



December 18, 2015

VIA EMAIL

Honourable Michelle Stilwell
PO BOX 9058
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Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
SDSI.minister@gov.bc.ca

Re: Family Maintenance Services

Dear Minister Stilwell,

We write further to your March 23, 2015 email responding to Adrienne Montani's March 2, 2015 letter. In it, you wrote that, "[f]or the time being, program operations of the Family Maintenance Program of the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation will continue. At the same time, our government will ensure that resources continue to be made available to parents on income assistance to assist them in pursuing support orders from non-custodial parents."

Further to that letter, in May 2015 the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation revised the eligibility requirements for the Ministry's Family Maintenance Services (FMS), as well as the process for requesting services. In response to further enquires about the changes to the FMS, Ministry staff confirmed that the Ministry had secured legal counsel to provide family maintenance legal services for clients across BC.

It is in this context that we write to ask whether the Ministry anticipates any changes to the following for the 2016/17 fiscal year:

- the eligibility requirements for FMS;
- the specific services provided through FMS;
- the current FMS delivery model; or
- the funding allocation for FMS.

With the elimination of the mandatory assignment of rights to the Ministry to seek a child support order and the elimination of the clawback of child support payments from benefits, we are aware that the Ministry no longer has a short-term financial incentive to help clients pursue an order. In previous dialogue with the Ministry, we raised the issue of clearly and consistently letting all eligible clients know that they can still request Family Maintenance Services to obtain or defend a child support order. We were assured this would be done through updated support materials for staff.

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We are aware of the description of Family Maintenance Services on the MSDSI website, but it is a bit buried, and for many clients this method of communication will not be effective. Therefore we are interested in knowing what materials have been developed to guide staff in communicating the availability of these services directly and proactively to eligible clients. Could you please share with us any materials designed to accomplish this objective so that we may have the most up-to-date information on hand?

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours truly,



Adrienne Montani
Provincial Coordinator
First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition



Kendra Milne
Director of Law Reform
West Coast LEAF

[electronic signature unavailable]

Viveca Ellis
Organizer
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Cc: Molly Harrington