



Community-based
Social Service Workers

What you can do
to help return us to
funding adequate care
for the most vulnerable
among us.

ORDER more leaflets! Make sure your co-workers, clients and government representatives know about the funding plight of community-based social services. Contact national@nupge.ca to order copies today, or get a paperless version of the leaflet at www.nupge.ca.

WRITE your Member of Parliament to tell them that community-based social services have been forgotten and need re-investment. A listing of MPs across the country can be found at webinfo.parl.gc.ca.

WRITE your Provincial and Municipal representatives to let them know that they too have a responsibility to provide sustainable funding to community-based social services. Strong social services will provide quality jobs and quality care for those most in need.



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**NATIONAL UNION OF PUBLIC
AND GENERAL EMPLOYEES**

- B. C. Government and Service Employees' Union
- Health Sciences Association of British Columbia
- Health Sciences Association of Alberta
- Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union
- Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union
- Ontario Public Service Employees Union
- Canadian Union of Brewery and General Workers
- New Brunswick Union of Public and Private Employees
- Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union
- PEI Union of Public Sector Employees
- Newfoundland & Labrador Association of Public and Private Employees

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The National Union of Public and General Employees is an affiliate of the Canadian Labour Congress and a member of the Public Services International



No way
to show
we care

*Renewed
funding for
community-
based social
services*



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Social Service Workers



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COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS

GROUP HOMES WOMEN'S SERVICES ADULT MENTAL HEALTH
CHILDREN'S TREATMENT SERVICES DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

The crisis in community-based social services is real. The services have been starved of billions of dollars over the last 12 years, while the demand for comprehensive social services keeps right on increasing. Workers in this sector continue to pay a huge price for this massive withdrawal of funding.

There is a growing demand for more services, but shortfalls in funding mean fewer services and understaffing. Low wages mean that recruiting and retention of workers is difficult. Workers are greatly undervalued in an economic sense, but what they do matters to people they support, to their families and the community. The difference these workers make in people's lives is immeasurable but the conditions in which they work are becoming increasingly intolerable.

It's time that governments face up to this reality and commit to reinvest in our capacity to care.

The CAP Promise: Providing for the most vulnerable

The shift from charity to state-provided social services was an important one. It turned the responsibility for providing support to the most vulnerable in Canadian society from a voluntary act to a shared commitment by all citizens. It transformed recipients of services from "charity cases" to citizens who had a right to assistance.

One of the most important social policy instruments in Canada's history was the establishment of the Canada Assistance Program (CAP). As a federal funding program, CAP created a system of legislated standards and accountability through a cost-sharing agreement with the provinces.

Under CAP, every dollar that a province spent on a social program was matched by the federal government. CAP provided the basis for a major growth in the sector in the late 1960s and throughout the 70s and 80s.

Block Funding: Forcing social services out into the cold

Unfortunately, the Chrétien government turned away from the cost-sharing arrangement provided by CAP to block funding under the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST). Transfer payments underwent a massive cut in the 1995-96 federal budget.

Many provinces, for political reasons, chose to follow suit and cut their funding for social programs. Other provinces faced serious financial hardship and reluctantly had to make cuts to the sector or offloaded social services to municipalities.

Municipalities, faced with funding cuts from the province, responded by reorganizing the social services they deliver. Often it has fallen to community agencies and, ultimately, to individuals and families to pick up the pieces.

The impact of changes to federal / provincial funding arrangements that were made in 1996 ended the federal government's commitment to share equally with the provinces the costs of providing social services. It also eliminated national standards and accountability in the provision of programs.

The solution to the crisis in community-based social services is equally real. It will have two main parts.

1. Build a national framework for funding to include:

- Establishing a separate federal Social Service Transfer to renew and strengthen Canada's social safety net with clearly demarcated funding mechanisms for social services in combination with social assistance.
- Ensuring a predictable federal funding formula that provides sufficient, stable and sustainable funding. Predictability and stability of funding are crucial to allow provinces to provide Canadians with social services.
- Ensuring federal funding is restored to the 1995-96 levels of CAP funding. Taking into account the 20 percent rise in the national inflation rate for the last decade, this would provide an immediate annual increase of approximately \$3.85 billion.
- Establishing a national financing formula calculated in a way that ensures a reasonable amount of federal cash, year after year, to support programs run by the provinces and territories. There is obviously a strong link between unemployment, regional economic disparities and reliance on social services, so the formula should take this into account, along with inflation.

2. Provinces and territories must provide accountability and sustainability by:

- Paying the full costs of service provision, including the actual operating costs of service delivery.
- Implementing a transparent and accountable global budgeting approach, where they approve a total budget amount and allow service providers to determine how best to spend the funds within their service delivery mandate.
- Providing annual funding to community-based social service agencies to upgrade salaries and benefits of workers to the level of their counterparts employed in health care, post-secondary education and municipal and direct government sectors.
- Providing undesignated funding that agencies can apply for to assist in building their service and program capacity to meet local needs.
- Ensuring that workers responsible for the delivery of supports and services to individuals not be required to fundraise. Money raised through fundraising should be used by the community agencies to enhance support and services as they see fit and should not impact government funding.

