



REPRESENTATIVE FOR  
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

## REPRESENTATIVE'S MESSAGE

**June 2, 2015**

### **TO B.C.'S CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE**

For five years now, British Columbia has dedicated one week to reflect on the strengths, challenges and needs of each of you – the more than 8,000 children and youth in the care of our provincial government.

It is a time to celebrate your hopes and futures, and an opportunity for me to speak directly to those of you in government care. My message today is about education and your right to be well-supported through school. This is your surest way to a better future. Education is the key to so many successes, whether it's graduating from high school or going on to post-secondary. We know that a solid education is closely tied to future employment and your ability to build a better life.

I've called on the Ministry of Education to make sure that each of you has a clear education plan and skills pathway to guide you as you progress through school and transition out of government care. Providing the necessary planning, support, advice and resources will give each of you the best possible chance of success.

You will also need and deserve support to transition from care to an independent life. Transition isn't about piecemeal programs – it's about relationships and support you can count on. These transition years are so important to your future. You deserve a stable environment that gives you the best opportunity to achieve your goals. That is why I have also asked the provincial government to extend foster care up to age 24 on a case-by-case basis, especially for those requiring greater support in meeting the social, emotional and cognitive milestones of adulthood, such as education completion or employment.

I believe educational institutes have a role to play as well, which is why I asked B.C.'s post-secondary schools to waive tuition for former children and youth in care. Ten of the 25 B.C. post-secondary schools now do this, and I am confident the rest will also eventually offer a tuition-waiver program. It is a smart investment in all of you – a group of youth who are too often overlooked.

As we receive the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the same week as we honour children and youth in care, I also acknowledge the many of you who are Aboriginal children and youth in care. I see supports for you as especially important with services rooted in a deeper understanding of the challenges your families may have experienced through several generations. I want you to be the last generation in care.

So, for Aboriginal youth transitioning out of care, I call upon government, community, friends and neighbours, to make your transition a healthy and positive one of success and not abandonment of another generation of children. For that reason I continue to call on

**Head Office** #201 – 546 Yates Street P.O. Box 9207 Stn Prov Govt Victoria, BC V8W 9J1

**T** 250 356 6710 **T-F** 1 800 476 3933 **F** 250 356 0837 **E** rcy@rcybc.ca **www.rcybc.ca**

government to make sure you receive targeted and meaningful supports to help you and your families to maintain your culture and identity.

I also give you a firm commitment that my Office will continue to advocate for your needs and rights, for the extension of foster care, for the building of bridges back to culture and identity, and for the opening of doors to education, employment and positive inclusion in our society.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "mecturpelafond". The signature is written in a cursive, lowercase style.

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond  
B.C. Representative for Children and Youth