



March 19, 2009

Hon. Diane Findley,  
Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development,  
House of Commons,  
Ottawa, Ontario,  
K1A 0A6

**RE: Vancouver and Surrey Baristas Skills Link Program**

Dear Honourable Minister,

I am writing on behalf of Pacific Community Resources Society to request that a review take place concerning a decision made by Service Canada to;

1. Cancel the Vancouver Baristas Skills Link Program
2. Renew the Surrey Baristas Skills Link Program but only after a gap in funding and service from March 15 to May 1, 2009
3. Renewing the Surrey Baristas Skills Link Program for only two contract cycles (4 months per cycle)

We have had this decision reviewed by regional staff, Linda Martin and Mary Nolan and they have indicated that this is a result of a lack of funding not a service issue. Given these difficult employment times, especially for multi-barriered youth, funding needs to be made available for the youth most vulnerable to gang recruitment and other self-destructive and anti-social behaviours.

**1. Cancellation of the Vancouver Baristas Skills Link Program**

Service Canada announced (with little notice) that, as a result of a review of Skills Links programming for the Lower Mainland, there is no longer a need for a Baristas Program in Vancouver, as a parallel program exists in Surrey. In the absence of a Vancouver Baristas Program, Vancouver area youth are expected to travel to the Whalley area of Surrey to participate in the program. This nationally acclaimed, award-winning program has assisted hundreds of at-risk youth, drastically changing their lives towards becoming employed and contributing members of their respective communities.

Problems with this decision include;

- 1) Over the period January 1 – March 31, 2009, there have been only 10 Skills Links seats available for at-risk youth over the entire Lower Mainland as compared to 116 during the same period last year. Consistent with the at-risk youth profile, primarily marked by poverty, substance abuse and emotional instability, youth do not possess the resources and confidence to manage the commute.

- 2) These are the youth who are most impacted by the economic downturn and are most vulnerable to gang recruitment and other self destructive and anti social behaviours.
- 3) The Surrey Baristas Program is extremely popular and already turns away over 100 youth applicants every year,
- 4) Proximity to the program location in Vancouver has been seen as a strong determinant for youth success, particularly for youth accessing the Broadway Youth Resource Centre. Those youth who live nearby have fewer obstacles to successful program completion.
- 5) This program has been identified as an extremely valuable component to the Broadway Youth Resource Centre, a centre which has multiple service delivery and funding partners in the Mid-town area of Vancouver. Barista participants are able to access multiple services (addictions and mental health counselling, housing support ...) to support their training.

**2. Renew the Surrey Baristas Skills Link Program but only after a gap in funding and service from March 15 to May 1, 2009**

We strive to have respectful and mutually beneficial business relationships with our funders and partners on behalf of the people we serve. We hire staff, rent offices and purchase equipment based on some reasonable level of certainty in our business relationships.

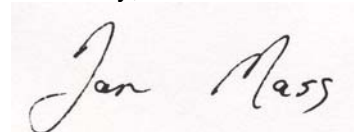
This program has been operating with consistent funding through Service Canada for six years. To suddenly be told that we have a 6 week gap in funding and then be expected to place our employees and pay our bills and then re-establish the service is unreasonable and a poor business practice.

**3. Renewing the Surrey Baristas Skills Link Program for only two contract cycles (4 months per cycle)**

As discussed above, given our experience with this contract, we are reluctant to make any long term business commitments unless we can negotiate stability in funding. The federal governments Voluntary Sector Initiative identified this very issue as one of the major irritants in the government/non profit relationship and there was a commitment to resolve these situations. We have no problem being judged on our performance and if we are seen to be lacking then our contract should be renegotiated or not renewed.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Ian Mass  
Executive Director  
Pacific Community Resources  
(604) 412-7950  
imass@pcrs.ca