

# FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

## News Release

March 17, 2022

### FNLNLC Applauds Increased Age for Supports to Youth from Government Care

(X̱w̱məθḵw̱əy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish) and sə̱lilw̱ətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLNLC) applauds the announcement by the Ministry for Child Development (MCFD) Minister, Mitzi Dean, that youth raised in government care will now be able to access much needed housing, mental health, educational and financial support up until the age of 27, with a commitment of \$35 million over the next three years to support this population.

“MCFD’s announcement to offer post-majority supports to youth in and from government care has been a long time in coming, and follows decades of advocacy by First Nations, youth from the government care system, and advocates”, stated Cheryl Casimer, First Nations Summit Political Executive member “Many programs offered by MCFD, such as the Agreements with Young Adults program have been highly restrictive and offered few results. Increased support for this vulnerable population of youth is needed now more than ever. Young First Nation adults from care experience some of the worst outcomes in the province, being 200x more likely to become homeless, 17x more likely to be hospitalized for a mental health crisis, and 5x more likely to die before the age of 25, when compared to their peers in the general population. These numbers are simply not acceptable, and we look forward to seeing a whole of government approach, working closely with rights holders, to addressing these dire outcomes”.

“The FNLNLC is strongly committed to holding BC accountable to the promises in Budget 2022, and while we acknowledge \$35 million is a substantial commitment, further resources may be necessary to ensure appropriate housing, financial resources, health, and transition supports are developed and implemented. Homelessness is at an all-time high for First Nations across BC, and we know that many of these are former youth in care who have aged out with nowhere to go and cut off from all resources and supports. This funding, including the availability of a monthly rent supplement, will go far to address the multiple housing barriers that are rooted in centuries of colonization, forced child removal, and dislocation of First Nations people from their lands and territories”, stated BCAFN Regional Chief, Terry Teegee “We would also like to applaud BC for being the first jurisdiction in Canada to make a full commitment to supporting youth who have grown up in government care, and acknowledge the alignment with the ongoing work to reform the First Nations Child and Family Services Program and Canada’s commitment to post-majority supports for First Nations youth from government care. We look forward to working together with Canada and BC to implement these important and critical changes”.



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“As the FNLC we remind BC of the Importance of working with First Nations to develop community-based supports and resources for their youth members who have been raised in the colonial child welfare system, and this must include repatriating and reconnecting displaced youth to their communities”, stated Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, secretary-treasurer of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. “Recognition of inherent rights and self-determination is essential for BC when working with First Nations in repairing past wrongs. The legacy of the Residential School system was carried on by the foster care system, as is evident in the 60’s Scoop and Millennium Scoop. Full implementation of the UN Declaration, including collaboration with First Nations rights holders is required for reconciling a flawed system of caring for our First Nation children. We are grateful to see these commitments from both the Province and Canada, and acknowledge this as a significant step forward, but remind them that there remains much more work to be done.”

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*The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).*

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