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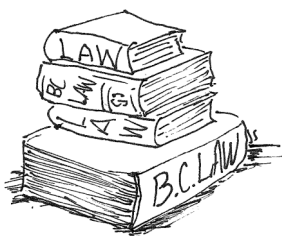
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TAPS HAS A STAFF LAWYER!

By Daniel Jackson
TAPS has two new positions, staff lawyer and legal assistant, with me and Caitlin Wright, respectively, filling those roles. Together we form the litigation project.

Why does TAPS need a staff lawyer? Traditionally, TAPS' advocates (who are not lawyers) have helped clients with what are known as "administrative remedies." If you are denied a benefit by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, for example, a TAPS income assistance

legal advocate can help you challenge the Ministry's decision to deny you that benefit. The first step in that challenge is called a Request for Reconsideration. If



you are denied the benefit again at the reconsideration stage, the advocate can help you with an appeal to the Employment & Assistance Appeals Tribunal. The reconsideration and appeal are administrative remedies.

Similarly, if you have a hearing at the Residential Tenancy Branch about, say, an eviction notice, that is also an administrative remedy, and a TAPS tenant legal advocate can help you with that. Hearings with the Employment Standards Branch, and, for CPP-Disability denials, with the Social Security Tribunal are also administrative remedies that TAPS advocates help with.

However, because TAPS' legal advocates are not lawyers, they are not able to help beyond this stage, even if there are compelling reasons to think that

(See Lawyer, page 6)

T A P S

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PPMB: PERSONS WITH PERSISTENT MINISTRY BARRIERS

By Thea McDonagh

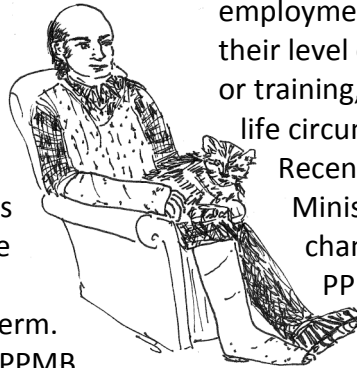
The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction has a specific category of benefits for people who face barriers to maintaining paid employment. The category is called Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers (PPMB) and it is intended to help people whose barriers to employment are long-term.

To be eligible for PPMB, an applicant must have:

- a health condition that has lasted for at least one year and is likely to continue for at least two more years, and the health condition must seriously impede the person’s ability to search for, accept, or continue in employment.

and

- at least one additional barrier that also seriously impedes their ability to search for, accept or continue in employment, such as their level of education or training, or certain life circumstances.



Recently, the Ministry made changes to the PPMB

application process to make the

benefit more accessible. Where previously only those who had been on income assistance for a year were able to apply for PPMB, the benefit is now available to new income assistance recipients. And people with substance use challenges are now eligible, where before they were not. Not only are the financial benefits of PPMB greater than regular income assistance, but PPMB also offers additional medical support, which can be invaluable for people with serious medical conditions.

While we appreciate the increased accessibility,

UPCOMING ID CLINICS

Lost all your ID? Can’t afford to replace it? These free ID clinics can help you apply for a new birth certificate or First Nations status card.

You must register first, which you can do at the clinic location at 9 am on the day of the clinic. Clinics run from 10 am to 1 pm. First come, first served.

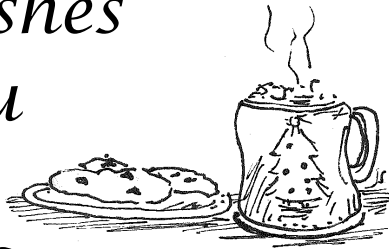
- January 10, Central Library, 735 Broughton
- January 24, Our Place Society, 919 Pandora
- February 7, Central Library
- February 28, Our Place
- March 6, Central Library
- March 20, Our Place.

income assistance advocates at TAPS believe that additional changes to the PPMB eligibility criteria are needed. We often hear from clients who have temporary health conditions that prevent them from working but are not expected to last for two years. TAPS advocates feel the requirement for the health condition to have pre-existed for one year and to

(See Multiple Barriers, page 4)

Together
Against
Poverty
Society

*TAPS Wishes
All of You
a Happy
Holiday Season*



STAFF CHANGES AT TAPS

This fall TAPS hired three new advocates, replacing Yuka Kurokawa and Jen Matthews and adding some part-time help to our tenancy project. Madyson Powell, who was our Social Work practicum student over two terms last

year, joins us as a full-time income assistance legal advocate. Hannah Mang-Wooley is our new tenant legal advocate; she comes to us from the Cool Aid Society, where she worked as a housing support worker. And Kaitlyn Hait, a second year student in the Uvic School of Law's Indigenous Law Degree Program, has joined us on the tenancy project part-time for the school year. This brings our staffing up to 12 employees, the most TAPS has ever had, and we couldn't be more excited to hit the next decade with such an amazing team.

*Doug King
Executive Director*

Taproot is published bi-monthly. Newsletter artist:
Joan Stiebel

TAPS STAFF

Doug King
Executive Director

Megan Billings
Income Assistance Legal
Advocate

Izzy Dehler-Hyde
Employment Standards
Legal Advocate

Kaitlyn Hait
Tenant Legal Advocate

Daniel Jackson
Staff Lawyer

Hannah Mang-Wooley
Tenant Legal Advocate

Thea McDonagh
Director of Advocacy and
Income Assistance Legal
Advocate

Madyson Powell
Income Assistance Legal
Advocate

Sharifa Riddett
Coordinator of the Tax
Project

Emily Rogers
Tenant Legal Advocate

Caitlin Wright
Legal Assistant and
Coordinator of the
Volunteer Disability
Advocacy Project

On Leave
Stephen Portman

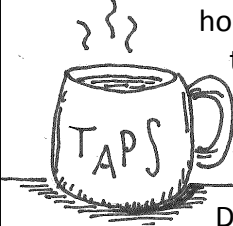
Together Against Poverty Society

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TAPS' HOLIDAY CLOSING

TAPS will be closed for the holidays from the end of the day on Friday, December 20th, until we re-open on Thursday, January 2nd.



PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

TAPS has advocates who can help you apply for Person With Disabilities status (PWD) through the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. TAPS can also help you with an appeal if you have been denied. Call us at 250-361-3521 for more information. If you are at the appeal stage, get in touch with us as soon as possible after receiving your letter of denial, and tell the receptionist you are calling about a disability denial.

TAPS' ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

On November 29th, TAPS held its 30th annual general meeting, hosting our members and supporters in our own office on View Street for the first time. Thirty-two voting members attended and they re-elected current board members Amy Baylis, Jeff McEown, and our presiding secretary Ryan Tonkin. Sadly, we had to say goodbye to two board members who have contributed greatly over the last few years: Bernice Kamano and Sarah Cunningham. Bernice was one of TAPS' very first volunteer advocates, and she has been a stalwart supporter of our organization for decades. Sarah stepped in as board president in 2018 in a period of transition for us, and was instrumental in keeping the board running smoothly, before having to step away earlier this year. Thank you both for all of the time and energy you have put into making TAPS a strong organization!

Doug King

FEDERAL DISABILITY PROGRAMS

TAPS can help you with your reconsideration request and appeal if you have applied for CPP-Disability and been denied. We are not, at present, able to help with the CPP-Disability application itself.

TAPS can also help you apply for the Disability Tax Credit.

If you would like to speak with an advocate, call 250-361-3521.



(Cont'd from Multiple Barriers, page 2)

persist for two more years creates a barrier for a lot of people trying to access this benefit. Consider the following examples:

- Liam is working at a minimum wage job with no benefits. He receives a diagnosis of cancer, which will require

(See Multiple Barriers, page 5)

(Cont'd from **Multiple Barriers**, page 4)

surgery and chemotherapy and a year and a half for full recovery. While he qualifies for Employment Insurance (EI) sickness benefits, these benefits will only last for 15 weeks. Once his EI benefits run out, he will have to find another source of income.

- Dana has been injured in an accident. She will need about a year to recover before being able to go back to work. Dana had been working on and off part-time and

taking some courses at university, and she does not qualify for EI at all. Now she needs income to live on while she recovers.

If folks do not have access to disability benefits through employment, they often have to rely on income assistance while they are unable to work. Income assistance only provides \$760 per month for a single person, and clients often tell us that they are concerned about losing their housing or having to give up other necessities while dealing with their health conditions.

At TAPS we believe that

reducing the required duration of a person's health condition from two years to one year and removing the requirement that it have pre-existed for one year would make this benefit more accessible for people going through temporary health treatments. TAPS' income assistance advocates are interested in this issue and want to hear from you. If you have been denied PPMB because your health condition is *not* likely to last for two years or because it has not yet lasted for one year, please contact our front desk and ask to speak to an income assistance advocate. ■

BECOME A TAPS MEMBER!

Want to support TAPS? Why not become a member! We are happy to waive the fee, so it doesn't have to cost you anything. You will get the Taproot mailed or e-mailed to you.

Together Against Poverty Society Membership Registration 2019 - 2020

Together Against Poverty Society, 828 View Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 1K2

Annual Membership Fees: Unwaged \$5 (we are happy to waive this fee)

Waged \$20

Organization \$80

Method of payment: Cash Check N/A

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

I would like to join TAPS' mailing list to receive: E-mails from TAPS about its work

Taproot—TAPS' newsletter

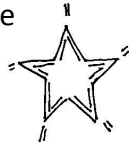
>>> by e-mail

by postal mail

Free Christmas Dinners

December 17

Our Christmas Lunch
11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
At Our Place
919 Pandora Avenue
250-388-7112



December 20

Gordy Dodd's Annual
Christmas Dinner
4:00 to 6:00 p.m.
At Our Place
919 Pandora Avenue
250-388-6663

December 21

Street Breakfast
(the Mustard Seed)
8:30 to 10:00 a.m.
At Glad Tidings Church
1800 Quadra (entrance on
Caledonia)
250-384-7633



December 24

Tapa Bar Christmas Dinner
Starts at 10:00 a.m. and
goes until food runs out
At Tapa Bar
620 Trounce Alley
250-383-0013

December 25

Christmas Dinner
12:00 p.m.
At The Rainbow Kitchen
500 Admirals Road
250-384-2069



December 25

Christmas Luncheon
11:30 to 2:00 p.m.
Sandy Merriman House
809 Burdett Avenue
250-480-1408

December 25

12:00 to 2:00p.m.
At St. Andrew's Kirk Hall
680 Courtney Street
250-384-5734

(Cont'd from Lawyer, Page 1)

an administrative tribunal has made a mistake.

That's where my job kicks in. As the staff lawyer, I can meet with people who may want to appeal decisions of the Employment Assistance Appeals Tribunal, the Residential Tenancy Branch, the Social Security Tribunal, and the

Employment Standards Tribunal. If you are concerned about a decision you have received from one of these tribunals, you can contact me and we will discuss the decision, what you think went wrong, and whether an appeal to the Supreme Court is a good option for you. If we decide that it is, I will prepare the

evidence and submissions, and either negotiate an agreement that works for you, or represent you until a judge decides the case.

I will also be providing support and advice to advocates from anywhere on Vancouver Island who have had unfavourable decisions from any of these tribunals. If you are one of those advocates, feel free to contact me to discuss appeal processes and how best to prepare for an appeal.

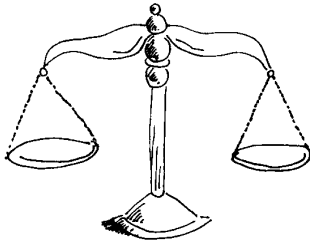
I expect that this new litigation project will allow us to hold these tribunals more accountable by bringing greater judicial oversight to the work of administrative decision makers. While decisions are often thorough and well-reasoned, we still

(See Lawyer, page 7)

**VOLUNTEER
AT TAPS!**

**Come and volunteer
on our busy front
desk—
a great way to
participate in the
fight against poverty!**

**Call Heidi
at 250-361-3521**



(Cont'd from Lawyer, Page 6)

see far too many that do not seem to reflect all of the information presented. And we see too many hearings that fail to meaningfully engage with our clients. I'm also looking forward to working with our partners around BC in leveraging the legal system to create legislative and policy change.

As I settle into this new role, I will look at expanding its scope, so stay tuned for any changes. For now, though, I can't help with general legal issues, so if you didn't receive a decision from one of the tribunals listed earlier, I probably can't help.

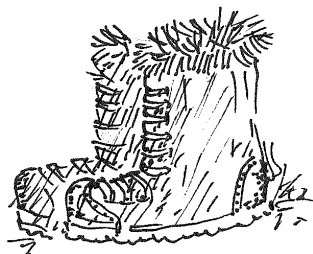
In the meantime, if you have had an unfavourable decision from the Employment Assistance Appeals Tribunal, the Residential Tenancy Branch, the Social Security Tribunal, or the Employment Standards Tribunal, get in touch with me, Daniel Jackson, at TAPS at 250-361-3521. ■

TAPS TAX CLINIC

**Thursdays
9 to 12 and 1 to 4
First come,
first served.**

The Thursday drop-in tax clinic is open to anyone who meets the Canada Revenue Agency's criteria for Community Volunteer Income Tax Programs: income below \$35,000 for singles and below \$45,000 for couples or families; no business income.

Those who have Person With Disabilities status (PWD) can make an appointment to see our tax coordinator on any weekday. Just call TAPS at 250-361-3521 and leave a message for Sharifa.



BECOME A MONTHLY TAPS DONOR!

With your support, individuals and families living in poverty in our region will have access to critical legal advocacy and educational services. TAPS' services are unique in their design and delivery, and offer knowledge, empowerment and, in many cases, a new sense of hope.

Select a monthly amount that's affordable to you, and TAPS will automatically deduct it from your checking account each month. You'll never have to write a check, buy a stamp or find an envelope again.

Monthly donors receive the following benefits:

- Updates on TAPS programs
- Annual tax receipt for all your donations during the year
- Taproot delivered to your e-mail.

See the monthly donor form on page 8 of this newsletter.

ABOUT TAPS

TAPS was established and registered as a society in 1989. We provide legal information and representation on issues relating to income assistance, provincial and federal disability benefits, residential tenancy, and employment standards to people in the Greater Victoria area. We also provide public legal education in these areas and on broader poverty issues.

You can reach us between 9:30 am and 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday, by phone at 250-361-3521 or in person at 828 View Street. The office is closed daily for lunch between noon and 1:00 pm and is closed to walk-in clients on Monday and Friday mornings.

TAPS IS FUNDED BY



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Thank You for Supporting TAPS' Legal Advocacy!

The best way to support TAPS is by becoming a monthly donor! Please submit this form and your voided check to: Together Against Poverty Society, 828 View Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 1K2

Date: _____

Please debit my bank account (attach VOID cheque):

\$10 \$25 \$35 \$50 \$100 Other amount \$_____ (please specify)

I would like this donation debit to be processed through my account on the 25th of each month.

Signature: _____

Donor Name: _____

Address: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

This donation is made on behalf of: an individual a business

A tax receipt for your total monthly donations will be sent to you at the end of the calendar year.

I would like to join TAPS' mailing list to receive: E-mails from TAPS about its work

Taproot—TAPS' newsletter

>>> by e-mail by postal mail