

November 16, 2020

The Hon Travis Toews
Minister of Finance
208 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB T5K2B6

Dear Minister Toews,

RE: Government of Alberta Budget 2021-22 – YWCAs of Alberta Pre-Budget Submission

Alberta's economy is at a turning point that requires all hands-on-deck to respond to the challenging fiscal situation we are in. On behalf of the YWCAs of Alberta, I am pleased to share with you our strategic recommendations on how to get Albertans - including women - back to work, while building key infrastructure to support economic recovery.

The YWCAs of Alberta have operated in Alberta since 1907 and we have supported Albertans through two world wars, the Spanish Influenza and the challenges of several economic downturns. As an employer of 655 Albertans in rural and urban communities, essential service provider and partner we are keen to help the Government of Alberta during this difficult time that has been characterized by a stagnated economy, a crash in oil prices and a pandemic. In our submission we recommend focusing on:

- Affordable supportive housing;
- Work-Integrated Training Programs;
- Childcare subsidies and operator support; and
- Transit development in rural and urban communities.

We believe that this combination of capital investment and social supports will provide the right mix of resources for women, girls, gender-diverse people and families in our province to help them thrive. We look forward to discussing our recommendations with you and your team in the near future.

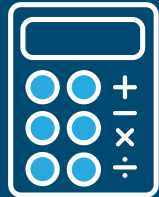
Sincerely,

Sue Tomney, Chief Executive Officer, YW Calgary
Connie MacDonald, Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Banff
Katherine O'Neill, Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Edmonton
Shannon Hansen, Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Lethbridge & District

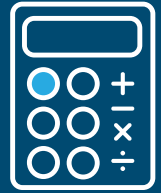
Attached: Government of Alberta Budget 2021-22 – YWCAs of Alberta Pre-Budget Submission



submitted on behalf of YWCAs of Alberta



Rebuilding Together: Capital Development and Supports for Inclusive Recovery



Introduction

Times are tough for all Albertans – whether you are trying to pay rent, find work or make hard decisions about the future of your business. The following recommendations identify strategic investments that can help the Government of Alberta to efficiently allocate its limited resources to support vulnerable Albertans including women, girls, gender-diverse people and men. These investments will distinguish Alberta as a leader in economic recovery while building the foundations for long-term prosperity. The recommendations included in this submission were developed in consultation with federal, provincial and municipal policy experts, civil society sector partners, academic experts and business leaders.

Aligning Housing & Supports

Affordable supportive housing is crucial for Albertans, especially women, girls, gender-diverse people and families, in preventing domestic violence and homelessness, reducing poverty and providing essential supports for job readiness. With demands for housing, domestic and sexual violence and mental health services on the rise it is important to ensure these are available for Albertans when they need it most. We see an opportunity to make best use of existing supports by working with government to identify and remove barriers to service delivery and eliminate duplication of work – in other words, make every dollar spent go as far as possible. To do this within the fiscal restraints presented to government, we recommend maintaining spending for the following capital and operational areas:

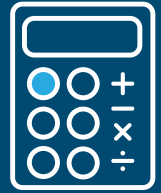
- \$1.4 Billion for Disability Services¹;
- \$195 Million for Homeless and Outreach Support Services;
- \$135 Million for Community Supports and Family Safety;
- \$56.8 Million Rent Supplements²;
- \$53.4 Million for Mental Health and Addiction Funding³; and
- \$416 Million⁴ in three year funding for capital housing development.

¹ Government of Alberta. Community and Social Services. Business Plan 2020-21. Retrieved From: <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/91c57caa-6878-4a31-9747-4e8f6a82d5aa/resource/659e34a5-b355-49b4-b99e-1e341376d005/download/community-and-social-services-business-plan-2020-23.pdf>

² Government of Alberta. Seniors and Housing. Business Plan 2020-21. Retrieved From: <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/c9978b07-aa01-4aa2-a214-16869170084f/resource/d46391bc-1ae8-4153-838a-44ca5b4c96a0/download/seniors-and-housing-business-plan-2020-23.pdf>

³ Government of Alberta. Health. Business Plan 2020-21. Retrieved From: <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/bb547784-e775-4eed-aa9c-0aa4a1aece8a/resource/891eadb9-b91b-48ab-99b4-33dbbf1b35a0/download/health-business-plan-2020-23.pdf>

⁴ Government of Alberta. 2020-23 Capital Plan. Retrieved From: <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/3c46f857-aa60-430f-ba52-f9ec96fc8ccf/resource/63c3929f-0ed2-463b-902a-24aa7271f3e3/download/budget-2020-capital-plan-details-by-ministry-2020-23.pdf>



Women and Gender-Diverse People Getting Back to Work

Most recent statistics demonstrate that 220,500 fewer women are participating in the labour force than men⁵. The year over year change in labour market participation is reduced for all Albertans, with women leaving the labour force at a rate double that of their male counterparts. While the unemployment rate for women aged 15 and over⁶, has improved more quickly than that of men in Alberta, the overall number of women in the labour force trails.

With the Government of Alberta's investments in technology and innovation fields and new bursaries for women in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields of study⁷, this is a prime time to re-engage women in the workforce and train them to meet the demands of Alberta's economy.

A great opportunity for women's engagement in the labour force lies within Work-Integrated Training Programs that prioritize collaboration between sector partners, while delivering a high return on investment⁸. For example, an employment skills agency that partners with a childcare provider and housing provider to best meet the needs of a vulnerable client so they can engage in their work while ensuring the needs for housing and supporting their family are met.

The following funding envelopes should be invested in to ensure women can get back to work:

- \$125,000 for Women participating in the STEM Award Program; and
- \$466⁹ million in funding (including any new Federal dollars) from the Workforce Labour Agreements should prioritize investing in Work-Integrated Training Programs.

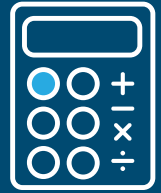
⁵ Statistics Canada (2020). Labour force characteristics by province, monthly, seasonally adjusted. Retrieved from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=1410028703>

⁶ Statistics Canada (2020). Labour force characteristics by province, monthly, seasonally adjusted. Retrieved from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=1410028703>

⁷ Government of Alberta. Expanding opportunities for women in STEM. Retrieved from: <https://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=732952CB88E79-BFD5-D27C-7F2542F63B27DF1E>

⁸ Momentum Calgary. Removing Barriers to Employment: Strengthening Work-Integrated Training Programs. Retrieved from: <https://files.momentum.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/26132945/Strengthening-Work-Integrated-Training.pdf>

⁹ Government of Alberta. Labour and Immigration. Business Plan 2020-21. Retrieved From: <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/eea2f7ef-0460-4fa7-8636-c7ee8e0cb7a9/resource/de36df9a-91ea91-4b96-baa3-2969a355a504/download/labour-and-immigration-business-plan-2020-23.pdf>



Childcare

The Government of Alberta has demonstrated a commitment to reduce red tape and maximize the use of federal dollars for childcare programs. As identified in the Alberta Recovery Plan, childcare remains an essential program to ensure the economic recovery of Alberta's businesses, families and children. The continued accessibility to childcare is also essential to ensure children are able to bolster their resiliency and thrive during this difficult time. We recommend that the investments continue to support children and their families:

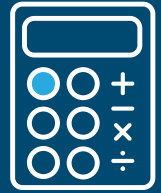
- \$408 million Child Care Subsidies and Supports for Operators; and
- \$310 million Alberta Child and Family Benefit.

Transit That Works

The availability of affordable transit in rural and urban areas is critical to ensuring that Albertans can safely get to work, get supports and go to school. With the loss of inter-city transit delivered by Greyhound and limited transit options outside of densely populated urban centres, Albertans need safe, accessible and affordable transit options. This need is even more acute amongst women, girls and gender diverse people who are made more vulnerable by the pandemic and need critical connections to employment and social supports. The opportunity to maximize spending here is twofold: ensuring that investments meet the acute needs of communities in need of supports and creating crucial jobs in areas that are hardest hit by the economic downturn. We recommend that the following investments in programs and capital projects be delivered:

- \$9.5 million for the Fair Access (low-income bus pass) Program;
- Identify projects from the Rural Transit Pilot ending in Spring 2021 to rapidly scale-up using a public-private partnership model; and
- \$484.6 million for LRT development projects in Edmonton and Calgary targeted at \$484.6 million¹⁰.

¹⁰ Government of Alberta. 2020-23 Capital Plan. Retrieved From: <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/3c46f857-aa60-430f-ba52-f9ec96fc8ccf/resource/63c3929f-0ed2-463b-902a-24aa7271f3e3/download/budget-2020-capital-plan-details-by-ministry-2020-23.pdf>



Summary

To get women and their families in Alberta back to work, we believe it is essential to maintain and leverage investments in:

- Affordable supportive housing;
- Work-Integrated Training programs;
- Childcare subsidies and operator support; and
- Transit development in rural and urban communities

At this turning point in our history, Alberta needs innovative solutions to get Albertans back to work and return our province to fiscal balance. Our proposed budget priorities highlight ways to address this while helping to ensure all Albertans have a chance to roll-up their sleeves and support our path to recovery.

If you would like further information or would like to discuss our recommendations, please do not hesitate to contact: Nesreen Ali, Government Relations Manager, at nali@ywcalgary.ca 403.750.2519 and/or Amber Niemeier, Director of External Relations, at a.niemeier@ywcaedm.org 780-423-9922 Ext 281.

The YWCAs of Alberta support over 30,000 women, children, gender-diverse people and families in rural and urban communities with childcare, disability supports, domestic violence and sexual violence counselling and shelter, emergency, transitional and permanent housing, employment supports, fitness, language instruction for newcomers, mental health counselling and youth leadership programming. The YWCAs of Alberta employ 655 staff in their respective urban and rural communities.

