

**Shane Simpson, MLA**

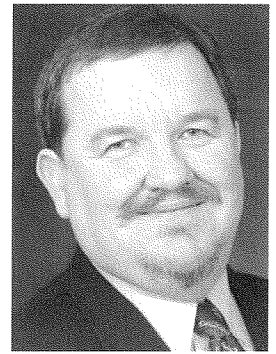
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**Province of  
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Legislative Assembly

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Shane Simpson, MLA  
(Vancouver-Hastings)

August 10, 2010

Honourable Rich Coleman  
Minister of Housing and Social Development  
Room 128, Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Coleman:

I am writing to raise serious concerns about the actions Community Living BC is undertaking in an attempt to meet your direction to find \$22 million in budget savings. As we discussed in the Estimates process, these attempts to find savings appear to be focused on reductions in the number of staffed group homes in British Columbia.

In my discussions with families and agencies, it has become clear that cost savings have been pursued in a manner that is totally inconsistent with the commitment you made during Estimates, when you affirmed that no one would be moved from a staffed group home situation without the consent of their family or guardian. It is now clear that, in some instances, assessments are being done without any prior discussion with the family. Further, there is some question as to how collaborative the discussions are with agency staff on this matter. From my discussions with families, it appears the assessments specifically exclude any review of the group home resident's history or projections on their future condition or care requirements. Rather, the assessment considers only an individual's current situation. As you are aware, the circumstances of these individuals, and their conditions and resource needs, are not static. Where is the due diligence in doing an assessment without consideration of future needs?

Frankly Minister, CLBC's failure to ensure that the families or guardians of group home residents are a full partner in the assessment is a breach of trust. Further, it is inconceivable that a competent assessment can be concluded without examining a resident's history and an informed determination of what their needs will be in the future years before these types of changes are foisted on a family.

I support a review to look for further efficiencies in the system. I am also sure there are circumstances where a shift from a staffed group home to home-sharing makes sense. However, this needs to be done in a manner that puts the interests of the service consumer and their medical and quality of life needs first. Financial savings simply cannot be the first priority, which appears to be the situation here.

During estimates you stated, "There is no movement to say we're closing group homes." You also stated, "We don't do forced moves." Yet it is clear from reports across the province that both of these things are now occurring in British Columbia. Further, it is being done with little consultation with families. This breaches a further commitment you made that any changes would follow extensive consultation with families.

It has become evident that in an attempt to fulfill your direction to find \$22 million in savings, CLBC has initiated a strategy that breaches your commitment in the Estimates process. This is particularly troubling when we are talking about some of British Columbia's most vulnerable citizens.

In the interests of CLBC families and service consumers, it is urgent that you either direct CLBC to halt their current efforts and proceed with a truly consultative process, one that fully involves families and agencies and puts the needs of the participants with developmental disabilities first, or confirm that the commitments you made in the Estimates process no longer stand.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shane Simpson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Shane Simpson, MLA  
(Vancouver-Hastings)