

A message from
Honourable
Shane Simpson
Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction



Social Services Sector Roundtable COVID-19 Communique May 26, 2020

ATTENDING MEMBERS:

Minister Shane Simpson (Chair)
BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres
BC CEO Network
BC Government and Service Employees' Union
Board Voice Society of BC
Canadian Union of Public Employees
Community Social Services Employers Association of BC
Ending Violence Association of BC
Federation of Community Social Services of BC
Provincial Association of Residential & Community Agencies
Community Living BC
Ministry of Children and Family Development
Ministry of Health
Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
Public Sector Employers' Council Secretariat

Messages from Minister Simpson and SSS Roundtable Members

- Minister Simpson recommended that the roundtable start refocusing the discussions on topics that were on the table prior to the onset of COVID-19.
- David Galbraith also talked about shifting the focus of future meetings. He thanked Dr. Behn Smith for attending all the calls and raising issues of concerns expressed by the Roundtable with the Office of the Provincial Health Officer. Other members also expressed their appreciation for Dr. Behn Smith's participation on the calls.

Instead of providing a health update at each meeting, Dr. Behn Smith will participate in future meetings by invitation as needed.

Temporary Pandemic Pay

- Christina Zacharuk from PSEC provided an update and said that PSEC is working through a number of questions that they received.
- PSEC is working with SDPR, MCFD, PSSG and CLBC on how to flow the funding. More information will be shared when it is ready.

Funding – post May 31st

- In light of COVID-19, government committed to maintaining status quo funding to SSS agencies through to May 31. Funding ministries provided a brief update on their approach post-May 31:
 - As June approaches, MCFD is working with contract managers to develop approach to working with agencies. Given that there are hundreds of contract managers, MCFD is looking to build a standard approach.
 - Likewise, CLBC and PSSG are also working closely with service providers.

CSSS HS Council

- Gentil Mateus of CSSEA spoke to the Health and Safety Council and how it came to be established five years ago to fill a gap. Given the smaller size of many agencies, they didn't have enough resources to have their own dedicated health and safety specialists.
- CSSEA, the Federation of Community Social Services and the union engaged with WorkSafeBC to receive funding for a four-year pilot project. About 30 agencies participated, resulting in 12 recommendations. It was recognized that the work needed to continue. The Health & Safety Council was formed with representatives of union and non-union employers, as well as representatives from the union bargaining association and one additional representative from WorkSafeBC. The membership represents the diversity of the community social services sector.
- The council has a budget of \$400,000 funded by a two-cent levy on all members.
- The council can be a good avenue to connect with the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, WorkSafeBC and agencies.

WorkSafeBC guidelines

- WorkSafeBC will be developing guidelines for the community social services sector. David Galbraith has asked Jonathan Dubé to be the liaison between WorkSafeBC and the Roundtable. More information will be shared as it comes available.
- The CSSS Health & Safety Council is also working with WorkSafeBC on this.

Procurement Working Group

- Rob Byers from MCFD noted that since his presentation of the EY findings to the Roundtable in February, the [final report](#) has been released. Rob indicated that Roundtable members had reached out to him to volunteer to be involved in the procurement working group.

- He said a new executive director has been hired to lead the procurement project. They will be developing a pilot project to look at ways to streamline procurement and remove administrative burden from the ministry and services providers.
- The procurement working group will be re-established, supported by the new executive director.

Sectoral Human Resources Strategy Working Group

- Robert Pauliszyn from PSEC noted that work on a sector-wide human resources strategy was on hold during phase 1 of the pandemic.
 - Robert highlighted the need to set up a working group specific to this project to start to develop the concepts in more depth. There are various components to consider, e.g., policies, sharing information and data, consider information on operations, credentials, centralized recruitment, and a sectoral compensation plan.
 - He noted that there were examples of sectoral compensation plans that are in use in the health and education sectors which have elements that can be adapted for the social services sector.
 - Pre-pandemic, there was a recruitment and retention working group. However, members noted that recruitment and retention is just one element of a human resources strategy, so a new working group will need to be established.
 - David Galbraith mentioned that additional resources to be provided to PSEC will help support this work proceeding.
 - Robert Pauliszyn will compile information on next steps in developing a human resources strategy.
- David Galbraith indicated that the Procurement Working Group and the Sector HR Strategy Working Group will be added to the agenda as standing items for future meetings. Rob and Robert agree to provide an update at the next meeting.
- There was discussion about sector stakeholders whose issues are not represented on the Roundtable. Rick FitzZaland of the Federation indicated that more members had been added to the reference group. Roundtable members were invited to contact Rick if they think there are others who should be a part of that reference group.

Provincial Health Officer (PHO) Update

- Dr. Behn Smith expressed appreciation for being able to participate on the SSSRT calls and provide support.
- Google mobility data is showing increases in visits to parks and in visits to grocery stores and drug stores.
- She noted that testing capacity has increased; people are encouraged to get tested if they are showing symptoms.
- People are also encouraged to stay home if they are not feeling well.
- In response to questions about the use of public transit, Dr. Behn Smith indicated that both [BC Transit](#) and [Translink](#) have COVID-19 safety plans which they have posted on their websites.

- She also noted that people who are relatively healthy and under the age of 65 are at lower risk from COVID-19.

Key Information

Canada's Public Health Agency of Canada recommends the use of non-medical masks when physical distancing guidelines cannot be met: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/about-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html>

[WorkSafeBC: selecting and using masks](#) released May 15.

The [updated family and visitor policy](#) with clearer and stronger language that addresses concerns expressed by people with disabilities and their families and caregivers was released May 19.

[WorkSafeBC released sector-specific guidance](#) with regard to re-opening on May 15.

Link to May 4th presentation, COVID-19: Going Forward

https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Covid-19_May4_PPP.pdf

Link to testing guidelines: http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Statistics%20and%20Research/Statistics%20and%20Reports/Epid/Influenza%20and%20Respiratory/ERV/BCCDC_PHL_Updated_nCoV_Lab_Guidance.pdf

Interim Guidance to Social Services: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-guidance-social-service-providers.pdf>

The B.C. government website contains links to important health information as well as non-health-related information: www.gov.bc.ca/covid-19

Appendix 1 SSSR Members' Questions

May 26

PARCA

PARCA held a ZOOM board meeting last week, and some questions came up to which we did not seem to have conclusive answers:

1. Is there any formal, consistent guidance regarding the use of ZOOM? Some organizations are using Doxy for counselling, which is reported to be PIPA compliant.

A: Christina Zacharuk said that no confidential or personal information should be shared on ZOOM calls, given that information and data exchanged on ZOOM can be stored outside of Canada and subject to laws in other jurisdictions. . MCFD noted that it does not use zoom for some of its interactions given privacy concerns.

The Ministry of Citizens' Services has a [website](#) about digital communication platforms, which also includes a link to a ministerial order and guidance that provides exemptions from the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* until June 30, to allow the use of technology that may store information outside of Canada.

2. How do we figure out if and how the Lobbying Act applies to us? Does it apply to the SSSRT process? Does it apply to ongoing liaison meetings between federations like PARCA and Ministries?

A: Information about recent amendments to the Lobbyists' Transparency Act are available online at: <https://www.lobbyistsregistrar.bc.ca/> and infographic: <https://www.lobbyistsregistrar.bc.ca/handlers/DocumentHandler.ashx?DocumentID=347>