

MEDIA RELEASE

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Response to the BC Budget: A Balanced Plan To Keep BC Moving Forward

(VICTORIA, BC) In the second year of BC's first poverty reduction strategy, *Together BC*, Family Services is disappointed to not see even a modest increase in disability and income assistance rates; as well as no implementation of \$10-a-day childcare, as they are the government investment levers that can most directly improve the lives of families, single mothers, children, youth, seniors, and individuals living in poverty, who make up the majority of our clients.

However, in terms of investing in the social services sector as a whole; in supports for families facing possible child apprehension or with children in Ministry care; in services to victims of violence and their children; and in supports for people experiencing homelessness; Family Services of Greater Vancouver applauds the government for recognizing the importance of their ongoing investment these key areas. Budget 2020's investments are very modest, and will require focused efforts in to provide tangible benefits for BC's most vulnerable citizens.

Family Services has several key requests of government for clarity and focus going forward:

FOR THE SOCIAL SERVICES SECTOR

"More clarity is going to be required on how the government plans to 'support recruitment and retention' in the social services sector as a whole," says Karin Kirkpatrick, CEO of Family Services of Greater Vancouver. "Right now we can't attract or retain our highly-educated and trained employees because we can't pay them competitively."

"This is because social services agencies who deliver programs and services to people on behalf of government don't receive enough funding to cover the actual delivery of these programs, and this funding is annually set and inconsistent. We look forward to working with government across Ministries to help solve these recruitment and retention issues in 2020."

FOR FAMILIES

- Re. the "\$23M for services that "support the health, safety and well-being of children and youth...which aims to reduce the number of children and youth in care." We ask that this funding be directed to programs that provide families with **upstream supports to prevent child apprehension.**

FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

- **No increase in the Assistance to Victims of Crime Program in 2020 is insufficient.** Victims are currently waiting five to six months for assistance, which funds things like shelter, trauma counselling, locks on doors,

and bars on windows. These wait times are unacceptable, and Budget 2020 has done nothing to improve these.

- **We ask for a shift in investment to fund Victim Support workers across the province.** There are currently NO victim support workers outside of urban centres in BC, and even those in Vancouver can only serve 5% of the most high-risk, domestic violence cases.
- We are disappointed to find **nothing in the Budget in response to West Coast LEAF's submission to Finance around the creation of community-based sexual assault teams** and integrated sexual assault clinics around the province. Victims of sexual assault outside of domestic violence are currently not served by Ministry-funded victim support workers, and have to find support with community organizations that are themselves overburdened and underfunded.

FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

- While we support the government's building of 505 new shelter spaces and two new 60-bed navigation centres for the homeless, **we ask that part of these shelter spaces and services be specifically dedicated to homeless youth, who need different supports than adults and should not be sheltered with adults.**
- We ask that at least **part of the additional \$50M over three years towards** expanding programs and services that support people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness **be dedicated specifically to homeless and at-risk youth.**
- We ask that **some of the \$56M in capital funding committed to the development 200 units of supportive modular housing** for people who are homeless **be dedicated to developing supportive housing for homeless and at-risk youth.** To date in the government's fiscal plan, no funding for shelter or supportive housing has been invested in housing and supporting homeless and at-risk youth.

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ABOUT FAMILY SERVICES OF GREATER VANCOUVER

Founded in 1928, Family Services of Greater Vancouver is one of BC's largest social services organizations. Last year alone we served over 12,000 families, youth, children, seniors, and newcomers at 14 locations across Metro Vancouver. Family Services' over 50 programs and services work to end violence against women, children and seniors through victims services and specialized counselling; supporting homeless and at-risk youth with wraparound services including detox, housing, and pre-employment programs; creating more inclusive communities through free parenting workshops, groups and community kitchens; supporting youth with developmental disabilities and their families become more independent; and supporting at-risk families facing challenges.

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