



# Statement

---

**Feb. 8, 2021**

**For Immediate Release**

The recent report issued by the British Columbia Expert Panel on Basic Income contains several recommendations regarding youth from care transitioning to adulthood that I strongly support.

*Covering all the Basics: Reforms for a More Just Society* reinforces the report my Office released in December about supports for young adults from the government care system entitled *A Parent's Duty: Government's Obligation to Youth Transitioning into Adulthood*. It is notable that several of the recommendations of the Expert Panel's report are very similar in theme, indicating that the evidence around youth transitioning to adulthood and the barriers they face is strong enough that discrete reports, panels, youth and scholars draw the same or similar conclusions.

For example, the Expert Panel report points out that for youth from care to truly have the same opportunities as those with family privilege, government needs to provide the same kinds of supports any parent would give to their young adult children. This precisely echoes what my Office said in *A Parent's Duty*.

I am pleased to see the Expert Panel calling for an increase in resourcing to Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) child protection and family services, as well as an increase in social worker resources to ensure appropriate planning and continuity of case management. For years, my Office has been calling for more resourcing for MCFD, in particular for increasing front-line staff resources. I recommended in December that MCFD extend and improve transition planning, beginning by at least age 14 and extending beyond a young person's 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. This will require effective, dynamic planning that addresses the full range of a youth's needs, including cultural needs, and fully engages the young person as a partner in that planning. I believe that the abrupt cut-off of young people from support at 19 is inhumane and inappropriate. Again, here, there is alignment with the recommendations of my Office.

The Expert Panel's report calls for the provision of core capacity funding for the most effective community organizations helping former youth in care, which, again, corresponds with my position. In *A Parent's Duty*, I also called for providing these youth with ongoing adult guidance and support by implementing dedicated youth transition workers through community agencies.

On the subject of financial support, the Expert Panel calls for a basic income for youth leaving care. My Office has also been clear that an automatic entitlement to appropriate financial supports, without hoops and barriers, for youth from care are necessary. That is what I was getting at with my recommendation to transform the Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) program. I've said that, in order to support the same gradual and extended transition to adulthood that most young people

enjoy, MCFD should implement universal and comprehensive financial support for young people aging out of all types of care and out of Youth Agreements by automatically enrolling them on their 19th birthday in the AYA program, unless the young person chooses to opt out.

Indeed, in *A Parent's Duty*, I offered further recommendations that I believe are equally essential to give youth in care the best chance at successful transition to adulthood over the long term. These include considering an extension of voluntary residential care so that youth, if they choose, could stay in their foster homes or staffed residential resources past the age of 19. I also recommended the provision of additional dedicated housing for youth transitioning to adulthood, trauma-informed and culturally appropriate mental health and substance use services, and ongoing data collection and evaluation so that effectiveness can be measured.

I am especially pleased to see that the report's authors included youth voice in determining their recommendations and recognized the over-involvement of the ministry in the lives of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous youth and the negative outcomes that result, including the cyclical and generational nature of the involvement of child welfare in families. I strongly support the report's urging that any change must be done in partnership with Indigenous communities and with youth themselves. This follows the collaborative principles that evidence shows must be incorporated in order to create effective public policy.

The establishment of a legislative mandate and resourcing of a ministry or organization to support youth transitioning to adulthood is an idea that holds promise, if implemented with care. Such an organization could take on a task I recommended in *A Parent's Duty* – to ensure that recommendations around youth aging out of care be considered and implemented as a whole, as they are inter-related and inter-dependent.

As I have pointed out, implementation of these recommendations will have staffing and resource implications and, in some cases, will require changes to legislation or regulations. The Expert Panel report draws the same conclusions in this regard.

It is my hope that the provincial government will see the value and, indeed, the moral and economic imperatives, of the Expert Panel's recommendations around youth transitioning to adulthood. Both reports cite research that clearly demonstrates that the status quo is the most expensive option and that investing in these young people would ultimately result both in a more just society, and also in substantial savings for government.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth  
Representative for Children and Youth