



Statement

March 16, 2020
For Immediate Release

This year, we mark Social Workers Week amid extraordinary times that are taxing for everyone, particularly those on the front lines, like social workers, whose duties are of such critical importance to society that they cannot be postponed.

I want to take this opportunity to honour British Columbia's social workers for their tireless commitment and passion for social justice on behalf of children and youth, especially during challenging times like these.

In my work as Representative, I hear from many children and youth around B.C. about their experiences in the government care system. Often coming from backgrounds that have included far more trauma than anyone should experience in a lifetime, I have frequently been struck by the importance these youth place on their relationships with their social workers. And rightfully so! Children and youth who are involved with any aspect of the government care system need a caring and trauma-informed approach.

What has impressed me so deeply is that there are many young people whose relationships with social workers have been life-changing. Sometimes, a social worker is the only constant for a child who feels lost and alone. Sometimes, the empathy shown by a social worker is a source of comfort seldom experienced by a young person caught in turbulence not of their own making. These are relationships that matter and that have the potential to have life-long influence.

As challenging as social work is, we are blessed in B.C. that the people who do this very necessary work have chosen to offer their skills and compassion to children and families when there is a safety issue, a family breakdown or a sudden serious mental health or physical illness that places them in crisis. As we deal with a global pandemic, the strength and commitment of social workers becomes even more essential to B.C.'s children, youth and families. For this commitment, we should all be grateful.

This year's Social Workers Week theme, "United by Diversity, Strengthened by Inclusion" mirrors the emphasis in my Office on diversity, cultural safety and inclusion. It is important that those of us who work in service of children and youth also reflect the children and youth we serve. I practiced as a front line social worker decades ago, and I can tell you that the field was not always as diverse and inclusive

as it is now. Things have changed significantly since then. Today's emphasis on diversity and inclusion is truly worthy of celebration and continued promotion.

I want to make it clear that the work of social workers is deeply valued by my Office. Social workers are essential to the system of care in B.C. To say that the work is complex and difficult is an understatement. I know that, at times, it is truly heart-wrenching and that social workers must make exceptionally challenging and even painful decisions on a daily basis. There is nothing easy or simple about this job. Social workers have my deepest respect, and we take time this week to applaud their service to the most vulnerable children, youth and families in the province.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J Charlesworth".

Jennifer Charlesworth
Representative for Children and Youth