



Policy Watch

Weekly calls with the Social Services Roundtable will continue for at least the next two months. While the pandemic continues to be the dominant topic, we are starting to see other pressing issues for our sector coming up in those calls. Board Voice is on every call, so keep us informed on issues in your community and organization that should be brought to that table, which brings together several social ministries, public health officials, and six umbrella groups representing our sector.

Agencies with performance-based WorkBC contracts are on monthly calls with the Social Development Ministry on how best to satisfy their contracts. Contracted agencies are receiving amounts equivalent to their 2019-20 billings as well as a top-up, and have been told things will remain that way for up to six months.

A major challenge remains how to serve clients unable to access what are now virtual services.

This letter from Vantage Point to the City of Vancouver highlights the challenges facing our sector. But the way forward needn't be a redo of the things we already know weren't working. How can we turn the hard lessons of the coronavirus into new approaches?

What you need to know...

If you missed our executive director Jody Paterson's opinion piece this week on our vital but too often invisible sector, [here it is in the Victoria Times Colonist](#). We'll follow up soon with another on economic recovery for our sector – a major concern.

Will grantors reduce their spending? What to do about the impact on fee-for-service programs? What happens to WorkBC payments if nobody can find jobs? How will organizations dependent on event-based fundraising get by in a period where no events can be held? What will happen to our work force?

The new BC Economic Recovery Task Force has a big job ahead. Rick FitzZaland, CEO of the Federation of Community Social Services, is on that task force. He has asked us to keep him informed as to what needs be on that table, so please ponder what the premier needs to know to help our sector recover. Here's what Board Voice has sent to Rick so far:

- COVID highlighted the challenges of no provincial plan for thousands of vital services. We badly need a strategic plan for coordinated and sustained social services.
- We must address wages and sick benefits for workers across the sector.

The single-site directive revealed just how many workers are having to string together a living wage.

- Please recognize the personal nature of so much of the work we do. We need PPEs too!
- The "temporary" fixes we're seeing now are the permanent ones we've needed for years – higher income assistance rates, rent subsidies, emergency housing, prescriptions for people with chronic addictions, etc.
- When we go "virtual," we exclude people who don't have access, language skills, etc. What's the plan for them?
- Non-profits can't access temporary funds in an emergency – no credit cards, loans, cash in the bank, etc. We need a recovery fund.
- Let's extract the lessons here – innovation, lucky breaks, disasters, emerging practices. This is a real opportunity to rethink and improve upon the work that we do.

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



Queries, questions, concerns, ideas:

Jody Paterson, ED
jpaterson@boardvoice.ca