



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

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September 29, 2006

Via Email

Claude Richmond
Minister of Employment and Income Assistance
Room 133
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC
V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Richmond,

Re: Raise Welfare Rates

On behalf of the 42,000 members of the Hospital Employees' Union, I call on you to immediately take action to raise income assistance rates by at least fifty percent. Welfare rates have not been raised in over twelve years. Welfare payments, which were punitively low to begin with, have lost thirty percent of their purchasing power due to inflation.

Single 'employable' adults aged 18-64 receive a benefit rate of \$510. This amounts includes \$325 for shelter and \$185 for living expenses, which is slightly more than \$6 a day. Perhaps you should consider whether \$6 would cover your current daily living expenses.

Inadequate welfare rates exacerbate homelessness, hunger and unequal access to public services such as health care. Poor women are often unable to escape male violence because they are unable to financially support themselves and their children on welfare. Malnutrition and sub-standard housing cause expensive health problems that burden our health system and further marginalize poor people in our province. The human costs of low welfare rates cannot be ignored, and action is needed now.

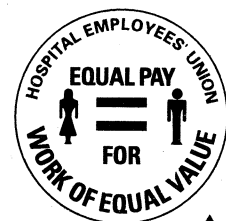
We also call on you to take action to:

- End the barriers to welfare so that people in need will not become homeless
- Allow everyone on income assistance to keep the first \$500 a month that they earn
- Raise the minimum wage to at least \$10 an hour now; and end the \$6 an hour training wage.

I look forward to hearing of progress in addressing this shameful inequality in our province.

Sincerely,

Fred Muzin
President



cc: PE
Political Action Committee
Raise the Rates Coalition
Jagrup Brar
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