

News Release
For Immediate Release
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**YOUTH FUTURES EDUCATION FUND GROWS,
ANNOUNCES FIRST DISBURSEMENTS**

VICTORIA – Two announcements today are kick-starting the Youth Futures Education Fund (YFEF) to support former youth in care with living expenses while they pursue post-secondary education on a tuition waiver or bursary.

The YFEF will make an inaugural disbursement of \$200,000 to 11 B.C. post-secondary institutions that offer tuition waivers or bursaries to former youth in care to help support them with other costs associated with their education such as housing, food and transportation.

In addition, Coast Capital Savings, the founding funding partner of the YFEF, will add to its original \$200,000 contribution with another \$100,000 to the fund. The Blue Moon Fund (held at the Vancouver Foundation) will also contribute \$120,000 to this important and worthy cause.

“Access to post-secondary education directly impacts outcomes for young people – and nowhere is this more evident than with former foster children who have aged out of care and for whom the traditional family network of supports is not available,” said Maureen Young, Acting Director, Community Leadership at Coast Capital Savings and vice-chair of the Youth Futures Education Fund Advisory Committee. Coast Capital, well-known for its commitment to community leadership and a promise to help build richer futures for youth in the communities they serve, has now contributed a total of \$300,000 to YFEF since the fund’s inception in 2014.

In June 2013, B.C. Representative for Children and Youth Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond issued a challenge to all 25 B.C. universities and colleges to waive tuition for young adults who were once in government care. Today, 11 of those institutions have a tuition waiver or bursary program for former youth in care and more than 100 students are earning degrees and forging important networks of support that will enable more successful futures.

Recognizing that access to education is one step in a more complex system of necessary supports that includes living expenses, the YFEF was established at the Vancouver Foundation. Its volunteer advisory committee represents a network of support that includes both public and private sector leaders along with not-for-profit organizations and philanthropists. To date, the YFEF holds \$776,000, including contributions from Coast Capital, the Blue Moon Fund and the Fred Boyd Brown Fund (both held at the Vancouver Foundation) and the Ministry of Children and Family Development. The objective of the fund is to provide low-barrier access to financial assistance for students on tuition waivers or bursaries, based on need.

Thousands of children and youth are currently in care of the B.C. government or on Youth Agreements that support them to live independently. In most cases, they do not have the same level of support with their education as their peers who were not involved with the child-serving system, and very few ever consider post-secondary education. In fact, almost half of the youth who will age out of care this year will go on income assistance within six months of their 19th birthday – the day they "age out" of government care.

“Our initial contribution to this fund we announced back in June was \$250,000. It is inspiring to see so many partners coming together to build on that investment for the sake of young people in care,” said Stephanie Cadieux, Minister of Children and Family Development. “Improving transition supports for 19 to 24-year-olds who have been in care is a major priority for this ministry and we have taken definitive steps to address this challenge, including our recent investments in the Youth Education Assistance Fund, the YWCA’s Strive program, the Learning Fund for Young Adults, the expansion and extension of the Agreements with Young Adults program and the new Agedout.com resource. The first disbursement of the Youth Futures Education Fund marks another important step forward in ensuring young people from care have the opportunity and tools they need to help them develop and thrive as successful adults.”

“All young people deserve to have the same aspirations and opportunities as their peers to benefit from getting a post-secondary education,” said Turpel-Lafond. “My focus is on what former youth in care can achieve when they are supported to reach their potential. With nearly half of B.C.’s universities and colleges now offering a tuition waiver or bursary program, I challenge the remaining 14 to have this program in place by next September.”

Dr. Ralph Nilson, President of Vancouver Island University (VIU), was the first post-secondary institution leader to embrace the tuition waiver challenge in 2013. This September, VIU welcomed 54 students on tuition waivers.

"At VIU we actively engage in reducing the barriers to potential students aspiring to post-secondary education," said Nilson. "The tuition waiver initiative is one specific program that is focused on enhancing access for children aging out of care who historically have had significant barriers to achieving success at the post-secondary level. However, we know a tuition waiver may not be enough to ensure credential completion," he said. "I'd like to thank Coast Capital Savings, the provincial government and the Vancouver Foundation for recognizing this gap in support and for investing, through the YFEF program, in former youth in care who wish to continue their education. This new investment will support retention and success for children aging out of care who are pursuing a post-secondary education. I commend all the institutions that are involved in the tuition waiver program and encourage all other B.C. post-secondary institutions to participate."

The YFEF disbursement of \$200,000 will be shared across all participating B.C. post-secondary institutions, proportionate to the number of students who are on tuition waivers or bursaries. Each participating institution will disburse these funds to these students based on need, recognizing that for some students who were formerly in care of the government, there is funding support through other government programs. The YFEF is intended to address the gap for those who have limited options.

Backgrounders (3) attached

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