



Statement

March 18, 2022

For Immediate Release

As British Columbia's Representative for Children and Youth (RCY), a significant part of my role is to point out when supports and services provided by government for children, youth and young adults are lacking. My Office routinely identifies such shortcomings and makes recommendations about how government can do better for young people in this province.

But just as important for the RCY is to recognize when government makes positive change and to publicly acknowledge such progress. And I'm pleased to say that's the case this week, with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) making important post-Budget announcements about enhanced supports for children, youth and young adults who have spent time in government care and are transitioning into young adulthood.

Government has responded to the tremendous advocacy work of groups such as TRRUST Collective Impact, Fostering Change, the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, and individuals such as the late Katherine McParland, by earmarking an additional \$35-million investment over the next three years in "the development and implementation of housing, financial supports, health and transition supports for youth until the age of 27." You can read the details in MCFD's announcement [here](#).

MCFD's improvements also embrace four of the recommendations I made in our Office's report *A Parent's Duty* (December 2020). That report is available [here](#). In addition, they begin to address some of the concerns expressed in a report led by McParland and her group Youth Against Youth Homelessness, *From Marginalized to Magnified: Youth Homelessness Solutions From Those With Lived Expertise* (February 2020). You can find that report [here](#).

Essentially, the improvements announced this week will help provide some continuity of relationships and supports past the age of 19 for young people who are in care – to reflect some of the supports that are in place for their contemporaries who enjoy family privilege. For example, if a young person is settled in their foster home or another setting and has built a strong relationship there, they'll now be able to

continue to stay there up to the age of 21. The improvements will also include better access to transition workers, life skills and mental health programs, and support with the cost of housing.

While I applaud these actions by government, I note that there is still important work to be done – in consultation with young people and advocates over the next few years – in order to continue to strengthen supports for youth and young adults transitioning out of care. Our Office will monitor the rollout of the enhancements announced this week and we will continue to advocate for additional investment in housing, mental health and substance use services that would address the other recommendations in *A Parent's Duty*.

Ensuring that youth in and from care are well-supported is important work. The poor life outcomes experienced by many who have been in care are not inevitable – they arise from the trauma, disruption and lack of belonging that is too often part of their experience. These young people possess tremendous strengths and potential. When provided with the supports that others count on from their families, they can thrive.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth
Representative for Children and Youth