

**BC ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 17, 2016**

BC Budget 2016 Fails Children and Families

Vancouver, BC - For the one in five children living in poverty in British Columbia, there was little in Finance Minister Mike de Jong's Budget 2016.

"Social workers across this province work with some of the most disadvantaged citizens" said BCASW President Michael Crawford. "Our hope was that BC Budget 2016 would make their lives easier and give them a chance to participate fully in their communities."

The BC Liberals increased disability benefits although much of that increase simply replaces transportation subsidies; giving with one hand and taking away with the other. General income assistance rates remain frozen for the ninth consecutive year.

Reduced services by the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation due to inadequate staffing and reduced hours of public operation in rural communities, makes life difficult for the most vulnerable of those experiencing poverty. It is particularly punitive to those who cannot afford telephones and computers or those who do not have the skills to function online.

"We were looking for a number of opportunities for families in this budget set within an overall strategy of poverty reduction" said Crawford. "Sadly, BC continues to be the only province without a poverty reduction plan."

Typically poverty reduction plans include increased minimum wage, innovations and investment in housing for low income renters, affordable child care, progressive taxation, and increased income assistance rates.

"It was good to see some increased spending for the Ministry of Children and Family Development and especially a commitment to hiring more social workers" said Carol Ross, BCASW's spokesperson on child welfare. "There are many good recommendations in the recent report on the Ministry by former Deputy Minister Bob Plecas that we were hoping to see specific funding for in the budget."

The Plecas report noted that over the past four years, the proportion of the Ministry's budget dedicated to child protection has decreased in real terms.

BCASW has actively supported child welfare social workers, recognizing the importance of increased staffing, ongoing professional development, fair and constructive performance evaluation, access to clinical supervision, and registration with the BC College of Social Workers.

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