



Policy Watch

WorkBC contracts and EHT are weighing heavy on our minds this month. Amid many concerns about **what the procurement process wrought** for 2019-24 employment training contracts, Board Voice met with Social Development Minister Shane Simpson and ADM Chris Brown to stress that BC is **throwing open the door to privatization of social care** by using procurement that ignores community connections and does not measure the added value that non-profits bring to this vital work.

BC's procurement services are undergoing "transformation" right now. Social benefit in procurement is one of the four goals. We must increase efforts to highlight the non-profit model as the gold standard for social benefit – born out of passion for community, guided by community volunteer boards, any profit going straight back into community services.

We will seek a meeting with Hon. Jinny Sims next, as she oversees procurement. In the meantime, please share with us any anecdotes about the impact of this procurement in your community.

The impact of **EHT** on our members above the \$1.5 million threshold will be wildly variable. Board Voice is writing a second letter to Finance Minister Carole James sharing some of these impacts, and our many concerns. We continue advocacy to have EHT covered in all government contracts.

What you need to know...

Speaking of WorkBC, the province recently announced **two job-training programs**, one for survivors of violence and abuse and another for workers ages 55+. Both are Skills Training for Employment (STE) programs, and among six STE programs for multi-barriered British Columbians in the works.

A **Call for Response** has been issued on BC Bid for the older-workers program and is open until Feb. 25. Hopeful service providers can send in up to three responses each, with services expected to begin this summer. **We've uploaded the CFR document here.** It has many details about both the older-adult program and STE goals overall. There are no other STE-related documents posted yet on BC Bid, but we'll keep you informed.

And please keep Board Voice informed if you see details in the CFR that feel unfriendly to community non-profits! Advocacy is most effective when we jump in at the earliest stages, not after contracts have already been awarded.

We're keeping an eye out for opportunities for the sector around strengthening community supports for people with addictions following **news of the province-wide expansion** of a pilot program through the BC Centre for Excellence in

HIV/AIDS and Vancouver Coastal Health. The pilot at 17 Vancouver-area health clinics found 70 per cent of the 1,100 people being treated for opiate/fentanyl addictions stayed in treatment past three months when simple strategies - calling people who missed their appointments, helping people find housing and work - were part of the treatment plan. That's a big improvement over previous success rates of 30 per cent.

With any contract valued above \$75,000 generally put out to bid in BC and \$7 billion in bids posted every year, how the government structures procurement really matters. **A new BC Bid "concierge" program** was announced this week inviting businesses to get involved in shaping programs before the bid stage. That's something our sector has talked about for years as experts in social services. A lack of reference to community non-profits in the release is unsettling. We'll be bringing this one up when we meet with Minister Sims.

Let's connect! Look for Board Voice on these social media platforms:



Queries, questions, concerns, ideas:

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