



For immediate release  
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## **BCGEU calls on Children and Family Development Minister to rescind closure of Victoria home for special needs children**

The B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU) has reacted with shock to the news that Community Living British Columbia (CLBC), an agency responsible to the Minister of Children and Family Development (MCFD), Tom Christensen, has ordered the closure of Corner House, a unique respite care resource located in Victoria.

Corner House supports families by providing short-term, 24-hour care to children with developmental disabilities. Parents and caregivers who depend on this service say it gives them a break, time for themselves and much-needed relief from the responsibilities and demands of caring for children with complex needs.

"I think it is outrageous that at the same time that Tom Christensen brags that budget allocations for his ministry have never been higher, his representatives at CLBC are closing needed services for vulnerable kids by pleading poverty," said George Heyman, BCGEU president. "The minister may not know what is going on in his own ministry. In either case Christenson should reverse this ill-conceived closure immediately."

Last week, with no prior notice, CLBC served 60-day notice on this long-standing and well-respected resource operated by Moncrieff Enterprises Ltd., who have provided care to special needs children for nearly 20 years. Ongoing budget problems at CLBC have been given as the reason for this closure.

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth, issued a highly critical report on Feb. 26 slamming the Liberals for creating a complex and fragmented service delivery system for children and youth with special needs. The representative also noted that support services, such as those provided by Corner House, are often lacking for parents who require or desire assistance.

News reports today also indicate CLBC is cutting the funding to Burnaby facility—L'Arche Greater Vancouver—that cares for developmentally disabled adults. While the BCGEU does not represent workers at L'Arche, the concerns about funding cuts by CLBC are the same as Corner House.

"There are indications that CLBC has gone off the rails and the minister needs to act now to straighten out the growing problems at the organization," said Heyman.

Seventeen BCGEU members who work at Corner House will be impacted by this closure. Parents of the children served by the resource will be forced to make alternate arrangements for their children in an environment where there are huge waitlists for the few services available.

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