



News Release

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February 23, 2024

Representative for Children and Youth disappointed by lack of significant new funding for children and youth in B.C. Budget

VICTORIA – B.C.’s provincial budget is not going far enough in addressing the urgent needs of children and youth in the province, says B.C.’s Representative for Children and Youth.

“While I am encouraged by some of the commitments that government made today, I continue to be disappointed that the acute needs of B.C.’s most vulnerable young people are not being reflected fiscally,” said Representative Jennifer Charlesworth. “I expect much more, and children, youth as well as their families and communities are telling us very loudly that they expect more as well.”

This year’s budget commits new funding for key areas including strengthened support for young people with dyslexia and autism, sustained support for young people from government care as they navigate young adulthood, more K-12 teachers, more support for children in government care who are living with a family member or other caregivers and increased funding for Community Living BC. However, the Representative notes that a significant amount of this funding will go towards addressing higher caseloads and negotiated wage increases rather than service enhancements. The budget falls short in a number of areas according to the Representative including:

- A lack of broad-based supports for children and youth across the disability spectrum, including those with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), Down Syndrome, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and other neuro-cognitive disabilities that currently receive little to no supports.
- Failing to enhance access to and supports for children and youth with mental health concerns – an acute need, especially given the significant rise in rates of clinical depression, anxiety and other mental health disorders over the past four years.
- Specific funding to support the transition of child welfare services from the Ministry of Children and Family Development to Indigenous Governing Bodies, a process that is underway and will have significant implications for how Indigenous children and youth receive services closer to family, culture and community.
- Funding to address the long-standing fiscal inequities that have resulted in Indigenous children living off-reserve having less access to needed supports and services.

“These are unprecedented times for children and youth in the province – for Indigenous youth who are at the centre of a seismic jurisdictional shift, for young people who are experiencing mental health challenges more frequently and intensely than ever before and for young people with increasingly complex special needs,” said Charlesworth. “The time to act is now. As we move into

an election, I am expecting to see more concrete commitments to the generation of people who will build the future of this province.”

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