



Statement

March 14, 2021

For Immediate Release

This year, we celebrate Social Work Week under the continued cloud of the COVID-19 pandemic – a circumstance that, over the past year, has profoundly affected the demands on social workers, and has markedly changed the nature of the job. No one could have foreseen this. But social workers have gone above and beyond the call of duty in responding to the challenges brought on by COVID-19.

A year ago, as I sat down to write a statement honouring social workers, the pandemic had only just been declared, and we all sincerely hoped that it would be over in short order. Instead, we have all felt its effects. Youth in government care have been heavily impacted, as have First Nations, Métis, Inuit, urban Indigenous peoples and women. For social workers, dealing with these many previously unimagined and multi-faceted impacts has been job No. 1, and I want to take this opportunity to commend them for the vital and important work they have been doing and continue to do. It has not been easy, I know.

We have seen some truly awesome work over the past year. I am personally aware of numerous examples of social workers whose tenacity in helping young people is astounding. When presented with the urgent and often daunting situations caused by the pandemic, these social workers have dug deep within themselves to get creative and do whatever is needed to improve the lives of children and youth.

As those in the profession know, helping a young person who has been traumatized, perhaps repeatedly, and who is suffering as a result, is not always easy. I've heard of social workers going daily to a young person's home, sitting outside as long as they need to and bringing food, beverages, clothing or whatever they think the youth may need in order to build the required relationship and trust. I've heard of workers collaborating with others and putting together family bundles and cultural activity kits to keep families strong and engaging with their children. This year has been difficult, but I am inspired by the stories about the passionate commitment of social workers who are so attentive to the needs of young people and who will stop at nothing to help them.

They have responded to the urgencies ushered in by COVID-19 with grace, originality, resourcefulness and single-minded purpose. This year, as I write, there is light at the end of the pandemic tunnel, and we are all grateful for that hope. To B.C.'s social workers, I raise my hands to you. The depth of the commitment you have shown over the past year has been inspiring and humbling, and I want to offer my sincere gratitude for your incredible efforts. Your work makes a profound difference to young people, and you are modelling innovation and creativity for all of us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J Charlesworth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth
Representative for Children and Youth