

November 27, 2019

The Honourable Rajan Sawhney, Minister of Community and Social Services
224 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Sawhney,

RE: 2019 Alberta Provincial Budget – Community and Social Services

Thank you for being a strong voice among cabinet members regarding the value of essential front-line services for Albertans. The YWCAs of Alberta were pleased to see ongoing support for domestic violence and emergency shelter, *Housing First* programming, and resources and supports for domestic and sexual violence survivors.

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

As we move into the next era of working with government to address homelessness, poverty, and economic empowerment of vulnerable Albertans, we look forward to ongoing consultation with you, Community and Social Services staff, and our partners to make Alberta better. We were pleased to see the following strategic priorities in the Ministry's business plan and budget:

- The clear and consistent stance against domestic violence from this government, led by this Ministry is crucial. We appreciate ongoing supports for domestic violence shelters and hope to collaborate on the implementation of Clare's Law.
- We strongly support the consolidation and enhancement of information systems to facilitate effective client service delivery.
- The Ministry's focus on reducing red-tape and streamlining reporting requirements will lift a major administrative burden from our organizations so we can focus on supporting Albertans.
- Alberta's response to homelessness, including youth and LGBTQ2S+ persons is cutting edge. The ongoing support for emergency shelters and transitional or supportive housing is critical to maintaining Alberta's reputation as a leader in this field in Canada and the world.

More specifically, through these challenging fiscal times we would like to provide the following recommendations to social services funding in Alberta:

- Design, in consultation with front-line service delivery organizations, community based organizations, first responders, Indigenous organizations, newcomer organizations and housing management bodies a vision for homelessness policy in Alberta that is informed by best practices in prevention and intervention. This policy vision would:
 - empower government staff to do this important work and reduce cross-government barriers to collaboration;
 - removes the red tape that limit data sharing, and analysis; and
 - provide a collective vision to service delivery organizations on how to effectively work together with government on this issue.
- Develop an outcome measure that benchmarks the social well-being of Albertans. This can be used for Ministry financial planning, assessing emerging trends, and promoting Alberta as a inclusive and equitable society;
- Strike a panel that reviews the de-indexing of Assured Income for Severely Handicapped and Alberta Works to reduce the impacts of this change on vulnerable Albertans; and
- Review and refresh the *Family Violence Hurts Everyone: A Framework to End Family Violence in Alberta* to ensure it aligns with the current government's priorities for addressing family violence and meets Albertans' needs.

To discuss our depth of knowledge in these areas, the YWCA's of Alberta welcome a meeting with Minister Sawhney and representatives of Community and Social Services in 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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