

Ministry of Finance
BRIEFING DOCUMENT

To: Honourable Mitzi Dean
Parliamentary Secretary
Gender Equity

Date Requested: May 7, 2020
Date Required: June 1, 2020

Initiated by: Ange Liu

Date Prepared: May 25, 2020

Ministry
Contact: Anika Sparling

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Cliff #: 391662

TITLE: GBA+ and COVID-19 Economic Stimulus

PURPOSE:

(X) FOR INFORMATION

COMMENTS: Policy advice on how best to prioritize B.C.'s economic recovery from a GBA+ perspective.

DATE PREPARED: May 25, 2020

TITLE: GBA+ and COVID-19 Economic Stimulus

ISSUE:

The purpose of this document is to provide some possible areas to prioritize investment from a Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) perspective to inform government's \$1.5 billion COVID-19 economic stimulus plan.^{s.13}

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BACKGROUND:

Forecasts for how the COVID-19 pandemic will affect global economies are dynamic and vary widely. Some suggest that the impact on jurisdictions like B.C. will be similar to that of previous recessions and depressions and will be relatively short-lived. Others argue that the current situation is unprecedented, and its effects will be felt for generations. As a result, the GEO recognizes that attempting to provide sound policy advice on how best to chart B.C.'s economic recovery from a GBA+ perspective is exceedingly challenging and will need to be approached iteratively as we learn more about the realities we may be facing. There are short- and long-term impacts that are likely to affect different demographics in different ways, with the long-term impacts likely to disproportionately affect equity-seeking groups.

Preliminary analysis suggests that women are likely at a higher risk of long-term economic insecurity as a result of COVID-19, based on gaps that existed prior to the outbreak (including the gender pay gap). In B.C., women are over-represented in part-time and minimum wage work, making up 62% of minimum wage workers in B.C.¹ and 70% of minimum wage earners between the ages of 25-54.² Women are also more likely to take on a double burden of having to balance work and care for children and seniors. In Canada, women are twice as likely as men to work part time and, among women in the core-aged workforce (ages 25-54), caring for children is a top driver for working part-time.³ Even if these women could return to work, they are more likely to face a dilemma if schools remain closed to in-person learning. For women business owners and entrepreneurs (especially those balancing childcare), pre-existing barriers such as limited access to financing, networks, training, and mentors may make their recovery that much more precarious.⁴

¹ BC Fair Wages Commission Report, Jan. 2018

² BC Federation of Labour, fact sheet, retrieved March 17, 2020, <https://bcfed.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/BCFED%20minimum%20wage%20fact%20sheet%20-%20women.pdf>

³ *Who Works Part Time and Why?* Statistics Canada. November 6, 2018. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-222-x/71-222-x2018002-eng.htm>

⁴ *Women Entrepreneurship in Canada*. Report prepared for Women Entrepreneurs Saskatchewan by PricewaterhouseCoopers. October 2018. <https://wesk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/WESK-Report-Oct.-15-2018-PwC-1.pdf>

In addition to gender, the heightened economic insecurity associated with the pandemic is more likely to be compounded by Indigeneity, ability, transgender identity, and race. Indigenous women in Canada had an average annual employment income of \$33,455 in 2015 (17% less than non-Indigenous women, 28% less than Indigenous men, and 43% less than non-Indigenous men) and were more likely to work in female-dominated sectors that are traditionally undervalued.⁵ In Canada, only 60.4% of working-age people with disabilities were employed prior to the pandemic, which was more likely to lead to chronic unemployment, under-employment, precarious employment, and/or exploitative employment.⁶ According to 2016 Census data, people of colour in Canada face a significant racial pay gap, with men of colour earning 78 cents and women of colour earning 59 cents for every dollar that a white man earned.⁷

Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey shows that, early on, women were indeed facing more losses than men since the pandemic started in British Columbia. While men lost more jobs in April (138,200 compared with 125,900 for women), women and youth are overrepresented in cumulative job losses over March and April:

- Women: 52% of total job losses (207,100); 48% of total employment;
- Youth (15-24): 31% of total job losses (123,500); 14% of total employment.

Across Canada, 92.9% of job losses among men were full-time, whereas among women this was only 69.9% (likely because women are over-represented in part-time work). Among youth (15-24) in B.C., young women have continued to lose more jobs than young men (60.24% of all losses in March and 56.42% in April).

Looking at other intersectional factors, employment among recent immigrants fell more sharply than for those born in Canada in part due to their high employment in accommodation and food service. While there were few differences in employment losses between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada, as noted in the April Survey, lower employment rates prior to the pandemic will affect Indigenous people's ability to recover from the economic shutdown.

DISCUSSION:

Some demographic groups of British Columbians may face a more difficult recovery than others. The gender, Indigenous, and racial pay gaps, employment challenges for people with disabilities, the gendered segregation between lower- and higher-paid sectors and between part- and full-time employment, and women's disproportionate responsibility for child care is likely to impact different groups' ability to recover from job loss post-pandemic.

⁵ *Economic Participation and Prosperity of Indigenous Women in Canada*. Department of Women and Gender Equality Canada. December 2019.

⁶ *Poverty Reduction in Trans Non-Binary & Two-Spirit Communities: A Summary Report for the British Columbia Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction* 2019

⁷ *Canada's Colour Coded Income Inequality*. Sheila Block, Grace-Edward Galabuzi, Ricardo Tranjan. December 2019.

<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2019/12/Canada%27s%20Colour%20Coded%20Income%20Inequality.pdf>

By applying an equity lens to economic stimulus in B.C., the Province could try to mitigate deeper economic inequalities resulting from COVID-19. An equity lens does not suggest that traditionally male-dominated sectors in construction or natural resources should not be part of the economic stimulus, but it does recognize that equity-seeking groups who typically work in lower-paid sectors of the economy or who historically have lower incomes are likely to face greater barriers to recovery. Additionally, it is likely to take longer for the female-dominated service sector (where close contact has been necessary) to adjust to a “new normal” which may require some level of social distancing restrictions for the foreseeable future.

There have been calls from advocates and governments around the world to apply a gender lens to COVID-19 response and recovery in health care and the economy. On a global scale, the Secretary-General of the United Nations recognized that around the world COVID-19 is “having devastating social and economic consequences for women and girls” and has called on governments to put women and girls at the centre of efforts to recover.⁸

Similarly, Katja Iversen (President and CEO of Women Deliver) issued ten recommendations for how to build a stronger, more gender-equal world. Some of these include: applying a gender lens to all response efforts; leveraging disaggregated data to inform policy; protecting those on the frontlines (predominantly women); upholding services to reduce gender-based violence; protecting women’s economic opportunity and livelihood; etc.⁹ In Hawai’i, the State Commission on the Status of Women has drafted a high-level economic recovery plan with similar recommendations.¹⁰ At the time of writing, it is unclear whether the State of Hawai’i has accepted any of the recommendations put forward by the State Commission.

While these recommendations are very high-level and largely limited only to gender (not to other identity factors), they offer a guide for how the Province could inform its economic stimulus plan from a B.C.-specific and intersectional perspective using GBA+.

s.12; s.13

⁸ “Put women and girls at the centre of efforts to recover from COVID-19”. Secretary-General António Guterres, United Nations. April 9, 2020. <https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/put-women-and-girls-centre-efforts-recover-covid-19>

⁹ *Applying a Gender Lens to COVID-19 Response and Recovery*. Katja Iversen, Women Deliver. May 5, 2020. https://medium.com/@Katja_Iversen/applying-a-gender-lens-to-covid-19-response-and-recovery-2fe19255746f

¹⁰ *Building Bridges, Not Walking on Backs*. Hawai’i State Commission on the Status of Women, Department of Human Services, State of Hawai’i. April 14, 2020.

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7) Ensure that Infrastructure Investments are Informed by GBA+

- If traditional infrastructure investments (roads, bridges etc.) are part of the overall economic recovery package, Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) could be applied with equity targets.
- If CBAs are not an option, there could be a special infrastructure funding stream that encourages GBA+ considerations in the built environment. For example, an equity funding stream could support accessibility upgrades to buildings, more lighting to increase safety, etc.
- The Province could also encourage all municipalities to apply GBA+ to their local support measures and recovery efforts.

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Ministry of Finance
BRIEFING DOCUMENT

To: Honourable Mitzi Dean
Parliamentary Secretary
Gender Equity

Date Requested: May 20, 2020
Date Required: June 2, 2020

Initiated by: Ange Liu

Date Prepared: June 1, 2020

Ministry Contact: Anika Sparling

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Cliff #: 391944

TITLE: Applying GBA+ to COVID-19 Supports in BC

(X) FOR INFORMATION

COMMENTS: GBA+ Analysis of immediate federal and provincial supports during the COVID-19 pandemic.

DATE PREPARED: June 1, 2020

TITLE: Applying GBA+ to COVID-19 Supports in BC

ISSUE:

The purpose of this document is to provide a high-level application of Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) to the immediate support measures that have been put in place by the Government of Canada and the Government of BC in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The application of GBA+ reveals that people of different backgrounds are impacted in diverse ways, with some demographics facing disproportionate, negative impacts (Appendix 1 – examples of COVID-19 disparities). As such, GBA+ is an important tool for governments to apply to immediate support measures so that staff can identify and address gaps in order to mitigate pre-existing inequalities and those that have been further amplified by the pandemic.

BACKGROUND:

When the scope and scale of the challenge posed by COVID-19 first became apparent, the Gender Equity Office (GEO) worked to compile research about other crises and the disproportionate impacts they had on marginalized and vulnerable populations. Using this initial research, GEO used GBA+ to analyze supports as they were announced, and offered our findings both to counterparts in the Department of Women and Gender Equality Canada (WaGE) and ministries within the Government of BC.

What follows is a high-level overview of key new programs and supports created in response to COVID-19. Given the scope and scale of federal and provincial response to COVID-19 this analysis is necessarily non-exhaustive.

Key federal supports

The government of Canada has unrolled a number of programs to support people, businesses and communities through the COVID-19 pandemic. This analysis focuses on programs aimed at individuals and vulnerable populations. Details about these programs can be found in appendix 2 – details of key federal supports.

Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)

s.13; s.16

Supporting women's shelters and sexual assault centres during COVID-19

s.13; s.16

s.13; s.16

Emergency Community Support Fund

s.13; s.16

Canada Emergency Student Benefit

This benefit helps address gaps in the CERB for students, especially where paired with provincial supports.

Increased support through the Canada Child Benefit

While this additional funding will help financially strapped families, access to child care remains a barrier for many women re-entering the workforce during COVID-19.

Financial supports for seniors

The federal government is delivering a one-time tax-free payment to seniors eligible for Old Age Security and seniors eligible for the Guaranteed Income Supplement. This payment addresses increased costs caused by COVID-19 for people on fixed incomes.

Indigenous Community Support Fund

s.13; s.16

Essential Food Support

This emergency federal funding was aimed at improving access to food for Canadians facing social, economic, and health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Key Provincial Supports

This analysis focuses on significant provincial programs and policies introduced in response to COVID-19, excluding programs directed at businesses. Details about these programs can be found in appendix 3 – details of key provincial supports.

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Appendix 1 – examples COVID-19 disparities

- The virus is much more dangerous and deadly among older people.
- In jurisdictions where data about race and ethnicity of people impacted by COVID-19 is collected, there is evidence of an outsized impact on racialized people, particularly Black people.
- Youth and women in Canada have disproportionately lost jobs due to COVID-19, and will likely have a harder path out of economic uncertainty.
- Women are at increased risk of domestic violence as people spend more time at home, and have fewer opportunities to access help safely.
- Hate crimes are on the rise, particularly crimes targeting East Asian people and Jewish people.

Appendix 2 – details of key federal supports**Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)**

The CERB is a taxable benefit of \$2,000 every 4 weeks for up to 16 weeks to eligible workers who have lost their income due to COVID-19.

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- The CERB process is simpler than applying for EI, and claims are processed more quickly.
- People who have lost income due to needing to care for children due to COVID-19 disruptions are eligible for CERB.

Initially the CERB excluded anyone who had any income, however reduced, but it was adjusted to allow for those who “don’t expect to earn over \$1,000 in employment or self-employment income for at least 14 days in a row during the 4-week period.”

Supporting women’s shelters and sexual assault centres during COVID-19

Recognizing the threat of rising gender-based violence, and increased costs for organizations helping women and children escape abuse, Canada allocated \$50 million to supporting women’s shelters and sexual assault centres during COVID-19.

This funding includes:

- Up to \$10 million to Indigenous Services Canada's (ISC) existing network of 46 emergency shelters on reserve and in Yukon to support Indigenous women and children fleeing violence.
- \$40 million to Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE), \$30 million of which addresses immediate needs of shelters and sexual assault centres as follows:
 - \$20.54 million to Women’s Shelters Canada to distribute to over 420 violence against women shelters across the country
 - \$3 million to the Canadian Women’s Foundation to distribute to approximately 90 sexual assault centres across the country

- \$6.46 million to women's shelters and sexual assault centres in Québec, through an agreement between Canada and Québec.

Emergency Community Support Fund

The \$350 million emergency community support fund is available for community-based organizations from across the country to apply for funding to support activities that address a pressing social inclusion or well-being need caused by COVID-19.

- This funding is being administered by United Way Centraide Canada, Canadian Red Cross, and Community Foundations of Canada.

Canada Emergency Student Benefit

The Canada Emergency Student Benefit provides financial support to post-secondary students and recent post-secondary and high school graduates who do not qualify for CERB and are unable to find work due to COVID-19.

From May to August 2020, it provides a payment to eligible students of \$1,250 for each 4-week period to students without dependents or a disability. For those students with disabilities and those students who have dependents, it provides a payment of \$2000 for each 4-week period.

Increased support through the Canada Child Benefit

Families receiving the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) are eligible for a one-time increase in their May payment of up to \$300 per child.

Financial supports for seniors

The federal government has allocated \$2.5 billion for a one-time tax-free payment of \$300 for seniors eligible for the Old Age Security (OAS) pension, with an additional \$200 for seniors eligible for the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS).

This measure would give a total of \$500 to individuals who are eligible to receive both the OAS and the GIS, and is intended to help them cover increased costs caused by COVID-19.

Indigenous Community Support Fund

As of June 1, 2020, \$380 million has been allocated to the Indigenous Community Support Fund to address COVID-19 in First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities:

- The initial \$305 million allocation announced on March 18, 2020 included:
- \$215 million for First Nations, allocated to each First Nation based on population, remoteness and community well-being.
- \$45 million for Inuit.
- \$30 million for Métis Nation communities.
- \$15 million for Indigenous organizations and communities providing services to Indigenous peoples in urban centres and off reserve.

On May 21, 2020 the government of Canada announced a further \$75 million in funding for organizations meeting the critical needs of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in urban centres and off reserve.

Essential Food Support

This \$100 million in emergency federal funding was aimed at improving access to food for Canadians facing social, economic, and health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- It was announced that this funding would flow through to organizations “including but not limited to Food Banks Canada, Salvation Army, Second Harvest, Community Food Centres Canada, and Breakfast Club of Canada.”

Appendix 2 – details of key provincial supports

B.C. Emergency Benefit for Workers

This one-time tax-free \$1000 payment for people whose ability to work has been impacted by COVID-19 is available to BC residents who are eligible for CERB, 15 years or older, have filed or agree to file a 2019 B.C. income tax return, not be on provincial income assistance or disability assistance, and not be incarcerated for 90 days or longer during the period that includes March 15, 2020.

Pandemic pay

In partnership with the federal government the province is offering temporary pandemic pay to health, social services and corrections employees delivering in-person, front-line care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

BC Temporary Rental Supplement

The BC Temporary Rental Supplement Program gives tenants and landlords temporary support towards rent payments for renters impacted by COVID-19.

- Payments are made directly to the landlords of eligible households with a gross income of less than \$74,150 for singles and couples without dependents, and less than \$113,040 for households with dependents.
- To be eligible households must, as a result of COVID-19, be receiving or eligible for EI, or be receiving or eligible for CERB, have experienced and be able to provide evidence of a drop of 25% or more in monthly household employment income, and be paying more than 30% of household income towards rent.
- Eligible singles and couples can receive \$300 a month. Eligible families with dependents can receive \$500 a month.
- Tenants must begin the application and landlords must finish it.

Temporary tenancy policies

In addition to the Temporary Rental supplement the province brought in a number of supports and temporary housing tenancy policy changes through emergency orders.

The following temporary tenancy changes were put in place:

- Annual rent increases are frozen during the state of emergency.
- Evictions are being halted except where court ordered or for health and safety.
- Rental providers can now restrict use of common areas by tenants or guests.

- Rental providers are now prevented from accessing rental units without tenant consent, except in exceptional cases
- Renters and providers may not serve notices in-person and can do so by e-mail.

Emergency housing supports for vulnerable populations

A number of emergency housing supports have been introduced by the province as part of addressing vulnerabilities that could lead to the spread of COVID-19.

Some of the actions taken by the province, through BC Housing include:

- Arranged meal delivery services for people living in Single Room Occupancies, BC Housing owned buildings and buildings operated by non-profit housing providers to help people maintain physical distance.
- Provided temporary indoor housing for everyone who was living at Oppenheimer Park in Vancouver, and are working to deliver the same help to those living at Topaz Park and along Pandora Avenue in Victoria.
- Provided hotel rooms in communities throughout the province to house women and children fleeing violence.

Child care supports and supports for service delivery agencies

To support non-profits, service delivery agencies and child care providers, the Province will continue to provide funding to these agencies even if these agencies are closed or their regular operations have been disrupted.

- Licensed child care providers staying open will receive enhanced funding to maintain their operations at lower capacity. These centres are eligible to receive seven times their average monthly operating funding from government, which is expected to cover approximately 75% of a group facility's average monthly operating expenses.
- A service was launched to match parents who are essential service workers with children up to five years of age with child care during the early stages of the pandemic.
- This service prioritizes care for parents in public health and health services, social services, law enforcement, first responders, and emergency response sectors.
- Centres will continue to be eligible for the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative and the Early Childhood Educator Wage Enhancement.
- In addition, families accessing care from these providers may be eligible for the Affordable Child Care Benefit.

Supports for Seniors

The province provided the United Way of the Lower Mainland with \$50 million to bolster seniors' supports at community service agencies throughout British Columbia.

Opioid response

Opioid overdose deaths have increased during the pandemic, however, the province is taking a number of steps to support substance users during COVID-19, including:

- Issuing clinical guidance that widens access to safe supply.
- Offering prescription alternatives in addition to existing treatment options to prevent risk associated with toxic drug supply.

Supports for post-secondary students

The province took a number of actions meant to specifically support students and former students through the COVID-19 pandemic including:

- Freezing student loan payments for 6 months – federal loan payments have been frozen as well.
- Delivering \$3.5 million to public post-secondary institutions to support domestic and international students who may be experiencing financial hardships.
- \$1.5 million to supplement the Indigenous Emergency Fund, which is available to students at all 25 post-secondary institutions as well as Native Education College through Indigenous Student Service Centers on campus.

Income Assistance and disability assistance policies

As part of mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations the province introduced a number of temporary enhancements to Income Assistance and Disability Assistance, including:

- Removing the job search requirement for applying for income assistance.
- Temporarily exempting employment income, including the CERB, as an income deduction for existing Income and Disability Assistance (IA/DA) clients. However, IA and DA clients receiving the CERB will not be eligible for the BCEB or the rental supplement.
- Introducing a dedicated COVID-19 supplement of \$300 for adults not eligible for federal assistance programs or who are on IA or DA and are in long-term care or who receive the Senior's Supplement.
- Refunding the cost of the BC Bus pass for those months when transit was provided free of charge by BC transit and Translink.

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Meeting Backgrounder

Meeting Date: June 26, 2020

CLIFF #: 392570

MEETING:

Stakeholder Roundtable: Framing the Future – Women and the Economy

ISSUE:

Input from stakeholders on the economic impacts of COVID-19 on women and charting BC's economic recovery.

KEY FACTS REGARDING THE ISSUE:

- British Columbians who are most affected by the economic downturn work in the service sector (e.g. retail, restaurants, tourism, social services); women and young people are overrepresented. Women are also more likely to reduce their hours during the pandemic to care for children and more likely to face a dilemma in returning to work if schools are closed.
- There are two additional considerations that are likely to be raised by stakeholders:
 1. An intersectional analysis (i.e. Gender-Based Analysis Plus, GBA+) of the pandemic indicates that intersecting identity factors (gender, age, race, Indigeneity, disability, etc.) amplify the negative economic impacts of COVID-19 and may thus make it more difficult for more marginalized British Columbians to recover financially.
 2. Concerns about increased rates of gender-based violence during the pandemic may be another barrier for return to work given the emotional, physical, and psychological impacts of violence as well as the potential for financial abuse to be exacerbated in social isolation (e.g. withholding, stealing, or controlling money).
- It is likely that the stakeholders participating will align with the Province's response to these two considerations but may call on the Province to do more.
 1. Minerva BC recently circulated a message from CEO Tina Strehlke that committed the organization to learning more about systemic racism and decolonization as part of their program offerings on women in leadership. Minerva BC may similarly call on the Province to include these considerations as part of any intersectional analysis on economic recovery. Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equity Mitzi Dean has worked in collaboration with Minerva BC previously to encourage more women representation in leadership positions.
 2. Simon Fraser University's Dr. June Francis has spoken to the media during the pandemic that the lack of race-based data has led to inadequate health care responses to address the needs of marginalized communities such as Black and Indigenous people. She may raise race-based data as a key piece of any intersectional analysis of economic recovery in addition to health responses.
 3. The Tulayan Filipino Diaspora Society was referenced in the same media coverage as Dr. Francis noting that many workers in long-term care facilities are people of colour (particularly Filipino). Erie Maestro of Migrante BC may similarly raise concerns given the organization's mandate to protect and promote the rights and welfare of Filipino immigrants and migrant workers.
 4. Vancity is committed to the full economic participation of women and has signed

on to Minerva BC's diversity pledge to advance women's leadership. Kirsten Sutton (who was previously with SAP Labs Canada but has since moved on to Vancity) participated in the August 2019 announcement from Minister of Labour Harry Bains and Parliamentary Secretary Dean regarding strengthening the Employment Standards Act to better support people who have faced domestic or sexual violence. As such, Vancity representatives may raise intersectionality and ending gender-based violence as key components to an equitable recovery.

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ADVICE:

- These two considerations that are likely to be raised can be addressed:
 1. Intersectional analysis (i.e. GBA+):
 - GBA+ continues to be a corporate commitment and requirement for Cabinet and Treasury Board Submissions so intersectional analysis is key a component of government processes, including Budget 2020. Over 9,500 public servants have been trained in GBA+ and training is being adapted for virtual delivery given social distancing requirements.
 - Gender Equity Office – Ministry of Finance is engaging partners across ministries on ongoing GBA+ analysis of the pandemic that includes health, social, and economic implications.
 - Premier John Horgan wrote to the Human Rights Commissioner and Information and Privacy Commissioner seeking guidance on how race-based data can be collected in a way that balances the right to privacy and calls for rigorous and thoughtful data. There was also recognition of the need for an intersectional lens.
 2. Gender-based violence:
 - MACIW is supporting the development of a three-year, \$10-million grant program to be administered by the Ending Violence Association of BC for the delivery of coordinated community-based emergency sexual assault response services in regions throughout the province, in collaboration with Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General and the Ministry of Finance - Gender Equity Office.
 - Barb Ward-Burkitt, Chair of MACIW, sits on an internal, cross-ministry Assistant Deputy Minister "COVID-19 Gender-Based Violence Working Group" that is monitoring gender-based violence during the pandemic. The working group is currently co-chaired by the Office of the Provincial Health Officer and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, with Secretariat support from the Gender Equity Office – Ministry of Finance and Health.
 - The Province has secured nearly 300 additional spaces in communities throughout BC for people leaving violent or unstable situations, with more spaces to come. These are in addition to more than 100 transition houses and safe homes that the Province funds on an ongoing basis.
 - The Province offers immediate crisis support for people facing family or sexual violence that is available through VictimLink BC's 24/7 telephone service to be referred to the closest service agency.
 - The Province deemed victim service and violence against women programs as essential services early in the pandemic to help ensure adequate

supports are maintained during this unprecedented crisis. Provincial funding arrangements with contracted service providers have remained in place to maintain and adapt these important services that people count on every day.

- The Government of Canada has invested in services to support survivors of gender-based violence during the pandemic, including \$26M for women's shelters, \$4M to sexual assault centres, \$10M for emergency shelters on reserve for Indigenous people, and \$44.8M to build new shelters in First Nations communities (as well as \$40.8M for operating costs and \$10.2M annually, ongoing).
- Additionally, if questions are raised about childcare, the Province has done the following since the pandemic started:
 1. Introduced the Temporary Emergency Fund to support child care operators, who are predominately women, address operational challenges.
 2. Built an online resource to support and match workers with local child care providers through Child Care Resource and Referral centres.
 3. Temporarily amended regulation related to the Affordable Child Care Benefit, which is available to support families with paying for the cost of child care. This amendment allows payments to continue for families that were in receipt of the benefit and subsequently experienced a loss of employment.
 4. Given impacts on the ability of students in Early Childhood Education programs to complete the required practicum or professional development hours to either achieve certification, or, for registered early learning professionals, to renew certification due to agencies offering these opportunities are operating at reduced capacity, the Province amended regulation and policies to allow for longer time frames and in some cases, reduced hours, to achieve the same certification.

Program Area Contact: Anika Sparling, A/Director of Policy,
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ADVICE TO PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY

**CONFIDENTIAL
GCPE-FIN ISSUE NOTE**

Ministry of Finance

Date: June 10, 2020

Parliamentary Secretary Responsible: Mitzi Dean

C-19 Supports for Women

RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- Women are one of the groups at risk of long-term economic insecurity as a result of the pandemic because many work part-time work and in jobs that have been most affected such as hospitality, retail, food services and personal care such as hair stylists.
- While the job losses are staggering and we have a long road ahead, we expect to see many people returning to work as more of these businesses reopen.
- Women are also most likely to be in a caregiving role – for children or elderly parents – sometimes both.
- B.C.'s immediate response includes financial supports for people whose ability to work has been affected, help for people facing violence, supports for vulnerable people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, help for youth in crisis and for seniors who are isolated, and funding to assist childcare providers.
- As B.C. works to build its COVID-19 economic recovery plan, it's vital that all people – especially those who already face disadvantages – are supported and given the best possible opportunity to move forward.

SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

- Sexual assault and domestic violence strike at the heart of a person's safety and well being, and can cause lifelong trauma if survivors can't access the supports they need to heal.
- Anyone who is in immediate danger or needs urgent medical attention is urged to call 911. Immediate crisis support for victims of family or sexual violence is available through VictimLink BC's 24/7 telephone service at 1-800-563-0808 or by email at VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca.
- We have recently announced \$10 million to the Ending Violence Association of BC for emergency sexual response services.
- B.C. also supports more than 400 victim service and violence against women programs in communities in every part of the province.
- In addition, BC Housing is working with their partners on accelerated and coordinated supports for women who have experienced domestic or sexual violence.

BACKGROUND:

Inequality makes people who are systematically disadvantaged more vulnerable to the impact of disaster. Women are one of these groups. On average, more women are killed in times of social disruption and breakdown than men, and at an earlier age.

Home is a dangerous place for those who are already experiencing domestic violence. Combined with isolation, economic insecurity is likely to lead to stress that can increase the risk of gender-based violence. This is likely to be compounded for women living in rural areas, Indigenous women, women with a disability, women who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual, and trans people.

Women are also at higher risk of long-term economic insecurity as a result of this pandemic and its implications for the economy because of their over-representation in part-time work and highly-affected sectors like health, education, home support, and service. Women make up 62% of minimum wage workers in B.C. and almost 82% of liquor servers (i.e. pubs and bars) are women.

Women are also much more likely to take on a double burden of having to balance work and care for children who are now out of school due to school closures.

Statistics Canada's recent Labour Force Surveys shows that, early on, women faced more losses than men in B.C. once the pandemic started. While men lost more jobs in April, in May, employment increased more for men (+25,900) than women (+17,500), while unemployment increased more for women (+31,800) than for men (+27,900).

Economic insecurity is also likely to be amplified for people with disabilities (a higher proportion of whom are women).

Sex workers who rely on physical contact and those who perform in live venues are already experiencing deep income reductions as a result of COVID-19 and more likely to get pushed into increasingly unsafe situations.

Minimum wage increase:

To support B.C.'s lowest paid workers, the general hourly minimum wage is increasing to \$14.60, and the minimum wage rates for liquor servers, resident caretakers and live-in camp leaders are also increasing, effective Monday, June 1, 2020. These increases for low-wage workers are the third of four planned increases scheduled to take place on June 1 of each year since 2018.

Media attention: numerous media outlets have reported on the impacts on women during the pandemic, as well as concerns over increases in violence as a result of people needing to stay at home with an abusive partner. Most recently, media have reported extensively on the mass murders that occurred in Nova Scotia on April 18, which started with domestic violence when the gunman attacked his girlfriend. In addition, a murder-suicide on Salt Spring Island June 1 is reported to be the act of an abusive spouse.

Key dates: On April 19, Parliamentary Secretary Dean issued a statement that the province had secured nearly 300 additional spaces in communities throughout B.C. for people leaving violence, which is in addition to more than 100 transition houses and safe homes that the Province funds on an ongoing basis. On May 26, Parliamentary Secretary Dean and Minister Mike Farnworth announced \$10M in new funding for the Ending Violence Association of BC for emergency sexual response services.

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File Created:	June 10, 2020	
File Updated:	n/a	
File Location: Operations\2. House - Estimates, Issues, Binder, Core Messages & QAs\Issue Notes, QP Notes\9. Gender Equity		

ADVICE TO PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY

Appendix Additional Statistics:

- Globally, women are approximately 70% of workers in the health and social care sector meaning women are more likely to be providing paid care to people with the virus while also performing unpaid care work.
- Women are the majority of home support workers in Canada, and a significant number of these women are immigrants and visible minorities.
- In B.C., women comprise 72% of all teachers and 83% of teachers aged 29 or below.
- In B.C., women also represent:
 - 90% of registered nurses
 - 94% of licensed practical nurses
 - 93% of child care workers
 - 82% of medical lab technicians
 - 82% of people cleaning our hospitals, schools, and office buildings
 - 76% of cashiers
- The gender pay gap means that women are at particular risk of struggling if pandemic supports are delivered at EI percentages, as women in Canada, on average, earn 75% of what men in Canada earn. This is further compounded for Indigenous women and visible minorities.
- Economic insecurity is also likely to be amplified for people with disabilities (a higher proportion of whom are women) given only 60.4% of working-age (25-64) people with disabilities are employed.
 - Disability prevalence is also higher among Indigenous people across Canada (36% of Indigenous women and 26% of Indigenous men) and they tend to have a lower income than Indigenous people without disabilities (excludes those on reserve).
 - For disabled trans and racialized people discrimination based on gender, race, disability, and immigration status compound employment issues leading to chronic unemployment, under-employment, precarious employment, and/or exploitative employment.
- The largest share of persons living in poverty in the province are women aged 18 to 64 in families, which is likely due to the high rate of poverty among single mothers. They are now at an even higher risk having to balance school closures, economic insecurity, and expectations of increased gender-based violence.
- Additionally, LGBTQ2S+ youth make-up 40 per cent of homeless and precariously housed young people in Canada and are less likely to have access to financial and emotional supports from their families.
- Women are nearly twice as likely as men to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder.
- Senior women (aged 65 and over) are more likely to live alone and social distancing is likely to have serious implications for their mental and physical health.