.com/boardvoicebc)**

## Community Conversations Matter: Sunshine Coast

**“A Co-operative Approach to Social Care: A conversation that matters”** was hosted on April 18 by Sunshine Coast Community Services Society (SCCSS), a founding Board Voice member. Eighty local community leaders and service providers gathered and provided valuable input about pressing social issues and innovative approaches to address them. This event was made possible by contributions from Board Voice, the Sunshine Coast Credit Union, the Sunshine Coast Community Foundation, and the newly established Innovation Fund of SCCSS.

In seeking input for the society’s next five year strategic plan, the SCCSS Board engaged the community in a conversation about finding ways to deliver social care services in a more cooperative and effective way. Inspired by sessions at the November 2011 Board Voice Conference, the Board engaged John Restakis, Executive Director of the BC Co-operative Association to be the keynote speaker, to present his exciting and thought provoking “Co-ops and Social Care: A New Future for Community Agencies”.

The day also required a facilitator, one who understood social care and could engage participants with positive, focused topics and action planning. The Board, having attended the Board Voice conference session on

“Conversations that Matter” presented by Jennifer Charlesworth, Executive Director of the Federation of Community Social Services of B.C. knew she would be a perfect fit with her training in the Art of Hosting.

Invitations were sent to the local M.P., M.L.A., local elected government officials, RCMP, Vancouver Coastal Health, MCFD, School District and Community Schools, the Community Foundation, churches, and other non-profit agencies involved in social care services. The purpose of the day was to provide “an opportunity for the community to look at social services differently – a day to ask questions and have conversations about the changing needs of our communities and to imagine how new approaches can enrich the quality of care and the quality of life of our communities.”

On April 18, the Seaside Center was full to capacity. John’s keynote presentation kicked the day off with information on what’s changing in the social care paradigm, the emerging role of the social economy and ways in which agencies and communities must rethink their role, how we understand where social care needs will evolve next. He also seeded ideas of what some new approaches might be, such as cooperative models and user- centered systems.

Building on the excitement John generated, Jennifer created 12 groups with mixed representation, asking us to

remember our intention for the day - to put care at the center as we had conversations about the pressing social care needs on the Sunshine Coast. Ideas were generated and listed on flip charts.

When asked for observations about the table conversations, some of the comments were: “incredibly interesting conversation”, “total engagement of the group” and “we all had the same threads at our table even though we come from different parts of the social care network.” Over lunch there was a ‘dotmocracy’ vote, as participants placed dots on the flip charts to vote for what they perceived were high-priority social care needs.

After lunch the highest priority social care needs were revealed. These were: poverty, affordable housing, seniors care, skewed demographic profile, more integrated coordination of social care services, mental health, navigating the social system, transportation, community engagement, and food security/hunger. Participants then went to the issue table where they felt they had the most knowledge, passion, and ideas to contribute. The question to address was: “taking into account what you have learned today and what you know from your own experience, what are the possibilities for positive action in this area; to create a more caring and inclusive community?” At the end of

the conversations Jennifer asked each group to report on the three ideas that could most easily be applied.

In ending, individuals signed up for follow up groups for further discussion and planning to implement some of the generated ideas on the various issues. SCCSS will take a lead role in helping these groups organize a first meeting, will participate in the groups that fall within their vision and mission and will be integrating information learned throughout the day into their new strategic plan.

One week later the conversation is carrying on with lots of ideas incubating. A group to address senior care is planning a meeting, another group has committed to organize a meeting to address how to coordinate diverse services coast wide, and two social care agencies have a meeting to address how to better integrate and deliver some of their services more cooperatively.



**Gloria Lifton,  
President of SCCSS  
board and Board  
Voice member**

**John Restakis and the  
Sunshine Coast Group  
hard at work**



**The 4 Dimensions of Public Sector Innovation**

Christian Bason is one of the leading thinkers on public sector innovation and on ways of addressing vexing social challenges. Board Voice attended a session with him several months ago and see that his thinking could be an influence on Board Voice and other related groups and organizations including the Social Entrepreneurship Advisory Committee, The Vancouver Foundation, GNPI and the McConnell Foundation. So does Board Voice BC qualify as a public sector innovation? We believe so!

<p><b>The 4 Dimensions of Public Sector Innovation</b> (From Christian Bason)</p>	<p><b>Board Voice BC - Indicators</b></p>
<p>1. Create consciousness about what the innovation is and what it means to the organization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BV Board and membership will become informed about Social Innovation.</li> <li>• BV will promote the inclusion of community-based social services in the Social Innovation conversation at a community and provincial levels.</li> </ul>
<p>2. Building capacity to innovate, from political context and organizational structure to people and culture.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BV will lead and facilitate community-based conversations, including community-level shared training and application of collaboration skills.</li> <li>• BV will link the ED's and Boards at the community and provincial levels for collaboration.</li> </ul>
<p>3. Mastering a process of co-creating new solutions with people, not for them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans based on best practice.</li> <li>• Community conversations will be based on trust, openness, and increased collaborative skills.</li> </ul>
<p>4. Displaying courage at all levels of management to really lead innovation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement at both the community and provincial levels</li> <li>• Board Voice has been created and will be expanded.</li> <li>• Board voice is engaged in discussions with provincial policy and opinion makers</li> <li>• A provincial model has been developed and will be piloted, revised and expanded across the province and perhaps beyond.</li> </ul>

## Reaching Out Over Great Distances

Our annual conference in December included some energetic, focused discussion between members on topics important to their interest in Board Voice.

More than one Open Space discussion at the conference raised this question: how do we build our network, join with our neighbours, become a province-wide, community-driven organization of community social service boards, speaking together?

You, our member agencies, had some great ideas to make the step beyond the “one off” visits by the traveling president or other board members.

Consider some of your ideas:

- Uniqueness/conditions of each community/region means building methodically
- Problem with a lack of continuity - not following up on initial meetings.
- Utilize and get feedback on the organizing “kit” produced by Board Voice as a tool for building the organization across the province. Some people

weren’t aware of it.

- Need time to get out to Boards individually; it takes more than one visit.
- Need a longer-term perspective. Build relationships; face-to-face meetings.
- People need to better understand the value of membership – concretely.
- Technology also a possibility for education – webinars, etc.

What can I take from these comments?

- Our outreach has been largely opportunistic and dependent on local champions willing to step up and take leadership;
- We need more community Board Voice champions;
- Our outreach strategy needs to be more systematic, not ad hoc;
- Our outreach strategy needs to have worker support beyond a local point person;

- We need to consider how we can utilize technology more effectively;
- The Board Voice outreach strategy needs to be based on a series of two or more meetings held in a community in order to successfully have Board Voice understood and embraced.

Important strides have been taken in several communities (as other articles in this Newsletter will attest to); however, our current revenues are stretched and will not fund all of these strategies.

The good news is that those strategies are central to our imminent proposal to major funders.

**Dave Stigant, Board Chair**

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