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*For immediate release
February 6, 2004*

Public Research Group Responds to Welfare Time-Limit Numbers

VICTORIA – Today the province projected that 339 welfare clients are expected to be impacted by the upcoming welfare time limit legislation.

It is obvious that the province has heard the outcry from the general public over this unprecedented and punitive policy. When this legislation was first introduced there were seventeen exemptions to this policy, last Tuesday Minister Hagen said there were twenty-two exemptions and today there are twenty-five. As more and more churches, school boards, city councils and public citizens voiced their concerns on the impact of totally refusing welfare to people in need, the Ministry scrambled to create more and more exemptions.

This morning, the Ministry announced its twenty-fifth exemption; an exemption that likely exempts the majority of the welfare caseload from this ultimate sanction. This new exemption says that people who are complying with their employment plan and looking for work will not be cut off of welfare. Up to last week the province had vowed to deny assistance to clients even if they are looking for work, but just because their period of need lasted longer than the government would like.

In effect, this last exemption makes the twenty-four month legislation redundant, as there is already legislation that threatens the loss of benefits for recipients who are deemed incompliant to employment plans.

We are relieved that the policy makers are scrambling to exempt people from their radical social experiment, but remained concerned not just for these 339 individuals but for the many more people struggling to meet their basic needs in BC.

Similar to last year's massive disability review policy, the Ministry has once again created inappropriate legislation and then had to create even more policy to negate the legislation. While the ministry claims to be focusing their efforts on those most in need, in actuality they are focused on creating more and more red tape to patch the holes in their decimated safety net.

This needless process of threatening vulnerable people, creating unthinkable legislations and then backtracking policy exemptions must end. The Ministry of Human Resources must stop its campaign to end welfare and instead work to end poverty in British Columbia.

This province needs to engage the public, including people living in poverty, in creating a progressive welfare agenda that takes care of those in need, that respects human rights, and reduces poverty. There is absolutely no need for the time limit legislation to remain on the books in BC.

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