

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Poll shows strong public support for community social services

A new poll confirming British Columbians' support for restoring funding to community social services is welcome news to a sector that has endured significant cuts and reductions during the economic downturn.

Sixty-five per cent of British Columbians surveyed in a recent poll agree that current funding levels are too low for community social services such as daycare; seniors' care; employment services; supports to families and children; help for vulnerable populations; and residential care.

Almost 90 per cent agree that community social services make their communities a safer, better place to live, and that such preventive services reduce the cost and societal burden of family breakdown and crisis intervention down the line.

"It's great to see that British Columbians really recognize what's important about social services," says Doug Hayman of the Federation of Community Social Services and Board Voice Society of B.C. "There's a tendency sometimes to see these services as frills - supports that are nice to have when times are good, but not essential. That couldn't be farther from the truth. And it's pretty clear from these poll findings that British Columbians know that."

The Angus Reid poll was conducted in August on behalf of an affiliation of 40 B.C. provincial organizations involved in the provision of community social services.

"We work in this sector, and we see first-hand the difference that comprehensive community-based social services make in people's lives, especially during difficult economic times," says Shabna Ali, Executive Director of the B.C. Society of Transition Houses. "These poll results show us that British Columbians get that as well. Any further cuts to social services will put community health even more at risk, now and long into the future."

A number of community social services organizations will present the poll results in presentations to government, including the Select Standing Committee on Finance on tour in B.C. right now. One in three British Columbians will use community social services in their lifetime, but services and access in the province have been eroded through a decade of reduced funding, increased demand and the unintended consequences of policy changes.

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Contact:

Doug Hayman, doug@fcssbc.ca , 250 480 7387

Shabna Ali, shabna@bcsth.ca, 604.724.4636

Glenn Hope, glennh@bccf.ca , (604) 678-8884 #226

Key Findings - B.C. Community Services research

- British Columbians believe the current level of funding for community social services is too low. Almost two in three respondents (65%) stated that the level of funding is too low.
- Only 7% believe the current level of funding is too high
- Three out of four respondents (75%) believe that in tough times, government cuts to these services hurt people now and into the future, where missed opportunities for prevention end up as costly crisis interventions
- Only 15% believe that in tough times, government should reduce its deficit by doing things like cutting community social services.
- Most respondents believe they would either have a short wait (two-in-five) or a long wait (almost half) for service, if they or a member of their family needed support. More than one in twenty (7%) do not think they would get the service at all.
- 87% agreed with the following statement: *Community social services like mental health services, support for seniors, and drug and alcohol counselling make our communities safer and better places to live. My community will be less safe and orderly without those services.*
- That same percentage (87%) agreed that it's smarter and more economical to tackle social problems early, and that spending on community social services now results in spending less in the future on policing, jails and hospital care.
- 85% of British Columbia residents consider community social services to be important.

Polling details

- Conducted in British Columbia on Aug. 24-25, 2010, by Angus Reid Public Opinion and NOW Communications on behalf of the Provincial Roundtable
- 804 adults responded
- Margin of error: plus or minus 3.5 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

Sponsors

An affiliation of up to 40 provincial agencies and umbrella organizations has been meeting over the past 18 months as the Roundtable of Provincial Social Services Organizations. The overarching objective of the group is to enhance the capacity of the social services sector in BC to support individuals, families and communities in tough times through collaborating effectively on common goals.

Representative Members Affiliated with the Roundtable of Provincial Social Services Organizations

B.C. Society of Transition Houses - Representing over 220 agencies that provide service to women, youth and children fleeing violence. Contact: Shabna Ali, 604.669.6943

Federation of Community Social Services of B.C. – Representing 126 multi service agencies. Contact: Jennifer Charlesworth 250 480 7387

United Community Services Co-op – Representing 112 member agencies cooperating to provide business and consulting services to non profit agencies. Contact: Tim Beachy 604 718 8292

Ending Violence Association of BC - Representing 240 programs across BC that respond to domestic and sexual violence and child abuse. Contact: Tracy Porteous 604-633-2506, ext. 11

B.C. Council for Families – Providing parent and family support across the province. Contact: Glenn Hope 604 678 8884

BC Association of Social Workers – Representing 1200 social work professionals. Contact: Linda Korbin T 604 730.9111 Toll free in BC 1 800 665 4747

Board Voice Society of B.C. – Representing 45 boards of directors of social services agencies Contact: Doug Hayman, 250 480 7387

Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies - Representing 80 immigrant and multiculturalism service agencies around BC. Contact: Timothy Welsh, 604 718-2782

ASPECT – Representing 175 agencies providing community based trainers and employment services. Contact: Norma Strachan 250 382 9675 ext: 225

Vantage Point – Coordinating professional development for non profits. Contact: Colleen Kelly 604.637.8291

Association of Neighbourhood Houses of BC – Representing 1250 members and eight Neighbourhood Houses. Contact: Mamie Hutt-Temoana, 604-875-9111 Ext.107

BC Coalition of People with Disabilities - A cross-disability organization serving the province of BC. Contact: Jane Dyson, 604-875-0188.

BC Association for Community Living – Representing 72 agencies which enhance the lives of children, youth and adults with developmental disabilities and their families. Contact: Faith Bodner, Tel. 604 777 9100 | Toll-free. 1 800 618 1119

B.C. Non-Profit Housing Association – A provincial umbrella organization for non-profit housing societies which offer over 50,000 units of long-term affordable non-market housing for British Columbians in need. Contact: Karen Stone, 604 291 2600

Association for Community Education of BC - promotes Community Education and supports the work of nearly 100 Community Schools, within 26 School Districts throughout B.C. Contact: Bill Preston (250) 752-8486