

# *Quotes Applicable to Basic Income for Young Adults from Care*

## Methodology

The following quotes were gathered from Ministry of Children and Family Development engagement data received by the Strategic Initiatives Branch between 2018 and 2019. To be considered relevant, a quote must meet one of the following:

- specifically reference the term Basic Income
- reference money as well as receiving relational support.
- speak to the cost of living and are not directly related to the AYA program.
- speak to automatically receiving funding/universal funding.

## Limitations

While the information is relevant to basic income related conversations, these quotes were gathered in relation to other engagement topics, including but not limited to youth transitions and the Agreements with Young Adults Program.

## Quotes

### Quotes from Young People

- If it [Agreements with Young Adults] was guaranteed – universal not applying automatically get it – Young person
- I was hoping for 'a relational model' but it felt more like a business transaction with my AYA worker. – Young person
- It is a very scary thing for any youth in care. Youth need skills to survive on own and finances to succeed. Would like to see a form of independent living for those after age 19 is needed. – Young Person
- AYA should be available for all who age out, even if I am just dealing with trauma and not getting to school. Seems so unfair that some youth have to go to income assistance just because they don't qualify for AYA. – Young Person
- We have nobody to help us with anything if we don't have a support worker to help us. We didn't have parents helping us before and we still don't after we turn 19. Funding to help with schooling, activities like going to the gym or a movie, driving lessons - any of that would of course be beyond awesome, but we also really need someone to help us along the way because I have nobody to turn to. I have been lucky to have my support worker but not everyone has one. I couldn't have made any of this progress without my support worker and get to go to college now, but no funding for it because I did not turn 19 in care, but I was in care for 5 years. I wish I could get AYA, that would be so appreciated and helpful, so I hope they change their eligibility criteria. I really hope Bridges doesn't go away because I'll be hooped without my support worker. – Young Person
- Should be more attention paid to mental health, depression and funding issues – AYA should not be just a cheque. – Young Person
- We should straight across the board get \$2000 because of everything [economy] that is changing and to avoid any discrimination. – Young Person

#### Quotes from Delegated Aboriginal Agency Staff

- [Agreements with Young Adults] Cannot be a transactional model, does not work for young people. Needs to be a relational model. – Delegated Aboriginal Agency Staff
- many young people do not have the cognitive abilities to manage money - they require different/additional support. – Delegated Aboriginal Agency Staff
- Program [Agreement with Young Adults] needs to be about more than finance benefit, needs to be a relational program that helps the young person transition to independence. – Delegated Aboriginal Agency Staff
- Young people 'aging out' require support with life skills, not just financial support. – Delegated Aboriginal Agency Staff
- Need to be careful about giving a large chunk of money to vulnerable young person who isn't ready to use it in a good way. – Delegated Aboriginal Agency Staff
- All youths need basic amount of support (regardless of whether they are going to school). Can consider requiring youths to, at the minimum, update their contact info to receive funding as incentives. – Delegated Aboriginal Agency Staff
- The youth that have aged out need other areas of support not just financial. – Delegated Aboriginal Agency Staff
- If it is only financial, we set youth up for failure, but if the supports encompass more they might be successful. – Delegated Aboriginal Agency Staff
- Young people require support after they turn 19, just as children not in care still need their parent's support. There should be a constant they can rely on, financial support isn't enough. – Delegated Aboriginal Agency Staff
- Being automatically opted in would be much more inclusive but option to opt out would need to be clear and can you opt back in if you wanted. – Delegated Aboriginal Agency Staff

#### Quotes from Community Support Workers

- There is a need for a broader range of options for youth transitioning to meet the variety of need/stages young people are in when they turn 19. - Community Support Worker
- AYA should be an "opt out" service, not something that young people have to "opt in". Transition planning becomes much different/better when you can count on certain supports. – Community Support Worker
- I think we should have a block funded model; every kid that ages out should have a block of funding and work with an AYA worker to determine what they need depending on where they are at. – Community Support Worker
- Cost of living and education has gone up and minimum wage has not kept pace. – Community Support Worker
- We if know young people are not eligible for AYA but could be accessing some other government support, why not make it simple and just saying if you were in care and are 19, you get AYA until you are 27. Then, based on what the young person needs and plans to do, they rest of the services are layered in (tuition waivers, mental health support, life skills classes). — Community Support Worker
- Consider a base level of basic needs support for all youth aging out of care. When you attached it to a criteria, it implies that "if you do this, then you are worthy/ worth \$1250, and if you don't, then you belong on welfare, which has stigma. Community Support Worker

## Re: Cabinet this week

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From: Dean, Mitzi MCF:EX <Mitzi.Dean@gov.bc.ca>  
To: Gotto, Sarah F MCF:EX  
Sent: January 11, 2021 10:37:30 AM PST

Yes thanks I'll join in cabinet.

The Honourable Mitzi Dean  
Minister of Children and Family Development  
Pronouns: she/her  
Telephone: (250) 387 1977

On Jan 11, 2021, at 9:55 AM, Gotto, Sarah F MCF:EX <Sarah.Gotto@gov.bc.ca> wrote:

Hello there.

I have confirmed there is room for you in Chambers if you would like to attend Cabinet on Wed from there (MS teams from your office is also fine). For Thursday and Friday at this point it is just MS Teams from your office but will let you know if that changes.

I will secure you a spot in Chambers if that is your wish.

Many thanks

Sarah

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**From:** Dean, Mitzi PREM:EX <Mitzi.Dean@gov.bc.ca>

**Sent:** January 9, 2021 4:44 PM

**To:** Gotto, Sarah F MCF:EX <Sarah.Gotto@gov.bc.ca>

**Cc:** Gunn, Paula MCF:EX <Paula.Gunn@gov.bc.ca>; McKay, Ashley MCF:EX <Ashley.McKay@gov.bc.ca>; Stojkovic, Josipa MCFD:EX <Josipa.Stojkovic@gov.bc.ca>; Morton, Kaitlin MCF:EX <Kaitlin.Morton@gov.bc.ca>; Hammond, Danika S MCF:EX <Danika.Hammond@gov.bc.ca>

**Subject:** Re: Minister's Schedule for Monday, Jan 11th Material Attached

Hi Sarah

Given the direction from Cab Ops I'll be in Victoria Wednesday Thursday and Friday this week. Please make sure this is relayed to whoever needs to know and our team for managing our numbers in the office. Let me know if I'll be in the cabinet room or my office. Thanks so much.

The Honourable Mitzi Dean  
Minister of Children and Family Development  
(Pronouns: she, her, hers, elle)  
Phone: 250.387.1977

On Jan 8, 2021, at 4:17 PM, Gotto, Sarah F MCF:EX <Sarah.Gotto@gov.bc.ca> wrote:

Good evening Minister. Here is your schedule for Monday, Jan 11th. Any concerns please let me know.

**CONTACTS FOR TECH ISSUES:**

**If you have any difficulties gaining access to any Government Meeting please reach out to me or Prempeh. Gov PREM Tech Number 250-953-5151 or**

**Tim Wynans 778-698-8225**

**\*\*For House Zoom participation assistance, Hansard Broadcasting and IT technical assistance is p. 778-401-6380 (Victoria)**

**For General LASS support the # is 778-401-6323 or email: [HelpDesk@leg.bc.ca](mailto:HelpDesk@leg.bc.ca)**

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**9:30-10:30 – Tripartite Meeting with Minister Miller – Material Attached – Speaking notes and Agenda – Documents 1-2**

Microsoft Teams meeting

**Join on your computer or mobile app**

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Paula will support Minister

**10:30-11:00 Caucus Meeting – Minister to join at 10:30 – Meeting is booked for 10:00-**

**11:00 – Material sent to MMD directly**

## Microsoft Teams meeting

**Join on your computer or mobile app**

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**Or call in (audio only)**

s.15; s.17

[Find a local number](#) | [Reset PIN](#)

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**11:45-12:05 – Meeting with BC Families of Complex Kids – Material Attached – Meeting Note and Attachment A and B – Documents 3-5**

## Microsoft Teams meeting

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Ashley and Paula will support

**12:30-1:00 – Joint Minister Briefing – Budget 2021 – Material Coming**

## Microsoft Teams meeting

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**1:00-2:15 – Meeting with CA's – Andrew will confirm dial in logistics**

**2:15-3:00 – Calendar/Invites Meeting – Verbal no materials**

## Microsoft Teams meeting

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MO Staff

**3:00-4:00 – Joint Minister Briefing with Minister Simons - Basic Income Panel Report -**

**Material Attached Documents 6-7 Did not attach the ppt as it is 500 pages but it is in the calendar invite**

**Join Zoom Meeting**

s.15; s.17

s.15; s.17

**4:15-4:45 – Weekly Check in with Minister Chen – No material**

s.15; s.17

Paula and Ashley

**4:45-5:15 – Joint Minister Briefing – Pre-Brief to Cabinet Retreat – Material TBC**

## Microsoft Teams meeting

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Paula and Ashley

**5:15-5:45 – Weekly Check in with DM – Verbal update**

## Microsoft Teams meeting

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MA's to support

TIME	MEETING	SUBJECT	STAFF SUPPORT	
9:30-10:30	Tripartite Meeting	TWG Meeting **Material Attached**	Paula	Microsoft Teams meeting Join on your computer or mobile app <a href="#">Click here to join the meeting</a> <a href="#">Learn More</a>   <a href="#">Meeting options</a>
10:30 - 11:00	Caucus	Government Meeting	NA	Microsoft Teams meeting Join on your computer or mobile app <a href="#">Click here to join the meeting</a> Or call in (audio only) s.15; s.17  <a href="#">Find a local number</a>   <a href="#">Reset PIN</a> <a href="#">Learn More</a>   <a href="#">Meeting options</a>
11:45 - 12:05	Meeting with BC Families of Complex Kids	Stakeholder Meeting **Material Attached**	Ashley Paula	Microsoft Teams meeting Join on your computer or mobile app <a href="#">Click here to join the meeting</a> <a href="#">Learn More</a>   <a href="#">Meeting options</a>
12:30 - 1:00	Minister Briefing	Budget 2021 **Material Coming**	Paula Ashley Sarena Rob Kevena	Microsoft Teams meeting Join on your computer or mobile app <a href="#">Click here to join the meeting</a> <a href="#">Learn More</a>   <a href="#">Meeting options</a>
1:00-2:15	Meeting with CA's	NA	CA's	Andrew to confirm logistics
2:15-3:00	Calendar/Scheduling Meeting	Weekly Meeting	MO Staff	Microsoft Teams meeting Join on your computer or mobile app <a href="#">Click here to join the meeting</a> <a href="#">Learn More</a>   <a href="#">Meeting options</a>
3:00-4:00	Joint Minister Briefing MCFD/SDPR	Basic Income	MA's DM Carolyn	Join Zoom Meeting s.15; s.17

		<b>Panel Report</b> <b>**Material Attached**</b>		s.15; s.17
<b>4:15-4:45</b>	<b>Check in with Minister Chen</b>	<b>Weekly Meeting</b>	<b>MA's</b>	
<b>4:45-5:15</b>	<b>Joint Minister Pre-Brief</b>	<b>Cabinet Retreat</b> <b>**Material to come**</b>	<b>MA's Carolyn DM</b>	<b>Microsoft Teams mee</b> Join on your computer or mobile app <a href="#">Click here to join the meeting</a> <a href="#">Learn More</a>   <a href="#">Meeting options</a>
<b>5:15-5:45</b>	<b>Check in with DM</b>	<b>Weekly Meeting</b>	<b>DM MA's</b>	<b>Microsoft Teams mee</b> Join on your computer or mobile app <a href="#">Click here to join the meeting</a> <a href="#">Learn More</a>   <a href="#">Meeting options</a>

**Have a great weekend and please don't hesitate to reach out if you need anything.**

**Sarah**

<2020JAN11\_ISC-MCFD-FNLC Tripartite Meeting.docx>

<SN\_MMD\_Introductory FNLC ISC MCFD Mtg - Jan 8 2020 - DRAFT for MO.docx>

<255925\_Meeting note for MMD\_Introductory call with Representative of BC Families of Complex Kids (003).docx>

<Attachment A\_April 30th Report on BC Family Survey Children and Youth with Special Needs.pdf>

<Attachment B\_ENOUGH IS ENOUGH\_complexkids2020gmail.pdf>

<256691 Basic Income IBN .docx>

<256691 Appendix A Pages from Final Report BC Expert Panel on Basic Income.pdf>

## FYI: Basic Income Panel Report

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From: Lauvaas, Kirsten GCPE:EX <Kirsten.Lauvaas@gov.bc.ca>  
To: Gunn, Paula MCF:EX <Paula.Gunn@gov.bc.ca>, McKay, Ashley MCF:EX  
<Ashley.McKay@gov.bc.ca>, Stojkovic, Josipa MCFD:EX  
<Josipa.Stojkovic@gov.bc.ca>, Stojkovic, Josipa MCF:EX  
Cc: Larabee, Shawn G GCPE:EX <Shawn.G.Larabee@gov.bc.ca>, Bond, Allison  
MCF:EX <Allison.Bond@gov.bc.ca>, Kamper, Carolyn MCF:EX  
<Carolyn.Kamper@gov.bc.ca>, Heavener, Cory R MCF:EX  
<Cory.Heavener@gov.bc.ca>  
Sent: January 27, 2021 4:24:12 PM PST  
Attachments: 2021SDPR0005-000152.pdf, KM\_MLA\_Basic Income Report\_Jan  
28\_FINAL.docx

Hi All,

Here's final statement and KM document (which is also being shared with MLAs) on the Basic Income Panel Report. The Panel is holding a media briefing tomorrow at 10:15 a.m. that SDPR will monitor. MNS's statement is being issued at 11:30 a.m. and he will do reactive media only.

It's suggested that we don't work to amplify this since we're not committing to a specific course of action/investment at this point.

Cheers,

**Kirsten Lauvaas** (*she/her*)

Government Communications and Public Engagement

Ministry of Children and Family Development

Ph: 250 356-1553 | Cell: 250 213-5572

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## STATEMENT

For Immediate Release  
2021SDPR0005-000152  
Jan. 28, 2021

Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

### **Minister's statement on basic income report**

VICTORIA – Nicholas Simons, Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, has issued the following statement in response to the expert panel on basic income's report to government:

"I thank the expert panel for its hard work over the past two years to produce its comprehensive report, *Covering All the Basics: Reforms for a More Just Society*.

"The panel was appointed in July 2018 to assess the feasibility of a basic income and basic income pilot in B.C., and to examine how the values and principles of a basic income can be used to improve our existing income and social support systems.

"The panel has recommended widening B.C.'s existing foundation of social supports and services to address the complex needs and unique circumstances of individuals and families instead of pursuing a basic income model or pilot.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us how important a strong social safety net is to protect people and the economy. The panel has made 65 thoughtful recommendations on how to improve our existing support systems.

"We are now reviewing them closely while we build an economic recovery that supports all British Columbians. We continue to implement *TogetherBC*, the province's poverty reduction strategy, to help reduce poverty and improve social inclusion."

### **Learn More:**

Read the final report, *Covering All the Basics: Reforms for a more just society*:

[https://bcbasicincomepanel.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Final\\_Report\\_BC\\_Basic\\_Income\\_Panel.pdf](https://bcbasicincomepanel.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Final_Report_BC_Basic_Income_Panel.pdf)

Read the Province's poverty reduction strategy, *TogetherBC*:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/initiatives-plans-strategies/poverty-reduction-strategy/togetherbc.pdf>



**Contact:**

Vivian Thomas  
Communications Director  
Ministry of Social Development and Poverty  
Reduction  
778 974-5809

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## KEY MESSAGES

### Expert Panel on Basic Income Report, Covering All the Basics: Reforms for a More Just Society Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction Jan. 28, 2021

**Summary:** In July 2018, Government announced the creation of an expert panel to study the feasibility of implementing basic income in British Columbia. The panel submitted their final report, *Covering All the Basics: Reforms for a More Just Society*, to government and publicly released the report Jan. 28, 2021. The panel made 65 recommendations to improve B.C.'s current system of supports and recommended against implementing basic income and against running a basic income pilot.

- We thank the Expert Panel for their two years of research and their work to produce a comprehensive report on basic income.
- The panel made 65 recommendations to improve the existing systems of support that people rely on and recommended against implementing a basic income or a basic income pilot in B.C.
- We will be examining these recommendations in context of the province's poverty reduction strategy, TogetherBC, and as part of our ongoing work on a strong, inclusive economic recovery from COVID-19.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted how important a strong social safety net is for protecting people and our economy.

#### Poverty Reduction

- Since July 2017 we've taken many actions to reduce poverty, including legislating targets to reduce overall poverty by 25% and child poverty by 50% by 2024. Actions to date include:
  - Increased income assistance rates by \$150 per month – first increases in over 10 years.
  - We've increased the minimum wage to \$14.60/hour and are increasing to \$15.20/hour June 2021
  - As of October 2020, about 290,000 families are receiving extra support from the new BC Child Opportunity Benefit.
  - As of January 1, 2021, we increased the annual earnings exemptions for people on disability assistance to \$15,000 per year.

#### COVID-19 Response

- The Province's \$10 billion COVID-19 response is protecting people's health and livelihoods and investing in stronger communities and a bright future.
- This included ensuring up to 3.7 million British Columbians were eligible for the BC Recovery Benefit and individuals can apply to receive up to \$500 and families up to \$1000; and providing an extra \$300/month crisis supplement for people on income assistance and disability assistance from April to December 2020 and \$150/month from January to March 2021.

## **APPENDIX A – Summary of Basic Income Recommendations**

### **Reforms targeting people with disabilities**

1. Replace disability subcategories
2. Reform application process
3. Revise application forms
4. Eliminate DA Asset test
5. Relax DA income test
6. Reform adjudication process
7. Eliminate reassessment
8. Convert DA to a targeted basic income
9. Increase DA benefit to MBM threshold
10. Lower DA BRR and maintain income exemption
11. Create public and community employment
12. Integrate support for addiction and mental health disabilities
13. Review addiction Support

### **Reforms targeting single working-age adults**

14. Eliminate work-search requirement
15. Engage federal government about COVID-19 recovery benefit rationalization
16. Initially maintain current Temporary Assistance income test
17. Increase TA income test threshold in medium term
18. Eliminate TA asset test
19. Extend TA streamlined reapplication
20. Increase TA benefit levels by making COVID-19 emergency \$300 supplement permanent
21. Lower TA BRR and maintain income exemption
22. Evaluate training supports
23. Expand earnings supplement

### **Extended health basic service**

24. Convert extended health supplements to a basic service
25. Combine support and shelter allowance
26. Expand targeted supportive housing
27. B.C Rent Assist refundable tax credit

### **Intensive work support basic service**

28. Assisted to Work basic service
29. Joint rehabilitation and work support agency

### **Reforms targeting families with children**

30. Refocus Child Opportunity Benefit

### **Reforms targeted to young adults**

31. Increase MCFD resources
32. Enhance transition planning and community support capacity
33. Extend Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) education and training duration

- 34. Enhance AYA life skills support
- 35. Former youth in care Assisted to Work eligibility
- 36. Targeted basic income for former youth in care
- 37. Initiate basic income with community support engagement
- 38. Mandate a ministry to support former youth in care
- 39. Establish B.C Learning Bond
- 40. Contribute B.C. Learning Bond for children in care
- 41. Create B.C. Career Trek program

#### **Reforms targeting women fleeing violence**

- 42. Enhance housing for women fleeing violence
- 43. Create three-tiered domestic violence program

#### **Labour regulations reform**

- 44. Develop gig work employment standards
- 45. Review *Employment Standards Act* exclusions
- 46. Enhance proactive *Employment Standards Act* Enforcement
- 47. Improve employment standards for fissured work
- 48. Review *Labour Relations Code* unionization provisions
- 49. Proactively facilitate Industrial Councils
- 50. Extend *Labour Relations Code* successor rights
- 51. Rationalize employee definitions across programs

#### **System and IA cross-cutting reforms**

- 52. Combine refundable tax credits into Dogwood Benefit
- 53. Rationalize income definition for income testing purposes
- 54. Engage federal government to reduce tax filing barriers
- 55. Engage federal government to increase benefit delivery responsiveness
- 56. Engage federal government to streamline administrative tax data sharing
- 57. Develop an identification and verification platform for non-tax filers to increase benefits access
- 58. Automate informing applicants of eligibility for other programs
- 59. Enhance cross-program system navigation
- 60. Establish system governance
- 61. Index Income Assistance rates to MBM threshold changes
- 62. Increase Income Assistance staff resources
- 63. Rigorously evaluate major reforms
- 64. Create linked administrative data for policy development
- 65. Consider human rights-based consultations

## Follow-Up Questions on Guaranteed Income for Youth Transitioning from Care

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It is our understanding that your Support and Financial Assistance Agreement (SFAA) program allows young people transitioning from care in Alberta to have automatic access to financial and other supports that are responsive to the youth's needs.

Support and Financial Assistance Agreement (SFAA) Questions:

- You have said there is no cap on support dollars under this program. Is there an assessment tool that workers use? How do you budget for this (since there is no cap)?

There is no specific assessment tool for this program, only the qualification to receive the program based on prior CS involvement as specified by the policy. The program can potentially offer financial *and/or* supportive services; both are provided based on the individual's need, their Transition to Independence Plan, and through dialog with the client to identify their goals. Currently, on a regional level, offices have developed their own subset "budget" they apply to SFAA clients that dictate how much can be spent on rent, bus passes, household costs etc. This has ultimately led to disparities between clients accessing the same program provincially, and is now being reviewed in favour of a different approach not yet determined. I should stress that this is NOT just a financial program as the title of this document suggests. Sometimes what is provided is just the supportive elements, such as counselling etc.

- How do you balance social worker discretion and social worker values from region to region? For example, one SW might see the value in providing young people dollars for air travel to another province to connect with family several times a year.

As highlighted in the above response, regional differences in how the program is expressed are occurring, and we are now working to resolve provincially to create consistency. All expenses for the client with a SFAA are and would be subject to approval of the workers Supervisor and Manager. Alberta's Children's Services does operate with our Child Intervention Practice Principles as a common frame of reference on how we are to be interacting with our clients.

- What is the philosophical view underpinning these supports – is it intended to meet basic needs or provide supports to allow the youth to thrive?

The philosophical underpinnings are identified in the current policy. (See attached)

- Do you have any figures on average spending for youth on SFAAs?

Alberta Children's Services does not specifically collect this information. Variation on costs would be currently based on multiple factors, some of which could potentially be the region the

youth is living in and their pre-set budget, the goals of the youth, medical expenses, and current rental rates in their city...etc. looking at an “ average” at this point in time may be misleading.

- Do you have statistics on the number of people who access Support and Financial Assistance Agreements? Breakdown by gender and Indigenous status. How many people on this program go on to Advancing Futures?

Please refer to the attached document (Active SFAA with AFB)

- Is the SFAA ever more financial support than the Advancing Futures? If so, what is the incentive to move into the Advancing Futures program?

A SFAA and the Advancing futures Bursary can be accessed concurrently. The worker for the young adult and the Advancing futures program would collaborate to ensure there is no duplication of funding, but that fundamentally, the client retains all current services and supports. The purpose of Advancing Futures is to provide transitional supports to assist youth transitioning out of care navigate adult systems and access funding whilst attending post-secondary educational program such as a certificate, trade, license, diploma or degree. Youth enrolled with Advancing Futures are linked with a Program Coordinator who provide day to day supports as the youth requires; 85% of a Program Coordinators responsibilities are to provide transitional supports and the remaining 15% is focused on the financial administration of the award. SFAA are in place to ensure former children in care are provided for in early adulthood, just as any parent would of their children as they enter young adulthood. The programs are both distinct in their purpose.

Advancing Futures has pre-set monthly living allowance and supplemental benefits (transportation, child care, health benefits, and damage deposits) youth are eligible to receive.

- Does anyone ever opt out of the SFAA, if so, why?

Yes, some young adults decide to not accept SFAA's – but this is rare. A process is outlined in the SFAA policy for this circumstance to ensure that the decision is made only at the client's request. Clients who qualify for the SFAA can come back to Children's Services and begin accessing the program up to their 24<sup>th</sup> birthday should they change their mind. SFAA's are provided to any of our clients who meet the qualifications stated in policy.

- Are there considerations to expand SFAA to children in out of care options (ie. Living with grandparents instead of coming into care, etc.)?

SFAA are only accessible to qualifying adults 18 to 24 years of age. Children who reside with Kin are provided supports though other established funding and support paths. Based on individual

circumstance, a child who had previously resided with kin may still qualify for SFAA on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday based on their legal status whilst in care.

- **What proportion of those youth in SFAA go on to access income assistance after participating in the program?**

More clarity may be needed to answer this question – I’m not clear on what programming “income assistance” is referring to specifically, for clients who qualify for Adult disability funding, part of the transition process from Children’s Service involves engaging our partners in disability services to ensure they are part of the transition planning. We are in a unique position to provide both services concurrently in some circumstances, given the client’s age and legal status, and so dialog between ministries occurs to determine who is providing what, and when those pieces will transition in full to the adult service provider. The dialog and joint planning is key to ensure neither duplication of funding, or omission of services occurs.

- **What proportion of those youth in Advancing Futures go on to access income assistance after participating in the program?**

Alberta Children’s services does not specifically collect this information.

- **What outcomes can you share with us as it relates to both programs (ie. Educational achievement, housing, etc).**

With regard to SFAA I am unclear what outcomes you would be looking for here. Can you be more specific?

Advancing futures: Historically 82% of youth who access Advancing Futures complete their program of study during the fiscal year. Since 2004 (the inception of the program), over 2625 youth have received funding and over 1200 youth have graduated with a certificate, trade, diploma or degree. Currently over 4900 youth met the eligibility criteria; historically 12% access the program per year.

- **Can your Indigenous child welfare organizations administer these programs (SFAAs and Advancing Futures) or is it only the Ministry?**

Alberta’s Delegated First Nation Agencies are part of Children’s Services, and offer SFAA to their clients. The Advancing Futures Bursary program is operated centrally out of the ministry, and all qualifying Children’s Services clients, which includes DFNA clients, are eligible to apply for the program.

- **How do you deal with youth with substance use issues, and providing them with funding from SFAA?**

SFAA are provided to individuals 18-24, and are legally adults. Some our clients may be receiving supports in conjunction with a SFAA to address substance use issues through various treatment

programs. The SFAA policy states that all clients eligible for SFAA are to receive the program. In this instance the worker will need to provide a higher level of support to ensure safety.

- How does your program adapt to support youth with special needs and youth involved with the justice system, whether incarcerated or not?

The program itself would not need to be adapted, only the approach that the worker would use to support the individual accessing the program. The funding and supports provided would respond to the circumstances of the individual. For example, a young adult on SFAA who may have been incarcerated for a short period of time, could have their funding continued to allow their apartment to be maintained for their release to avoid them being homeless.

Your online application:

- When did you develop your online application process? How long has it been in place? Is it effective?
  - Advancing Futures is currently in the process of developing an on-line application. There is a unit with the Government of Alberta, under the Ministry of Service Alberta who provides this service to program areas. We are scheduled to have the on-line application complete by summer 2019.
- We are trying to do some costing of how much it would cost us to implement an online application system? Can you provide any figures on the development and implementation of the system? How is it working and are there any future improvements planned?
  - Advancing Futures – there is no costing data available, as the service is provided by another Ministry.
- Who monitors the online system and takes the applications? For example, do you have a central hub of people dealing with this? If yes, how many people does it take to manage it?
  - Advancing Futures – the program currently receives applications centrally. One Bursary Assistant is responsible for the initial intake and review of all applications; the majority of applications are received through fax/e-mail. Applications are reviewed on an individual basis, as guidelines of the program are applied on a case-by case basis. The program recently completed a workload assessment review. Based on the review of the Bursary Assistant role, an additional Bursary Assistant will be added to the team to assist in the initial intake, review of the applications and other responsibilities of the role. Once the applications are entered into our database they are provided to a Program Coordinator who processes the application and sets it to be conditionally approved. Once the youth completes the conditional approval requirements the application is set to be approved. There are currently eight Program Coordinators in Advancing Futures who provide daily transitional support to youth. Program Coordinators currently have over 150 current and prospective youth on their caseloads. Based on roles and responsibilities (provision of transitional supports and award administration) Program Coordinators should have a caseload of 75 youth. Advancing Futures has three application deadlines per year; June 1 (fall/winter term), October 1 (winter term) and February 1 (spring/summer term). Historically the largest number of applications are received during the June 1 intake, as students are able to apply for the entire academic



year. In 2018-19, 980 applications were received and 792 youth were approved to receive supports and funding. Although the remaining 188 youth did not complete the conditional approval process, Program Coordinators continue to provide transitional supports to the youth to determine what supports are needed for the youth to be ready, willing and able to attend post-secondary.

## Housing

- Is affordable housing an issue for youth transitioning from care in Alberta? If so, how do you manage this?

The provincial policy for SFAA does not speak to funding amounts. Individual service regions have attempted to do so – in some cases based on current market values for rent in their community, but no limit is set out. Workers may have a conversation with young adults to find living accommodation that would be sustainable to a funding program they are transitioning to, or would be sustainable based on their individual circumstance. Safety must also be considered above simply cost, ensuring that young adults are not being put at risk in order to save money.

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT  
INFORMATION NOTE**

**DATE:** June 3, 2020  
**CLIFF#:** 250674

**DATE OF PREVIOUS NOTE (if applicable):** N/A  
**PREVIOUS CLIFF # (if applicable):** N/A

**PREPARED FOR:** Allison Bond, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Children & Family Development

**ISSUE:** Seeking approval to share information on AYA to the Basic Income Panel

**BACKGROUND:**

On March 17, 2020 the Strategic Priorities Division (SPD) staff met with Dr. William Warburton, the lead researcher of an initiative inclusive of over 50 academics who are examining basic guaranteed income to address income inequality and poverty reduction. As part of this work, this group will be producing an interim report for government by July 31, 2020, and a final report by the end of the calendar year. The purpose of the meeting was to explore MCFD's perspective on basic income and statistics related to young adults from care.

Additionally, there was a further meeting held on May 12, 2020, between SPD, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR) and a panel of researchers and their consultant firm, Perrin Thorau, from the basic income research project to discuss the project and MCFD's emergency response measures. During this meeting, SPD committed to sharing information on what MCFD is doing to reimagine youth transitions.

**DISCUSSION:**

Through research and engagement, a number of key challenges facing youth and young adults were identified that highlight some of the barriers to youth transitioning from government care. One of the most common issues identified in engagement and reports on youth transitions is that the level of financial support available for housing and living expenses is inadequate and does not meet the living needs of young adults.

However, the research and engagement also highlighted young adults require further supports beyond monetary needs, most notably relational supports that provide guidance, emotional support, cultural connections, and help to build a sense of belonging and identity during their transition to adulthood.

Some of the data in the briefing for RCY on AYA uptake based on FY 2017/18 is not publicly available but are subject to FOI. The issues identified in the quotes and monthly payment information would be implied or directly addressed in the already available What We Heard Report.

**NEXT STEPS:**

Upon Deputy Minister approval send the information package to the panel via e-mail.

s.13

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**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT  
INFORMATION NOTE**

**DATE:** January 5, 2021

**CLIFF#:** 256691

**PREPARED FOR:** Honourable Mitzi Dean, Minister of Children and Family Development

**ISSUE:** Basic Income (BI) Panel Report Recommendations – MCFD implications.

**BACKGROUND:**

Youth transitioning out of care is a priority for government and is a renewed focus in the MCFD and SDPR mandate letter commitments, particularly as it relates to poverty reduction and building upon transition supports to reach all youth aging out of government care.

On July 3, 2018, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR) announced the creation of an expert committee (the panel) to explore the feasibility of BI in British Columbia. The work was expected to outline areas that could be explored through a pilot project.

The panel concluded that a pilot project would not generate the benefits that a long-term approach could achieve, nor is a government funded universal BI program financially feasible. Rather, the report acknowledged the enhanced vulnerabilities of certain groups (individuals with disabilities, youth in/from government care, gender-based violence) and called for specific reforms to better meet their unique needs. See Appendix A for an excerpt of report's recommendations that relate to youth aging out of care.

65 recommendations were put forward, 11 of which were targeted to youth and young adults. The key recommendations did not identify a lead ministry however, obvious MCFD implications include:

- Increase MCFD resources.
- Enhance transition planning and community support capacity.
- Extend the Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) program education and training duration.
- Enhance the AYA program life-skills support.
- Create targeted BI for former youth in care.
- Initiate BI with community support engagement.

s.13

s.13

The proposed approach is to implement new policies incrementally, evaluate them, and consult with key partner groups before making subsequent adjustments. s.13  
s.13

**DISCUSSION:**

Staff engaged with the panel over the summer and fall of 2020, and provided feedback/advice regarding youth transition issues, including providing key source documents from engagement, research and jurisdictional scans that are informing government work.

The panel supports the priority to improve outcomes for youth aging out of care. s.13; s.17  
s.13; s.17

MCFD does not have a mandate to support youth once they turn 19, other than through the AYA and Services to Adults with Developmental Disabilities (STADD) programs. Many of the panel's recommendations require a mandate to support post majority youth, legislation and policy change, significant new funding and require further consideration on how they would be operationalized.

For instance,  
s.13; s.17

The recommendations within the BI report require significant investment, consultation with former youth and care and key stakeholders, change management, and an overhaul of existing legislation, policies and practices.

Many MCFD advocates see BI as a tool that can be applied to several important social issues, like poverty, that will have collateral benefits, such as improving health and community development.

## **NEXT STEPS:**

s.13

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

Appendix A – Pages from Final Report BC Expert Panel on Basic Income.

Appendix B – SDPR's presentation to P&P.

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## 8. Reforms targeting young adults

We will split this discussion into a component examining policies for youth aging out of the government's care and a component focusing on other young adults from low-income backgrounds.<sup>120</sup> Youth transitioning out of care face a set of distinct issues that call for setting up specific supports for them, but other young adults from low-income backgrounds need help with education, and that is the focus of our recommendations for that group.

There are several programs for young adults currently in place; these were described and analyzed in Part 4, Section 5.7 (Youth Aging Out of Care). They include the Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) program; the tuition waiver program, which waives mandatory fees, including tuition, at all B.C. public post-secondary institutions for eligible youth in care and youth aging out of care; and the Youth Education Assistance Fund, which provides grant funding to eligible former children in care who are attending post-secondary education on a full-time basis.

Improving youth transitions involves many organizations, including multiple ministries, Delegated Aboriginal Agencies, and other agencies. Resources and mandates are siloed, and it is difficult for youth and young adults to know how to navigate government resources.

### 8.1 Youth aging out of care

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) is responsible for, among other things, supporting children and their families where the safety and well-being of children may be at risk. The stated goal of the ministry is to support families to reduce the vulnerability of these children wherever possible, keeping children safe within their family home environment. If a child or youth cannot stay safely with their family, they are placed in an out-of-care arrangement (e.g., with extended family). If an out-of-care arrangement is not possible, then a child will be “taken into care”—that is, legal guardianship for the child is taken over by the Director of Child Welfare and the child is placed with a foster family, contracted residential agency, or another arrangement. Both out-of-care and in-care arrangements can continue until the youth's 19th birthday, at which point they “age out” of the system.

One alternative to being taken into care for vulnerable youth aged 16–18 is Youth Agreements. These are agreements that may be entered into with youth who “experience a significant adverse condition such as homelessness, behavioural or mental disorders, severe substance abuse or sexual exploitation *and* they cannot live with their family *and* government care is not the best option” (Turpel-Lafond, 2014). These agreements are for youth with “out-of-care” status, and they specify financial and caseworker supports and a plan for moving toward independence. The initial plan is for three months

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<sup>120</sup> Youth are defined as being under 19 years of age and young adults are defined as being 19 years and over.

and is then renewable for six-month spells but, like foster care, ends at the youth's 19th birthday. The corresponding agreement for youth in care is called an Independent Living Agreement and includes the same components as a Youth Agreement. For simplicity, we refer to both as Youth Agreements.

Approximately 1,000 young people age out of the system each year, including from in-care and out-of-care status. It is important to note that Indigenous children are vastly over-represented. Of the 7,210 children and youth in care in B.C. in 2015, 61% were Indigenous, while only 8% of children under age 18 in the overall provincial population are Indigenous (Shaffer et al., 2016).

There is no government agency with a specific mandate to support youth aging out of the system or who have been under the system's jurisdiction for significant parts of their childhood. Many youth who are in the system at their 19th birthday have no financial support or family connection. To get support, many of these youth have to turn to the Income Assistance system as young adults. As noted by the former Representative for Children and Youth, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, though, the needs of young people aging out of care are "profoundly different from those of the general population of unemployed adults" (Turpel-Lafond, 2014, p. 29).

The AYA program provided by MCFD supports education, rehabilitation, and life-skills development programs for former youth in care,<sup>121</sup> but there is not a general mandate from government for the ministry to support this group, and the program is not fully funded. Agreements under the AYA program provide maximum financial benefits of up to \$1,250 a month for periods of up to six months at a time and 48 months in aggregate for the period up to the recipient's 27th birthday. Changes made in 2018 extended the program's original maximum duration and the maximum age of access, as well as increasing the maximum monthly benefit.

In addition to access to supplemental benefits to pay for extra living costs, such as a baby crib or extra costs for medications, AYA funding can be used to cover monthly living costs, such as rent, transportation, and tuition that is not covered by the tuition waiver program. Several post-secondary institutions, including the University of British Columbia, initially took up Turpel-Lafond's 2014 challenge and made tuition free for former children in care. The initiative has now been extended to all post-secondary institutions in B.C.

There are only a few social workers dedicated to the AYA program for the whole province. Some guardianship social workers and youth workers also participate in administering the program in addition to their caseload of children and youth under 19 years. Seven out of 24 Delegated Aboriginal Agencies also administer AYAs. The AYA program has a component which funds recipients to participate in life-skills programs but there is no direct funding for life-skills service providers. Changes have been made to

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<sup>121</sup> Cultural programs are also now included under the AYA life-skills program policy to help Indigenous young adults connect with their culture and traditions.



life-skills programs in response to the pandemic, working to make the AYA program more accessible through low-barrier life-skills programs that also included a component of cultural education for Indigenous participants. COVID-19 emergency measures also included temporary changes to the rehabilitation stream to allow young adults to access AYA funding through a broader range of mental health supports and services.

Take-up rates of AYA are low—only 12% of eligible young adults in 2015 rising to 16% in 2019. Currently 35% of youth who age out of care go on an AYA within 12 months, but this still leaves nearly two-thirds who do not access this program. Moreover, of those who take up the program, 34% are Indigenous and 66% are non-Indigenous—almost exactly the reverse of the composition of the former youth in care population as a whole (Shaffer et al., 2016). AYA support for post-secondary education is particularly unbalanced relative to the eligible population, with the program being heavily and disproportionately taken up by non-Indigenous females, although that has shifted somewhat under the COVID-19 emergency measures.

It is certainly good that such a program is being offered and used, but the numbers point to a large disconnect between the program and the majority of former youth in care. Many require social supports in order to get to the point where they can reasonably consider post-secondary education, life-skills programs only partially provide these supports, and many people require more wraparound support to prepare themselves.

In addition, failure to succeed in any of the education or program streams under AYA results in loss of support as a breach of their agreement under AYA, and no support is provided to help them try again or try something else. Adequacy could be improved by providing stable, ongoing support in terms of cash transfers and basic services sufficient to meet basic needs for a reasonable period to enable people to transition into independent adulthood.

### Recommendations

The outcomes described in Part 4, Section 5.7 (Youth Aging Out of Care), make it clear that it would be valuable to provide considerable additional resources for young adults who have had previous experience with the child welfare system. Most importantly, this is a matter of justice, and there is room to improve the current program framework in that respect, as established in Part 4.

For these youth to meet our hoped-for goals of self-efficacy and a feeling of social inclusion, they will need support that gains their trust. For them to truly have the same opportunities as youth who did not experience their tumultuous childhoods, the government needs to provide the same kinds of supports that any parent would give to their young adult children. Secondly, given the rates of Income Assistance use and low educational completion rates among these youth, there is surely an argument for later cost savings from investing in them when they are young.

To understand how to address these problems, it is instructive to turn to the voices of the youth themselves and those of people who work with them. The following are some of the quotes gathered from MCFD engagement data received by the Strategic Initiatives Branch between 2018 and 2019:

“We have nobody to help us with anything if we don't have a support worker to help us. We didn't have parents helping us before and we still don't after we turn 19. Funding to help with schooling, activities like going to the gym or a movie, driving lessons - any of that would of course be beyond awesome, but we also really need someone to help us along the way because I have nobody to turn to. I have been lucky to have my support worker but not everyone has one. I couldn't have made any of this progress without my support worker and get to go to college now, but no funding for it because I did not turn 19 in care, but I was in care for 5 years. I wish I could get AYA, that would be so appreciated and helpful, so I hope they change their eligibility criteria. I really hope Bridges doesn't go away because I'll be hooped without my support worker.” (Young person)

“Should be more attention paid to mental health, depression and funding issues—AYA should not be just a cheque.” (Young person)

“Program [Agreement with Young Adults] needs to be about more than finance benefit, needs to be a relational program that helps the young person transition to independence.” (Delegated Aboriginal Agency staff member)

“Young people ‘aging out’ require support with life skills, not just financial support.” (Delegated Aboriginal Agency staff member)

And from Doucet et al. (2017)—a collaborative video project with a group of co-researchers who were former youth in care:

“All co-researchers expressed frustration with the cut-off of supports at the age of majority. They emphasized that the lack of guidance and support received during their time in care in preparation for their transition to adulthood negatively affected their lives after ‘aging out’ of the system. Many felt a sense of loss and isolation after leaving care, as they had no continued support system despite still being at risk of experiencing significant difficulties.” (p. 53)

“All co-researchers expressed that the child welfare system’s sole focus on independent living prevents youth ‘aging out’ of care to form lasting and healthy relationships, and forces them into isolation and to grow up too fast. While learning life skills such as budgeting, cooking, and cleaning were deemed important to a young person’s

functioning, being connected to others who can provide continuous mentoring, support and nurturing throughout adulthood was considered equally as important.” (p. 56)

These quotes present a common theme: young people aging out of care are certainly lacking resources, but what they need to make any financial resources useful is true personal support and attachment. To us, this is clearly a situation where offering a basic income alone would fall far short of what is needed. What these youth appear to be looking for is not simply independence—financial or otherwise—but the combination of the opportunity to try out their independence with a feeling they have a true base of support that other youth enjoy.

Shaffer et al. (2016) discuss the concept of “connected autonomy” and state that while the system emphasizes independence, “a consistent theme emerging from a broad range of studies: youth aging out of care, while striving to live independently, require social supports and community connections that facilitate relationship-building and improved mental wellbeing, among other important benefits” (vol. 3, p. 20).

Based on this, the Vancouver Foundation’s Fostering Change Initiative argue that “young people leaving foster care should be confident they have at least three things to count on until age 25.

1. Consistent financial support with basic living costs like housing, transit, and food while they attend school, learn skills, and find work.
2. Long-term relationships with caring dependable adults for support, advice, and references, so that they always have somewhere to turn.
3. A chance to connect and contribute to their communities through creative, cultural, and volunteer activities, so that they feel like they belong.” (Shaffer et al., 2016, vol. 3, p. 21).

This way of looking at what is required fits closely with the joint goals of autonomy, efficacy, and social connection underlying our justice-based objective, set out in Part 2, and we agree with Shaffer et al.’s assessment. We recommend reforms in four main areas. Given the very substantial over-representation of Indigenous children, families, and youth in these systems, any change should be done in the context of partnerships with Indigenous communities both on and off reserve. We note that new federal legislation, *An Act Respecting First Nations, Métis and Inuit Children and Youth*, includes national principles and standards, along with providing communities jurisdiction over child and family services. This legislation will change the system for Indigenous children and youth.

### *MCFD resources*

Truly addressing the issues for youth aging out of care requires continuous improvement of the system supporting them before age 19. The existing system seems to be under-resourced to the point where the balance between addressing emergency child protection issues and providing proactive family and child support services is skewed to the former. We are not expert in these systems, and this area is beyond the scope of our mandate, so we don't provide specific recommendations for change.

Nevertheless, some themes seem obvious. Children (and their families) would benefit from consistent support from one support worker over time, allowing real connections to be made and providing the child with at least one reliable personal connection whatever other tumult they face, if permitted by the resources available. Doing that almost certainly requires substantially increasing the number of staff to the point where their caseloads are small enough that they are able to spend more time with the children in their charge.

**Recommendation 31 (short term):** Increase Ministry of Children and Family Development funding related to child protection and family services, increasing social worker resources with the objective of establishing longer-term continuity of contact between families, vulnerable children and children in care, and ministry social workers.

### *Community support and engagement*

As Shaffer et al. (2016) point out, there is an existing network of community organizations helping youth aging out of care. The government should determine which organizations are being the most effective and provide them with the resources to provide a reliable network of options for these youth. It is important that efficacy should not be measured just in terms of independence-related outcomes, such as education completion, employment, and earnings, but in terms of whether the organizations provide a secure community as a basis for youth to make autonomous decisions (and sometimes fail in those decisions).

There are strong advantages to working with community organizations rather than trying to create a government agency. In particular, the youth can take part in determining the direction of these organizations, enhancing their sense of self-efficacy and giving them a voice in the balance of autonomy and support that is right for them. The organizations also tend to have staff who have lived experience, which makes them a natural source for mentoring. This is important because one key emphasis for the programs should be establishing a stable relationship between the youth and a mentor/caseworker. This is being done successfully elsewhere; for example, Big Brothers and Sisters of Canada has a working relationship with the Ontario government to establish long-term support relationships for youth aging out of care in that province (Rennie, 2016). Although there are community organizations in B.C. that are

funded to support former youth in care, they are not funded to support them in transitioning to self-reliance, including transition planning.

**Recommendation 32 (short term):** Provide core capacity funding for the most effective community organizations helping former youth in care—those that provide a secure environment and base of support from which the youth can make autonomous decisions related to outcomes such as education and employment—to create capacity for transition planning and support.

*Educational and life-skills support*

The AYA program includes support for those engaged in post-secondary education and training, which was extended in 2018 to allow for up to 48 months of support in aggregate under Agreements with Young Adults. Many university students take more than four years to complete their undergraduate education, while others may choose to combine both academic and trades training, or to change their educational direction as they search for their best path forward. We also know that former youth in care tend to need more time than others to achieve their educational goals and that it is important to give them the flexibility to fail.

**Recommendation 33 (short term):** Extend the number of allowed months for education and rehabilitation under Agreements with Young Adults beyond 48 months.

The life-skills support component of the AYA program should be expanded. Given the low high school graduation rate for youth in care at age 19 and the trauma they have experienced, a post-secondary academic or trades-training option, or possibly even completing high school, are not immediately accessible goals for many of them. Changes to the non-post-secondary education component of AYA need to be made in consultation with youth, the organizations mentioned under Recommendation 32 and, in particular, Indigenous communities. AYA services have very low take-up rates, suggesting that their current form is not attracting many of the youth who need help, which further suggests that enhancing the range of assistance provided would be helpful.

**Recommendation 34 (short term):** Expand and enhance the life-skills support component of the Agreements with Young Adults program in consultation with affected young adults and organizations that support them.

Our recommended Assisted to Work program (Recommendation 27) will have the ability to provide intensive, customized supports to overcome barriers to work for populations that experience the greatest difficulties in achieving long-term labour force attachment. In addition to people with disabilities and women escaping domestic violence, we believe that youth aging out of care would also benefit from access to this program.

**Recommendation 35 (medium term):** Make former youth in care eligible for the Assisted to Work program (Recommendation 27), established to provide intensive work supports to overcome significant barriers to accessing good jobs. Design eligibility details in consultation with affected young adults and organizations that support them.

#### *Financial supports*

We believe that more readily accessible financial support for youth aging out of care would be beneficial. This set of people is defined by events not under their control that occurred before age 19. Thus, the government can afford to be generous with financial support without concern that such support will draw others into the system. Indeed, drawing more of these youth into support is clearly a goal. About 1,000 youth age out of care each year in B.C., and the vast majority of them do not access the available supports. In addition, 74% of former youth in care receive Income Assistance benefits at some point by age 34. Those who are in the AYA program are currently receiving up to \$1,250 a month in support, so expenditures on transfers targeting these youth will partly replace existing expenditures.

At the same time, encouraging moves toward autonomy is important, and financial supports should be set up to encourage that. Shaffer et al. (2016) recommend a system with gradual reductions in guaranteed payments until age 25, and this makes sense to us. In the current system, access to AYA is restricted to those who were in government care or in a Youth Agreement on their 19th birthday. This cuts out youth who might have been in care earlier in their childhood but happened not to be in care at age 19. We believe extending eligibility to these youth will increase the number of youth eligible by about 10% over the number currently eligible for an AYA.

**Recommendation 36 (short term):** Implement a new targeted basic income benefit for all youth formerly in care, with the following features:

- benefit at least equal to the Market Basket Measure poverty line
- 0% benefit reduction rate
- full amount paid for ages 19–21, reduced by 25% per year and phased out at age 25
- reduction suspended up to two years for education and training
- eligibility for youth in care or in Youth Agreements at 19 or in care for at least two years at a younger age
- entering into a young adult agreement not required for eligibility
- Agreements with Young Adults program adjusted accordingly and accessible to at least age 27, ensuring that current program participants receive at least as much financial support
- **must be combined with community supports (Recommendation 37)**

We cannot stress enough that a guaranteed income without youth-driven community supports is not enough to make a difference. Indeed, it would have the potential to drive youth away from community resources that come with the attachment and social connection they need. Moreover, the youth support workers quoted above expressed concern that some of the youth may not be ready for the responsibility of an income without supports.

The following two recommendations are intended to ensure that participants have at least a minimum reciprocal requirement to engage with these supports enough to understand what is available, and to ensure that the delivery of financial aid and other supports are delivered in an integrated fashion. This may be seen by some as paternalistic, but it is much less so than the requirements now imposed by agreements under the AYA program. Also, while allowing individuals the autonomy to choose what and how much support to utilize, it reflects the importance that they understand the availability of supports for them and that they have every opportunity to access them.

**Recommendation 37 (short term):** Design the financial support program for youth aging out of care so that financial payments and the offered support services would be initiated through a youth contacting one of the service delivery organizations (of the youth's choice) and would involve an initiation session to give the youth information on available supports.

Quite apart from the recommendation to deliver transition support and planning through community organizations, the whole program for former youth in care should be organized for delivery in an integrated fashion so as to avoid barriers to access and stigmatization, including the principle of meeting the young adults where they are. Current programs have low take-up levels, likely due in part to lack of trust among former children in care wanting to separate themselves from the system that formerly acted as their guardian. Instead, these former children in care are now adults and should be provided with services in a way similar to those provided to other adults, through a seamlessly integrated approach. It is crucial that reformed supports be designed using a collaborative and consultative process with former children in care and other stakeholders, including youth under age 19, youth-serving organizations, Indigenous communities, MCFD's provincial youth advisory council, and advocacy groups.

**Recommendation 38 (short term):** Establish a specific legislative mandate and funding allocation for a designated ministry or other government agency to support former children in care. Currently, no single ministry has such a mandate, but it is necessary to ensure that all programs focused on this group are designed and administered in a coordinated, seamlessly integrated fashion. This is particularly important because the list of supports is long, including financial aid, life-skills support, education support, social work assistance, and funding for/operations of community organizations providing support. All of this must be based on ongoing collaboration and consultation with former children in care and other stakeholders.

A key input to public trust is cost. What we propose in Recommendations 32 to 38 in terms of creating a wraparound system to help youth aging out of care through the transition to adulthood would cost on the order of \$120,000 to \$190,000 per young adult. These are significant costs, but it is helpful to put them in the context of costs associated with these vulnerable young adults under the current system. As discussed in Part 4, Section 5.7 (Youth Aging Out of Care), the fiscal costs associated with the extremely poor health, justice, education, and financial outcomes that this group experiences are roughly estimated to be \$320,000 per person in net present value terms at age 19. We don't see this as an estimate of the savings that would result from our recommendations, since we do not know what their effects will be on these various outcomes, but it provides context for the spending we propose.

Perhaps more importantly, 31% of the children of people who were formerly in care are taken into care themselves, compared to 1.5% of the rest of the population, and former children in care have much higher fertility rates than the general population. This implies that any cost estimates have to be projected across generations—a particularly important consideration given evidence of strong associations between childhood poverty and health outcomes through the rest of life (Schmidt et al., 2020). There is a clear need to help the families of people formerly in care to escape this cycle. We believe that if this alone were known, there would be considerable public support for sizable expenditures in this area.

While we recognize that these recommendations will require significant effort and changes to implement, this is an area that we regard as being of high priority; we have therefore put these recommendations into the “short-term” category.

## 8.2 Youth from low-income backgrounds, not in care

Substantial gradients by family socio-economic status (defined by parental education and income) persist in Canada in high school completion rates, college and university attendance, and college and university graduation (Foley & Green, 2016). These differences in educational outcomes represent a substantial inequality in opportunities and lifetime income between children from lower-income and higher-income backgrounds.

However, eliminating differences is not entirely straightforward because the differences do not appear to be due only to differences in income. Foley et al. (2014), for example, find that the higher dropout rate for boys from low socio-economic backgrounds is largely eliminated once researchers control for parental attitudes toward education. Transfer programs or even free tuition are unlikely to resolve that issue. Indeed, since higher-income families take greater advantage of educational opportunities, policies such as greater subsidization of post-secondary education or universal free tuition may exacerbate rather than reduce inequality in education and income (Foley & Green, 2016).



What is needed are policies targeting children and youth from low-education backgrounds and that not only make post-secondary education more affordable but also help bridge the socio-economic gap in the attention and value assigned to education (Robson, 2017).

B.C. has several initiatives aimed at helping youth from low-income backgrounds choose to access post-secondary education.

The B.C. Access Grant, effective August 1, 2020, will support 40,000 post-secondary students from low- and medium-income backgrounds.<sup>122</sup> It is meant to address financial disincentives for low- and middle-income youth to access post-secondary education. The grant amounts to a maximum of \$4,000 per year for educational programs lasting two years or less, and \$1,000 per year for programs lasting four years or longer. It is important that this support be in the form of a grant, since prior research indicates that potential students from low-income backgrounds are less likely to enrol in more education when offered even a low- or no-interest loan than a grant. The 2020/21 mandate letter for the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training states that the minister is expected to “Expand the B.C. Access Grant program by increasing eligibility to reduce barriers and make sure more people are able to access the skills they need for the jobs of the future.”

The B.C. Training and Education Savings Grant is a one-time \$1,200 contribution to a child’s Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) with no matching parental contribution required. It is available to all families regardless of income, though it will be of greater relative value to low-income families. In that sense, it reinforces the incentives in the RESP program, including the Canada Learning Bond (CLB), through which the federal government deposits \$500 in the first year and \$100 in subsequent years in the RESPs of children from low-income households. Importantly, CLB take-up is low. For B.C., only 41% of eligible families take part in CLBs, even though it is essentially free money (Robson, 2017). This fits with Robson’s point that money is only part of increasing educational participation for children from low-income households.

This level of support is well below that in, for example, Ontario, through the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). Through OSAP a post-secondary student from a family with an income of \$30,000 a year without any other issues or conditions is eligible for \$7,000 in grants and \$7,600 in student loans for a year. The online calculator for the system is clear and shows potential students how the grants plus loans will cover their necessary expenses. The B.C. offerings do not come close to doing so.

B.C.’s support is also offered in a way that has built-in barriers. The B.C. Training and Education Savings Grant has a several-step application process that includes getting a Social Insurance Number for both parents and children, providing proof of residence, filling out an application form, and having that form evaluated by Knowledge First Financial. For low-income families who are uncertain about taking the

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<sup>122</sup> See <https://studentaidbc.ca/news/grants-scholarships/new-bc-access-grant>

gamble of sending their child to post-secondary education in the first place, this is hardly a blazing neon sign beckoning them in.

Robson (2017) reviews evidence on policies that have been tried around North America to encourage post-secondary education among children from low-income families and concludes that the most effective policies engage children and their families from the time children are young. In particular, education bonds that the family owns (but that can only be used for the child's education) can be effective if introduced early in the child's life and if the family and child are clearly aware of their ownership of the bonds. RESPs and the CLB have some of this feature but clearly not in a form that encourages take-up for the majority of low-income households.

**Recommendation 39 (short term):** Implement a \$1,000 B.C. Learning Bond account that is automatically created for children from low-income families at birth or a year after immigration, which can be used only for education.

The bond would be deposited in a notional account and would supplement the CLB so that by age 18, there will be over \$4,000 available to help cover education costs (Robson, 2017). Families should be clearly notified of the bond when it is given, and new notices of the existence and value of the bond should be sent every year. It would be treated as taxable income for the child when used, as for current RESPs.

**Recommendation 40 (short term):** Automatically create a learning bond when children are first taken into care, if a learning bond is not already in place.

As mentioned earlier, engaging children from low socio-economic circumstances in moving to post-secondary education is about more than just money. Several provinces, including B.C., have programs designed to help children understand the opportunities that are available to them, including mandatory high school courses and initiatives undertaken by community organizations. Manitoba's Career Trek, for example, has programs that specifically help low-income children and youth "discover who they are and what occupation they might want to pursue."<sup>123</sup> It emphasizes engaging parents, guardians and extended family in career discussions, since family support is important for success. Robson (2018) reviews the available literature and notes several studies that evaluate these types of interventions and find them effective. These programs tend not to be expensive.

**Recommendation 41 (short term):** Create a B.C. version of Manitoba's Career Trek to support low-income children in moving to post-secondary education and training by encouraging increased family engagement.

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<sup>123</sup> See <https://careertrek.ca/about-us/who-does-career-trek-serve/>

Geographic differences also lead to unequal access to education. Rural education completion rates are much lower than urban completion rates, with high school dropout rates in rural areas being about double those in Canadian cities (Uppal, 2017). B.C. has built a web of colleges and universities around the province that, in principle, make it easier for youth from all communities to get a post-secondary education. We believe it would be worthwhile to re-examine that system and its funding to make sure that it is able to deliver on its promise of province-wide access to advanced education, which is also a priority set out in the minister's mandate letter.

Finally, in any tabulation of educational outcomes, Indigenous youth appear as under-represented and lagging behind. Addressing this is the highest priority but requires a process that fully engages the Indigenous communities; we are therefore not in a position to make recommendations on it.