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WEST KOOTENAY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

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March 3, 1999

The Honourable Penny Priddy
Minister of Health
Room 133, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, British Columbia
V8V 1X4
Fax: (250) 387-3696

Dear Minister Priddy:

We at the Nelson and District Women's Centre / West Kootenay Women's Association are very concerned about the pending termination of funding for ANKORS' Needle Exchange and Client Services programs.

Both of these services are considered essential in urban areas and have been extremely successful here, exceeding all initial projections. Both operate at a fraction of the cost of their urban counterparts – yet both are slated to shut down at the end of March, 1999. Does the Ministry of Health consider that Needle Exchange and Client Services are less essential for people in rural areas who risk contracting, or are living with, HIV?

ANKORS provides the **only** comprehensive HIV and AIDS education, prevention, care, treatment referral and support services for the West Kootenay – Boundary region. Such programs are available through a variety of agencies in urban areas and we would like your assurance that these vital services will be sustained in our rural communities as well.

We urge your Ministry to recognize that HIV and AIDS are not only an urban concern. Provide funding for ANKORS to continue these two important programs. Rural health care matters!

Thank you for your prompt attention to this urgent concern.

Sincerely,

Karen Newmoon
Coordinator
Nelson & District Women's Centre

Rhonda Schmidt
Chair
West Kootenay Women's Association

Cc: Ms. Elena Kanigan
Director, HIV / AIDS Division
Ministry of Health
3rd Floor, 1520 Blanshard Street
Victoria, B.C. V8W 3C8

Mr. Corky Evans, MLA
Nelson – Creston
fax: (250) 352-9268

Ms. Karen Muirhead
Executive Director
ANKORS
fax: (250) 503-5507

Nelson & District Women's Centre

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ANKORS

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West Kootenay/Boundary A.I.D.S. Network, Outreach & Support Society
101 Baker Street, Nelson, British Columbia V1L 4H1
Fax: (250) 505-5507
e-mail: ankors@wkpowerlink.com

Dear Community Partner,

Urgent appeal re: further cuts to health services in our region.

In 1998 ANKORS established two new programs with funding from the BC Ministry of Health:

- The regional Needle Exchange program, an important component of HIV/AIDS prevention, has distributed nearly 1,000 new needles and collected more than 1,500 used ones in less than six months of operation.
- ANKORS' Client Services provides a vital link in meeting the unique health needs of rural people living with HIV/AIDS, their families and those providing care for them. Requests for these services have increased four-fold in seven months.

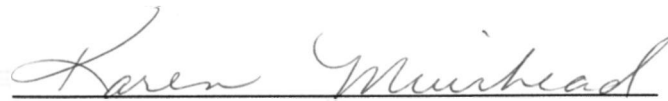
Both of these services (considered essential in urban areas) have been successful here beyond all initial projections and both operate at a fraction of the cost of their urban counterparts - yet both are slated to shut down at the end of next month. Repeated attempts to negotiate with the Ministry of Health for sustained funding of these rural services have been ignored to date and time is running out.

If you are concerned about the future of rural health care programs like ours, we urgently request that you write or fax the Ministry of Health to remind them that HIV and AIDS is not only an "urban" concern.

Please make use of the attached sample letter, or compose your own, to send a clear message to Victoria that *rural health care matters*. (A copy to your MLA would also be helpful, *see below*).

Thank you, on behalf of those both infected and affected by HIV and AIDS in our region.

Yours truly,



Karen Muirhead,
Executive Director

Mr. Corky Evans, MLA
Nelson-Creston
Fax: (250) 352-9268

Mr. Ed Conroy, MLA
Rossland-Trail
Fax: (250) 365-8535

Mr. Bill Barisoff, MLA
Okanagan-Boundary
Fax: (250) 498-3001



The Honourable Penny Priddy,
Minister of Health
Room 133, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, British Columbia
V8V 1X4
Fax: (250) 387-3696

February 19, 1999

Minister Priddy,

Re: Cuts to HIV & AIDS services in West Kootenay - Boundary region.

I am writing to express my concerns about the pending termination of funding for ANKORS' Needle Exchange and Client Services programs.

ANKORS provides the **only** comprehensive HIV and AIDS education, prevention, care, treatment referral and support services for the West Kootenay-Boundary region. We understand that such programs are available through a variety of agencies in urban areas and we would like your assurance that these services will be sustained in our rural communities as well.

We urge your office to address ANKORS' efforts to negotiate for continued funding of these important programs, at your earliest convenience.

Thank you.

cc. Ms. Elena Kanigan,
Director, HIV/AIDS Division
Ministry of Health
3rd Floor, 1520 Blanshard Street,
Victoria, British Columbia
V8W 3C8
