



April 12, 2018

Ms. Adrienne Montani, Provincial Coordinator
First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition
810-815 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, BC V6C 1B4

Dear Ms. Montani:

Thank you for your e-mail regarding the policy memorandum developed at the Youth Policy Solutions Day hosted by First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition and the Vancouver Foundation's Fostering Change initiative. As Premier of British Columbia, I am pleased to respond on behalf of the Honourable: Melanie Mark, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training; Selina Robinson, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing; Shane Simpson, Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction; Scott Fraser, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation; Judy Darcy, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions; and Katrine Conroy, Minister for Children and Family Development. I would first and foremost like to express my gratitude for your continued advocacy and leadership to ensure the voices of youth from care are heard, and I sincerely apologize for my delayed response.

I was honoured to attend the Youth Policy Solutions Day with youth from care, allied organizations, Minister Katrine Conroy, and Members of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. I was inspired by the passion, ingenuity, and determination exhibited by everyone present to promote positive change. The completed policy memorandum draws much needed attention to the challenges faced by youth from care as they transition to adulthood. The memorandum will be shared with the Select Standing Committee for their consideration.

Youth transition services, including Agreements with Young Adults and the Provincial Tuition Waiver Program, were identified as priorities by this government and highlighted in the mandate letters for both Minister Katrine Conroy and Minister Melanie Mark. I appreciate that these have also been identified as priority programs and services in the policy memorandum. Together, we can ensure youth from care receive the support they deserve to successfully transition into adulthood.

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Since July 2017, this government has introduced a number of programs that benefit youth from care:

- The Provincial Tuition Waiver Program, which waives tuition fees for eligible youth from care at all public post-secondary institutions in British Columbia.
- The largest investment in affordable housing in this province's history, including social housing, student housing, and housing for Indigenous peoples.
- The largest investment in child care in British Columbia's history, while taking the first steps to implement a comprehensive child care program to reduce costs for families, including young parents.

As part of Budget 2018, effective April 1, 2018, the Agreements with Young Adults program was expanded to increase the age of eligibility up to the 27th birthday, provide up to an additional \$250 per month to eligible young adults, as well as the option of year-round funding to eligible students in multi-year educational or vocational programs.

Although I am proud of the progress this government has made to date in offering supports to youth from care, I remain committed to working with our youth from care, partners, and communities to find innovative ways to improve transition experiences and life outcomes for vulnerable young people throughout British Columbia. Supporting transitioning youth is a shared responsibility of all government ministries and there is more work to be done.

I am pleased to share that the next steps outlined in the policy memorandum are immediately actionable:

- Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) currently leads a Cross-Ministry working group which has been established to identify, strengthen, and coordinate programs and services across government focussed on youth transitioning out of care. This working group has reviewed the policy memorandum and will consider the recommendations when developing supports for programs and services.
- Youth from care, including those on the Youth Advisory Council, have had and will continue to have involvement in developing policy, programming, and other supports offered by government.

Other recommendations made in the policy memorandum are also being reviewed as we continue to seek innovative and proactive ways to improve supports for transitioning youth and young adults:

- MCFD is reimagining the AYA program with the goal of offering supports to all youth aging out of care who need it, and not just a few.
- MCFD continues to work with the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training to further develop the Provincial Tuition Waiver program.

- Mental health services for youth in care continue to be developed with a lens of trauma informed practice and complex care. The Children and Youth with Complex Care Needs (CYCCN) system of care is comprised of four distinct but interconnected services: the Complex Care Unit, Provincial Outreach Services, Complex Care Community Residential Resources, and Complex Care and Intervention. These programs are supported by the implementation of the Trauma Informed Practice guidelines, *“Healing Families, Helping Systems: A Trauma Informed Practice Guide for Working with Children, Youth and Families.”* These initiatives provide wrap-around supports to children and youth who have experienced complex trauma.
- Training for social workers and other MCFD staff regarding cultural competency, particularly for Indigenous cultures, continues to be a priority as we continue to meet the recommendations made by Grand Chief Ed John.
- The Mental Health Transition Protocol was developed to provide guidance in planning for a positive transition experience for youth between the ages of 17 – 21 who are receiving Child and Youth with Mental Health services, and who have a mental disorder or provisional diagnosis, to transition to Adult Mental Health and Substance Use services.
- The Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions is leading the development of a transformational mental health and addiction strategy for the province. A key component of the strategy is a Child and Youth Plan to create a comprehensive, accessible mental health and addiction system. The scope of the Child and Youth Plan includes young people up to 25 years old and aims to further integrate culturally safe and trauma informed services. Shifting the service model to include youth to 25 would better support youth during and after their transition out of care.
- Through BC Housing, we are supporting youth to obtain appropriate and adequate housing as a priority group. For youth at risk of homelessness, we directly support youth through our Homeless Prevention Program, providing rent supplements and support services.
- An example of a unique housing partnership is in Kamloops with the Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Family and Community Services, which will create 31 units of housing. The project is an innovative model providing Aboriginal youth and youth aging out of care with housing under the same roof as Aboriginal elders.
- The Province is also providing funding for the BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness to hold a provincial meeting of Coalition members later this year. The meeting will assist Coalition members in developing a plan to end youth homelessness.

Improving services for British Columbia’s transitioning youth from care continues to be a priority for this government. As Premier, I am proud to share a commitment to change as we continue to build on the progress completed by this government to date. I commit to expand and improve supports to youth transitioning from care through the development of an action plan to be created by the Cross-Ministry working group. This action plan will meet the needs of transitioning youth and will be informed by the recommendations made in the policy memorandum, in consultation with youth from care. The plan will be developed with the goal of making life better for youth aging out of care, by improving the services they count on and

making life more affordable to ensure youth from care have the opportunities they need and deserve to succeed.

Again, thank you for writing and for advocating for vulnerable youth in our province.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John J. Horgan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John Horgan
Premier

pc: Honourable Katrine Conroy
Minister of Children and Family Development

Honourable Melanie Mark
Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training

Honourable Selina Robinson
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Honourable Shane Simpson
Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

Honourable Scott Fraser
Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

Honourable Judy Darcy
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions