

November 27, 2019

The Honourable Leela Aheer, Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
227 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Aheer,

RE: 2019 Alberta Provincial Budget – Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women

Thank you for being a strong voice amongst cabinet members for the value of creating an inclusive Alberta that ensures persons no matter their gender, religion, or age are included.

The YWCAs of Alberta support over 30,000 Albertans in rural and urban areas across the province. We believe in a better Alberta that removes the policy red-tape that prevents vulnerable Albertans from thriving.

We were pleased to see ongoing support for the civil society sector, advancing the Status of Women, and creating a more inclusive Alberta. We applaud the following key ministry priorities:

- \$44.3 million for harnessing the power of civil society is a key strategic investment for maximizing the economic, and social power of civil society. Non-profit organizations are nimble, highly professional and effective organizations that can quickly pivot to meet the needs of citizens;
- Actively collaborating across ministries to address gender-based violence is key to addressing this issue, and in general, improve the Status of Women is incredibly important. Employing an intersectional lens to policy and decision-making processes will serve to remove the systemic barriers experienced by women; and
- Support for, and leadership in implementing the recommendations from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, and the United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is crucial to creating a more inclusive Alberta, that addresses the root causes of inequality that affect First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people in Alberta.

Strategic Recommendations to advance CMSW priorities:

- A **Civil Society Fund** focused on innovation would be a catalyst for accessing the latent potential of this sector. YWCAs of Alberta would greatly benefit from a fund like this that would scale-up our innovative local practices for diversifying revenue and increasing our social impact;

- Examine the opportunities for introducing a Pay Equity Framework to advance the status of women in the workplace and economy; and
- We look forward to an opportunity to offer our expertise as one of Alberta's longest and largest serving women's organization to the development of the *Freedom to Care Act*.

We welcome an opportunity to share our experience and discuss our recommendations in further detail with you and Ministry staff in either Calgary or Edmonton.

Sincerely,

Sue Tomney, Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Calgary
Connie MacDonald, Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Banff
Amber Niemeier, Interim Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Edmonton
Lena Neufeld, Program Director, YWCA Lethbridge

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