



A REASON TO HOPE. THE MEANS TO COPE.  
BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY  
SOCIÉTÉ BRITANO-COLOMBIENNE DE LA SCHIZOPHRÉNIE  
UNE SOURCE D'ESPOIR, DE SOUTIEN ET D'ENTRAIDE.

A Registered B.C. Non-Profit Society

MAYOR'S OFFICE

DEC 14 2015

VICTORIA, B.C.

VICTORIA BRANCH

941 Kings Road

Victoria, B.C. V8T 1W7

Phone: (250) 384-4225

Fax: (250) 388-4391

Email: [admin.bcscs@shaw.ca](mailto:admin.bcscs@shaw.ca)

Website: [www.bcscsvictoria.ca](http://www.bcscsvictoria.ca)

BC Schizophrenia Society Victoria Branch (Inc.)

941 Kings Road

Victoria, BC, Canada

December 7, 2015

Honourable Peter Fassbender  
Minister of Community, Sport and Cultural Development  
Room 310, Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC, V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Fassbender,

I am writing to express my profound concern about how the \$5010.47 property tax bill assessed for 941 Kings Road, Victoria BC has somehow been deferred for the first time in 30 years to the British Columbia Schizophrenia Society (BCSS), Victoria Branch for payment. We have come to understand that this was made possible by section 224 of the *Community Charter* that permits property tax exemptions for non-profit organizations.

Our Executive Board and I are dismayed that our small non-profit is somehow responsible for paying property taxes on a building we do not own but simply lease. While section 224 of the *Community Charter* was no doubt conceived with an altruistic purpose in mind, it ultimately benefits non-profit organizations that are either wealthy enough to own property or were simply fortunate enough to have property donated to them. The benefits of section 224 are at our non-profit organization's expense.

While moving seems to be the most obvious solution for a flexible and resilient organization like ours, the vast majority of our clients encounter great difficulty feeling comfortable or safe in environments outside of their home. Moving is not an option for us as it would cause a significant disruption to our service delivery model and our client base.

One in five people face mental health issues in Victoria. For those with mental health issues, 1:100 live with schizophrenia, 3:100 live with bipolar, 3:100 have major depression, and 3:100 live with psychosis. Psychosis is seen most often in youth 14-25 years of age. BCSS Victoria works hard to assist individuals with mental illness access appropriate support, and provides services and support for their caregivers. This new \$5010.47 tax will impact our current and future client base because we will be compelled to cut services for approximately 45 people with serious mental health concerns. Our services increase our clients' self-management skills and have a measurable effect in diminishing calls to emergency services including the police, visits to the hospital, and general social services system burden.

We are the foremost non-profit in Victoria for mental health service provision; this is reflected in the number of referrals we receive from the Vancouver Island Health Authority. I am sure you can appreciate how cuts to social service providers like BCSS Victoria – whether they come in the form of decreased funding or increased taxes –



have a downstream effect of reinforcing existing systematic problems in the City of Victoria that contribute to homelessness, violence, and poverty.

We formally appealed to the City of Victoria in June 2015, but to no avail. We understand that mental health services are one of the top concerns of the Province of British Columbia as per the Minister of Health's announcement on October 10, 2015.

Please level the playing field and amend the *Community Charter* to ensure that organizations that are eligible for property tax exemption cannot defer their property taxes to non-profit organizations that provide front-line social services.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at work (250) 384-4225, my cell at (250) 884-8898 or email at [execdir.bcscs@shaw.ca](mailto:execdir.bcscs@shaw.ca) to address this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hazel'.

Hazel Meredith  
Executive Director, BC Schizophrenia Society, Victoria Branch

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Axon'.

David Axon  
President, BC Schizophrenia Society, Victoria Branch

cc:

Honourable Dr. Terry Lake  
Minister of Health  
Room 337, Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC, V8V 1X4

Her Worship Lisa Helps  
Mayor of Victoria and Councillor Ben Isitt  
1 Centennial Square  
Victoria, BC, V8W 1P6

Carole James, MLA  
1084 Fort Street  
Victoria, BC V8V 3K4