

March 12, 2008

Premier Ed Stelmach
307 Legislature Building
10800 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Premier Stelmach:

On behalf of *Who Cares Alberta*, a coalition of provincial associations representing human services agencies providing services to women, children, families and persons with disabilities, I am pleased to congratulate you on the results of the recent election.

During the election, your campaign stated that you would personally meet with representatives of the *Who Cares* coalition to discuss the sector-wide staffing crisis faced by our associations. We would be pleased to attend such a meeting before the next session of the Legislature, as budget decisions are being made and department priorities are being set for the upcoming term. If convenient to your schedule, we would like to request your availability for a meeting on any date between April 7 and April 18, 2008.

At current funding levels, human services contract agencies are unable to offer competitive wages to recruit or retain qualified staff, with the result that agencies are forced to limit services, compromise quality, or restrict access for vulnerable Albertans. A recent survey of member agencies of the Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families (AASCF) indicated a staff turnover rate of 19% in just six months. It is simply impossible to provide the level of service needed by our most vulnerable citizens under these conditions.

Unless agencies are able to offer competitive wages, service levels will continue to suffer. The Alberta Council of Disability Services (ACDS) recently completed a review of compensation for six benchmark positions, using government-approved HayGroup evaluation methodology. Results indicate that the ACDS workforce is paid 33% less than comparable jobs across multiple sectors.

This crisis demands a long-term solution, but some immediate steps can be taken to narrow the considerable gap between wages offered by agencies and those offered by government for the same positions. We would like to discuss with you several immediate requirements:

- An immediate funding increase of 20% is required in order to allow agencies to maintain staffing levels required to sustain a minimum level of basic service. This increase would not achieve competitive wage balance, but would mitigate the immediate crisis.
- In order to develop a three year sustainability plan, one of the first steps is the creation of a position evaluation, classification and compensation system. This could be similar to the review carried out by the HaysGroup for ACDS and should be carried out for all branches of the human services sector, in order to provide a suitable basis of comparison

to use in defining necessary competitive wages for the sector. To be truly reflective of the situation, such a review should include comparisons of benefits and pensions as well as wages. Our provincial associations do not have the resources or capacity to undertake a comprehensive comparison, and would require either departmental or funding support.

The provincial associations represented by *Who Cares* look forward to forging a long-term collaborative relationship with your government to keep services for vulnerable Albertans sustainable and accessible and to develop an inclusive three-year social infrastructure plan. We appreciate your commitment to working with our sector, and look forward to meeting when your schedule permits. To schedule a meeting with the Who Cares Alberta coalition, please contact my office at (403) 250-9495 extension 239 and speak with Alison Long.

Sincerely,



Ann Nicol
Alberta Council of Disability Services

On behalf of the *Who Cares Alberta* coalition, which includes:

Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families
Alberta Council of Women's Shelters
Alberta College of Social Workers
Alberta Council of Disability Services
Alberta Community Council on HIV
Alberta Home Visitation Network Association
Boys and Girls Clubs of Alberta
Child and Youth Care Association of Alberta
Public Interest Alberta