

## On Disability?

### Know What Benefits Are Available to You

By Katie Tanigawa, *Income Assistance Advocate*

So you've just been approved for Persons with Disabilities status (PWD) through the Ministry of Housing and Social Development. Now what?

Through PWD status, you already receive health coverage through the Medical Services Plan, coverage for many

prescription drugs through Pharmacare, dental coverage of up to \$500 a year or \$1000 every two years, and eyeglasses every three years with a prescription. Here's some quick information on additional benefits you can apply for.

#### Extended Therapies

Under MSP, you are covered for 10 sessions with an acupuncturist, chiropractor, massage therapist, naturopath, physiotherapist, and podiatrist. If your physician confirms that you require additional visits to the above specialists, you can request up to 12 extra visits in a year. Please have the explicit confirmation from your physician in writing to provide to the Ministry. Make sure your physician

provides the following information:

- your physician's name, address, and contact information
- your diagnosis
- whether the condition is acute or chronic
- the type of service you require, the frequency, and number of visits you require

*(See Benefits, page 6)*

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# Forum Meets on Ending Homelessness

By Geneva Hagen

A community forum called “The Ways Home: Top Ten Ways to End Homelessness” was held at the University of Victoria on October 29. Moderators were Dr. Margot Matwychuk (Professor of Anthropology) and Dr. Bernie Pauly (School of Nursing). Panelists included MP Denise Savoie, Rev. Al Tysick (Executive Director of Our Place), Kim Jaundrew (photographer for the “Hope in Shadows” calendar) and Tyytler MacDonald (a chef, photographer and singer who has been homeless). Strategies that emerged are summarized online at <http://www.uvcs.uvic.ca/news/feat>

ures/homelessness/.

Of the three hurdles to ending homelessness—housing, income and social supports—the most crucial is housing. People need housing before they can handle mental health or addiction issues. People in sound health also need housing, or they won’t stay healthy for long! Living on the streets shortens life by 20 to 25 years.

The cost of doing nothing is far greater than the cost of housing people. It costs \$50,000 a year to have someone living on the street; even supportive housing costs only \$17,000 – \$47,000.

Victoria has an estimated 1,600 homeless, but only 141 shelter beds.

During extreme weather, the number of spaces goes up to 350.

Almost no new rental housing has been built in Victoria for 20 years. Even co-op housing may soon be phased out. One local school has a 42% student turnover because families, living in motels in the area, must move when

(See Homelessness, page 5)



## President's Note

We recently held the Annual General Meeting of TAPS and now we have a new Board of Directors. I am President for another year, Robin Bassett is Vice-President, Kris Constable is Treasurer and Barbara Celu Amberstone is Secretary. I am pleased that Tim Richards, Rose Henry, Melanie Hudson are remaining on the Board. I want to welcome Noreen Marshall, Patti Stockton, Wendy Cox and Paul Dwyer to the Board.

Unfortunately, Freya Kodar resigned from the Board due to family and work commitments. I want to thank Freya for her hard work on behalf of TAPS over the years. We will miss her. The new Board members, and those remaining on the Board, represent a wide range of skills and abilities which will be of great benefit to TAPS in the new year of 2010.

There are changes ahead for the TAPS office as the Board, after consulting with the staff, has decided to hire an Executive Director, who will manage the day to day operations of TAPS.

This is the time of year when I want to wish everyone the best of the Christmas and festive season. This season is a special time of year when we think about the past and dream about the future. I am sure you will join with me and wish health and happiness to all who volunteer and work for TAPS. Our clients, too, are on my wish list for all the very best in the near year.

Joan McHardy

# Our Province Has the Highest Rate of Child Poverty in Canada—Again

By Tricia Roche, Coordinator  
Together Against Poverty Society (TAPS) supports the call for government action to reduce child poverty in British Columbia to 14 percent by the year 2013, and to 7 percent by the year 2020.

Figures released this week by First Call, the BC partner in Campaign 2000, show BC at a rate of 18.8 percent of children living in poverty in 2007. The Canadian average in that same year was 15 percent. For six years in a row, British Columbia has had the highest child poverty rate in Canada.

According to the 2009 Child Poverty Report Card, in 2007 BC had a total of 156,000 poor children, equivalent to the entire

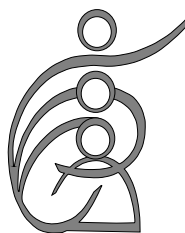
population of Nanaimo and Prince George combined. And this was in a year of a strong economy.

Here in Victoria, TAPS is seeing more and more families applying for income assistance and 58 percent of our tenant advocacy case files involve low-income households with children at risk of homelessness.

November 24, 2009 is the 20-year anniversary of a unanimous vote in the House of Commons to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. TAPS strongly believes that now is the time to take action to reduce child poverty in BC.

Child Poverty can be significantly reduced now by increasing income assistance rates, raising the minimum wage and improving access to nutrition and health and recreation for low income children.

The 2009 BC Child Poverty Report Card is available at [www.firstcallbc.org](http://www.firstcallbc.org).



Together  
Against  
Poverty  
Society

## Good-Bye, Lorraine

We are sad to have to say good-bye to Lorraine Bates, who worked at TAPS for two and a half years in income assistance and disability advocacy.

Lorraine was very warm and always made people feel like they had someone fighting on their side. Indeed, she did wonderful work helping people access the benefits they needed to improve their lives. We will all miss her. Best of luck in your new endeavours, Lorraine.

*All of us at TAPS*

Together Against Poverty Society

# TAPROOT

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# A Bottom Dollar Christmas

By G.R. Tomblin

It actually happened! When Bob Nobuks looked in his pay envelope—lo and behold. A Christmas bonus! Bob rolled his eyes heavenwards and whispered, Thank you, Lord! But when he looked closer and saw what the Christmas bonus was, Bob spat, “What! Is this a joke?”

No joke. Or at least the boss probably didn't think so. It was a \$10 coupon for Bottom Dollar.

Bottom Dollar was a huge dollar store where every low-income person in the downtown area did a lot of their shopping. Everything there was crap, but it was cheap. And for low-income people, cheap is all that matters, crap or not—because it's all they can afford.

Bob took the \$10 coupon and in the cold, pissing rain trudged the six blocks to Bottom Dollar. He splatted his way through the puddled streets in his two-sizes-too-big running shoes, the ones he'd found in one of the garbages at Monster Mart—his feet felt like cold turds in them. His thin coat soaked up the cold rain and soon it trickled icily down into his pants.

As usual Bottom Dollar was busy. Apparently there are a lot more poor people these days—strange, in a country like Canada, supposedly one of the

wealthiest in the world. Maybe for some people it is. In any case, Bob was appropriately frugal in his selections of Bottom Dollar's merchandise: two pairs of boxer shorts, four tins of pork'n'beans, two tins of pasta sauce, and a little jar of strawberry jam—a special Christmas treat!

There was an embarrassing moment at the checkout. The previous night, Bob had eaten an entire tin of no-name beans and four no-name chicken wieners along with several on-sale brussel sprouts. This had a distressing effect on his bowels. Throughout the whole of the next day, Bob's rumbling bowels had been continually erupting with a seemingly unending barrage of monstrous high-methane farts.

At the checkout, as the young goth chick with blue-streaked hair was dumping his stuff into the plastic bag after

he paid for it, and despite his painful efforts to contain it, a great pfffff-ffft escaped from his innards. Immediately, the goth chick, as well as the people in line behind Bob, screwed up their faces in disgust, and one woman in a loud voice cried, “What is that smell?”

Bob got out of there as quickly as he could, and tried to do it as if he was in an ordinary hurry, rather than fleeing some grossly unpleasant situation. But hostile eyes stabbed his back, or so he felt, as he swiftly vacated the area. And speeding him on his way was another pfffff-ffft that insisted on escaping from him at that particular moment. Clutching his bag of stuff, and clinching his buns, Bob escaped out of Bottom Dollar and into the relief of the

(See *Bottom Dollar*, page 5)



(From **Bottom Dollar**, page 4)

open air.

Still pissing rain and six blocks till home. Well, at least I have a home. As the wet-slick six blocks passed under his slogging feet, he felt the eyes of the homeless men and women he passed burning onto his skin like ugly tattoos. Bob would have a lonely Christmas—but unlike them, at least it would be warm and dry and under a roof, smelly farts notwithstanding.

And he had got his stuff from his \$10 coupon—two pairs of gauthies, four tins of beans, two tins of pasta sauce—and a little jar of strawberry jam.

Merry stinking Christmas, Bob! ■

## Together Against Poverty Society

wishes all of you

*A Happy Holiday Season*



(From **Homelessness**, page 2)

tourist season begins.

Denise Savoie has introduced Private Member’s Bill C-371 (now in committee), which she believes could stimulate hundreds of millions of dollars in private investment in affordable housing.

However, she said, what we really need is a solid national housing strategy, as we had before the 1990s. “We have the fiscal means to not just reduce but END homelessness.”

The UN has repeatedly criticized Canada for failure to provide housing. The \$2 billion for housing in the 2009 federal budget is one-time funding. We need that much annually to build 10,000 units a year for the next 10 years to make up for the deficit.

Bernie Pauly says: “It’s a moral problem.... What kind of society do we want to live in?”

And what can individuals do to bring this about?

Denise Savoie says: “Write to government.”

Al Tysick says: “Let’s not wait on the government. Let’s house people—government will follow.”

We need long-term solutions, but we also need emergency solutions. A tent city is a popular

**TAPS  
Fundraiser!**

**Victoria Salmon  
Kings**

Come out on December 28th at 7:00 p.m. to watch a Victoria Salmon Kings hockey game. TAPS is selling tickets and \$5 from every ticket we sell will go to support our work. Tickets cost \$16 for adults and \$13 for children and are available at the TAPS office at #302 - 894 Fort Street. Join us as we “Face Off Against Poverty.”

## Taxes

TAPS is offering tax prep services to people on low incomes. No appointments. Drop-in only. Call the office at 250-361-3521 for days and times.

### Graham Bourns

We at TAPS were sad to learn of the passing of Graham Bourns on November 12th, 2009.

Graham was a volunteer at TAPS for many years in the 1990s and early 2000s, when he produced and hosted our TAP-In Radio Show at CFUV.

Our condolences to his family.

idea among the homeless, who must now set up their tents after 9:00 p.m. and take them down before 7:00 a.m. This time of year, that means in the dark (and often in the rain). Some think it is time that Victoria obeyed the spirit as well as the letter of the “Right to Sleep” ruling. ■

(From **Benefits**, page 1)

- medical reasons why the additional visits are required
- date you used up the 10 visits covered by MSP

Wait till the Ministry approves the services before you access additional treatment if possible.

### **Pharmacare**

Some prescription medications will not be covered under Pharmacare. If you require a medication that is not covered, ask your physician about Pharmacare's Special Authority Request form. The form can be found at <https://www.health.gov.bc.ca/exfor.ms/pharmacare/5328fil.pdf>

### **Monthly Nutritional Supplement**

As a recipient of PWD benefits, you can also apply for a monthly nutritional supplement. The Ministry breaks the supplement into three categories: Nutritional items, bottled water, and vitamin or mineral supplements. There are certain requirements that a person's health conditions must meet before the Ministry will supply these supplements. All conditions and requirements must be confirmed by a physician.

If you qualify for the nutritional item supplement, the Ministry can provide up to \$165. For the bottled water supplement, the Ministry can provide up to \$20. For vitamin or mineral supplements, the Ministry will provide up to \$40. In order to qualify, your doctor or registered nurse has to confirm that they are treating you for a chronic, progressive, and deteriorating condition. They also have to

confirm that the condition is severe. Legislation states that the doctor must also confirm that the condition causes you to be underweight, causes malnutrition, significant weight change, loss of muscle mass or bone density, neurological degeneration, significant deterioration of an organ, or immune suppression. To receive the bottled water supplement, the physician must specify that you suffer from moderate to severe immune suppression.

Contact the Ministry if you are interested in picking up an application for your doctor to fill out.

### **Diet Supplement**

The Ministry has a list of conditions that qualify an eligible PWD recipient to receive a monthly diet supplement. Please note that this is different from the monthly nutritional supplement. You cannot receive both the monthly nutritional supplement and the diet supplement. To continue receiving the diet supplement, when requested by the Ministry, provide a letter from the doctor that states what your condition is, that you do require the diet supplement, and also how long you will require the diet supplement for.

### **Dental**

The Ministry will only cover certain dental procedures for the amounts listed in their schedule of fees. Your dentist should be aware of the Ministry's schedule of fees, however if you have any concerns call an EAW or see an advocate. The Ministry can cover emergency

## **TAPS' Volunteer Advocacy Program**

TAPS is looking for volunteers to help clients apply for disability benefits through the Ministry of Housing and Social Development. Volunteer advocates also help clients with appeals. This is an opportunity to develop legal advocacy skills and knowledge and to provide tangible, sustained support and assistance to people with disabilities. If you are interested in volunteering at TAPS as a volunteer advocate please contact Katie at 250-361-3521 or at [vdap@tapsbc.ca](mailto:vdap@tapsbc.ca).

dental procedures as outlined in their schedule of fees and only for the price they have set in their schedule of fees. The procedures and rates have to be approved by the Ministry. Ask your dentist if they will perform the procedure at Ministry rates.

### **Eyecare/Eyewear**

If you need an exam from an optometrist and/or ophthalmologist, the Ministry will cover up to \$44.83 for the optometrist exam and \$48.90 for the ophthalmologist exam, every two years. If you require a change in lenses more than once every three years, you need confirmation from two medical professionals. Your doctor must write a note describing your particular medical

(See **Benefits**, page 7)

(From **Benefits**, page 6)

condition and why you need new lenses more frequently. In addition, you must also have your optometrist or ophthalmologist confirm you require new lenses.

Non-medical benefits you can receive through PWD status must be applied for separately. For example, once you receive Persons with Disability status, you can apply for a subsidized annual bus pass through BC transit, subsidies for BC Ferries through BC Ferries, Gas Tax Refund, Disability Tax Credit, and Registered Disability Savings Plans. A variety of resources exist to help you figure out what benefits you can apply for. You can always call TAPS, the Disability Resource Center, the Action Committee for Persons with Disabilities, other community organizations, or the Ministry. ■



## Christmas Meals

### December 12th

2 p.m. – 6 p.m.  
3rd Annual Bandits Benefit  
Chili Supper  
Cool Aid Downtown  
Community Centre  
755 Pandora

### December 19th

1 p.m.  
North Douglas Pentecostal  
Church  
675 Jolly Place  
250-744-2411

### December 24th

12 p.m. – 3 p.m.  
Tapa Bar, 620 Trounce Alley  
Annual Dinner for the Homeless

### December 25th

Glad Tidings  
1800 Quadra Street  
3 sittings: 12 p.m., 2:30 p.m., 5  
p.m. (5 p.m. sitting is for adults  
only)  
Must register before with  
Christina at 250-472-1040  
If kids will be attending, must  
give ages.

### December 25th

Blethering Place  
2250 Oak Bay Avenue  
8 a.m. for breakfast. Dinner  
served from 9:30 a.m. until  
3:30 p.m.

### December 25th and December 31st

Our Place, 919 Pandora  
Rainbow Kitchen serving lunch  
on both Christmas Day and  
New Year's Day.

## Write for the Taproot

Taproot welcomes articles from readers. Share your ideas, experiences, opinions or outrage with Taproot's vast readership. Articles should be 600 words or less. Please include your name and a way we can reach you (phone, e-mail, or mailing address). The next submission deadline is January 15th, 2010. Send submissions to TAPS (Attn: Heidi) at #302 - 895 Fort Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 1H7, or by e-mail to [volunteers@tapsbc.ca](mailto:volunteers@tapsbc.ca).

## Persons With Disabilities

TAPS has advocates who can help you apply for Person With Disability status (PWD) through the Ministry of Housing and Social Development. TAPS can also help you with an appeal if you have applied and been denied. Call TAPS at 250-361-3521 for more information. If you are at the appeal stage, be sure to 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 appeal.

## **Together Against Poverty Society**

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

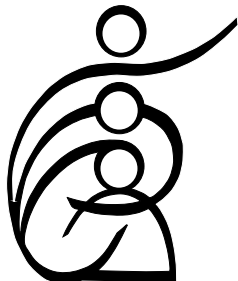
You can reach us between 9:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m, Monday to Friday, by phone at 250-361-3521, or in person at #302 - 895 Fort Street. The office is closed daily for lunch between 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m., and is closed to walk-in clients on Monday and Friday mornings.

## **Volunteer at TAPS**

### **Front Desk Receptionist**

TAPS is looking for a few people to volunteer on our busy front desk. One half-day shift per week. No experience necessary. Training is provided.

Call TAPS at 250-361-3521, contact us by e-mail at [volunteers@tapsbc.ca](mailto:volunteers@tapsbc.ca), or drop by the office at #302 - 895 Fort Street.



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TAPS is funded by:

*The Law Foundation of British Columbia*

*The Provincial Employees Community Services Fund*

*Province of British Columbia*

*and*

*Other Generous Supporters*

*We also appreciate the support that our members give.*

## **Become a Member of TAPS!**

**\$5.00 unwaged (may be waived)**

**\$20.00 waged**

**\$80.00 organization**

**Donations are appreciated.**

**Charitable tax receipts provided.**

**Taproot is mailed to members.**

TAPS mugs for sale

White coffee mugs with the TAPS crest on one side and a quote from Mary Wollstonecraft on the other: "It is justice, not charity, that is wanting in the world. (1792)" \$9, or two for \$15.