



Statement

March 8, 2021

For Immediate Release

This International Women's Day, we raise our hands to women everywhere – especially here in British Columbia – who have so much to do with raising, leading, nurturing, advising, counselling and role modelling for the children and youth of our province.

But International Women's Day is more than a day to honour women. It's a day for action. This year's theme is "choose to challenge" – a call to action for every one of us to examine where change needs to be made, and to take on the challenge of instigating it.

As we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, we must recognize the challenges women have faced and continue to face. In particular, we must recognize and respect that the pandemic has not affected us all equally, and that women are bearing the brunt of the hardships associated with it – job loss, child care issues and the myriad parenting issues that have emerged. The inequities are even greater for women who are Indigenous, racialized, living in poverty, and those who are without access to safe housing and timely compassionate supports. We "choose to challenge" the inequities that hurt women and their children by shining a light on them and advocating for more fair and just social policies, care and support.

Children, youth and young adults are at the heart of the work we do in my Office, but women are key people in the lives of these young people. They are valued family members: mothers, aunties, grandmothers, sisters, daughters, cousins, and partners. And they are crucial support people, too. Many women in B.C. feel that serving children, youth and young adults is a calling, and they have chosen careers that serve young people as their life's work. I'm talking about mothers, social workers, child and youth care workers, counsellors, outreach workers, teachers, pediatric doctors and nurses, and the staff right here in my own Office who work as advocates, investigators, analysts and researchers. And that's just a start.

The vast majority of people working in B.C.'s child-serving systems are women. These are people who are committed to making life better for children, youth and young adults and who feel deeply in their hearts that helping young people realize their potential is essential work. The "choose to challenge" theme is particularly appropriate for them because it is embedded in their work. A driving question that propels them each day is "what can I do today to make life better for a young person?" These women are heroes who deserve our thanks every day and, on March 8 in particular, it is my honour to recognize and celebrate them.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth
Representative for Children and Youth