

Dear Caregivers

A lot has happened since my election to President in May of this year. Willy Neal, our new Vice President, and I have attended several meetings with both Min. Stan Hagen and Min. Tom Christensen around issues related to the strengthening of the Foster Care System. As a result of these meetings, the Federation has developed collaborative relationships with various community groups including the BC Lions, Vancouver Canucks, and Science World. Both the Lions and the Canucks will be working with the BCFFPA to develop Public Service Announcements and short videos to aid in retention and recruitment of Foster Homes. There is also discussion taking place around the Duke of Edinburgh awards and various provincial discounts for foster parents, which may be brought about by MCFD.

The Provincial Education, Recruitment, and Retention Committees were developed out of the Caregiver Support System Framework Provincial Forum held in May. Several meetings have taken place with regard to these committees since that time. The Education Committee is looking at ways to rework the Foster Parent Education Program, to bring it up to date and make it more relevant to the current needs of Foster Parents. The Retention Committee is looking at ways of retaining the valuable resources the Ministry currently has, and bettering the system for both Foster Parents and the children and youth they care for. You may expect to be invited to be part of one of the working groups stemming from this provincial committee. These working groups will be looking at various issues which may include, protocols, respite, partnerships, inclusiveness, and levels of care to name a few. The BCFFPA has representation on these three committees, and continues to work closely with MCFD and agencies to address the issues that arose out of the original forum.

The Caregiver Support Service Standards has been worked on jointly with MCFD and was released in the fall of 2006. The BCFFPA provided input into this document in the areas of Insurance deductibles, FCHA 60 notification, Cultural requirements to name a few, as the document is shared within the regions, other changes/amendment will undoubtedly occur.

The Federation continues to work on the development of a position paper justifying increases in maintenance and service payments for caregivers as well as the further development of the Rights of Foster Parents draft legislation. The Federation also has representation on both the Youth Transitioning Committee, and the LEAP BC Provincial Working Group which has come out of the Legacies Now Funding as a result of the 2010 Olympics.

In closing I would like to share the following thoughts: I love the brilliant splendor of the Christmas season. No child should be without family during this special time. By opening your homes, you extend that special love and affection to children in need, helping them make new heart warming memories. Many of you have stories that would qualify for one of those Hallmark programs. Let us take time to pause in the midst of the twinkling lights and decorations to reflect on our many blessings.

Wishing you and yours a peaceful and memorable Merry Christmas.

Melanie Filiatrault, President.