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[Home](#) > [News Release](#) > Municipalities support community social services month, but services still being cut across BC

Municipalities support community social services month, but services still being cut across BC

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The province of British Columbia and nearly 50 municipal councils across the province have proclaimed March as Community Social Services Awareness Month. Despite this goodwill, community social services are still being cut across the province, including:

- A long-term care centre for adults with developmental disabilities near Vernon is closing on March 31, with residents being uprooted from their home;
- A “Woman of the Year” award for the Cranbrook Women’s Resource Centre coordinator was not enough to save the centre from closing on March 10;
- A highly praised Victoria teen suicide prevention program is due to close in June due to funding cuts.

“It’s a sad irony that important community social services are closing in Victoria, Cranbrook, and Vernon even as municipalities across the province recognize the importance of these services,” says BCGEU President Darryl Walker. “Proper funding for community social services would really help put families and communities first in British Columbia,” he added.

Willowbrook Services for Community Living, a care group home for adults with developmental disabilities in Lavington, near Vernon, is closing on March 31. The 13 long-term residents, some of whom have been there for 30 years, are being uprooted and relocated. Community Living B.C. - the government funding body - caught families and residents off guard with the announcement, according to press reports.

On March 7, Vicky Dalton received the “Woman of the year 2011” award for her decades of service to the community of Cranbrook. Just three days later, the Cranbrook Women’s Resource Centre coordinated by Dalton closed its doors due to a funding shortage after 36 years in operation. The Centre was accessed by an average of 300 women a month, and was frequently the first point of contact for women fleeing abusive relationships.

NEED2, a highly praised suicide prevention program offered in Victoria schools, faces closure on June 30 unless it receives extra funding. NEED2 staff and trained volunteers visit schools on Southern Vancouver Island to teach students how to spot the warning signs of suicide and get help. The program reaches over 2000 youth a year.

About Community Social Services Month

British Columbia has a wide network of community-based social services, including such services as child care, employment and housing support for people with developmental disabilities, specialized services for immigrant families and support for women escaping abusive relationships. Community social services build communities. These services are rarely in the public eye, but the problems they help solve are often in the news.

Community Social Services Awareness month is a province-wide effort to raise awareness about the vital role of community social services play in communities across British Columbia. The month's events conclude with a rally and walk in support of community social services, to be held in Victoria on Saturday, March 26.

To learn more, including a list of municipalities having proclaimed March as "Community Social Services Month" and details of the March 26 walk in Victoria, visit www.communitysocialservicesmatter.ca ^[1]

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Links:
[1] <http://www.communitysocialservicesmatter.ca>