

## PCFSA's Centre for Wellbeing introduced in BC Legislature

PCFSA's new Centre for Wellbeing for the community was introduced to the BC Legislature on April 28th 2016 by MLA Maurine Karagianis.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1i3ltzs23g&feature=youtu.be>

### **Comment: These cuts will drive up health costs** **By Jody Paterson, Special to Times Colonist March 12, 2010**

The funny thing about the current government is that I often agree with what they say. It's what they do that makes me crazy. For instance, here's the premier in an interview with the Times Colonist last week: "I think it's really important for people to understand that the costs of our health-care system are staggering, frankly."

Indeed. Health eats up 42 cents of every dollar the government spends. Premier, you'll get no argument from me on that.

But on the very day that Gordon Campbell was saying that, his government was preparing to eliminate birth-control options for women and men living in poverty, who will soon lose access to IUDs and condoms. It was taking away \$50 glucometers from people on income assistance who have diabetes, needed to measure their blood sugar every day. It was cancelling funding for a little plastic adapter that makes it easier for people with asthma to use their inhalers.

And I'm left to wonder: Hey, guys, what the heck are you thinking? And how on Earth did your talk ever come to be quite so far away from your walk? "Who did they consult? Certainly not a doctor I could ever imagine," says Dr. Danica Gleave, a Cool Aid Health Centre physician who predicts dire repercussions from the health cuts to people on income assistance. "It just baffles me. These are people who have no backup, no other resources."

Looks like they didn't fly the plan past the provincial health officer, either. Asked this week about the cuts, Dr. Perry Kendall wondered whether a cost-benefit analysis had been done. "The impact should be monitored, as this may turn out to be counterproductive to health and budgets in the longer run," he noted.

Hopefully a journalism teacher has latched onto the press release announcing the cuts. It's a fine example of modern-day propaganda. (As was Budget 2010; there must be a new communications mandate that all bad things are to be restated as good.)

The headline: "Province protects services for low-income clients." The opening paragraph: Changes will be implemented "in a manner that is fair to all British Columbians and supports children and families." The cuts to birth control, glucometers and asthma adapters are needed to "ensure these programs will be available to meet the most medically essential needs of clients."

Well, except for impoverished people in their fertile years, diabetics and asthmatics. And the ones who no longer qualify for "ready-made" orthotics -- insoles, braces and the like, which have also been cut. Oh, and the ones with HIV, hanging onto their health with the help of \$20 worth of bottled water every month.

Doctors at the Cool Aid centre typically prescribe IUDs to at least a dozen women on income assistance a week, says Gleave.

"We see all kinds of women who benefit from an IUD -- sex workers, people with developmental disabilities, people who have behavioural issues that make it hard for them to be compliant with taking a pill every day. These cuts are being made on the backs of the most vulnerable people," she says.

"The cuts will result in an increased number of unwanted pregnancies. It will increase emergency-room visits for people with asthma. Every diabetic needs to have a glucometer -- it's a huge safety issue for insulin-dependent people. We're robbing Peter to pay Paul."

There are no savings to be had by denying access to IUDs, says Island Sexual Health executive director Bobbi Turner.

"The IUD is the most cost-effective form of birth control out there. Something like the Copper T costs \$60 and lasts three to five years," says Turner.

"IUDs are not part of the 'compassion program' that drug companies have to provide free birth-control pills to these women, so this change cuts off a really effective form of birth control."

I tried to get Health Minister Kevin Falcon to talk to me about this, because it's obvious that the cuts in Rich Coleman's Ministry of Housing and Social Development will increase health costs almost immediately. But it appears the government doesn't like to talk about such things, because I just ended up routed back to the housing ministry communications staff.

Maybe I should try for Mary Polak over at the Ministry of Children and Family Development. The cuts ultimately mean more kids in care for the women who end up pregnant. But she's probably too distracted right now, what with the \$12.3 million in community cuts already going on for non-aboriginal children and families served by her ministry.

Or maybe just straight to the top. Premier, do you really want to get a handle on health-care spending? You have to know you're never going to get there this way.

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