



RE: Requesting Urgent Action to Stop the Superhighway to Youth Homelessness During the Pandemic

August 31, 2020

Dear Premier Horgan,

I am writing on behalf of the BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness to ask for your urgent attention to a situation in the Province that could result in alarming levels of youth homelessness.

We very much appreciate your Government's decision to extend the placements for youths in care during the public health emergency caused by COVID-19. The "pause" in these placement extensions is due to end on September 30, 2020. We are concerned that plans are not in place to address the housing needs of this much larger cohort of youths and that this could result in a major spike in youth homelessness across BC. We are writing to you as the response requires the urgent attention of multiple Ministries within your Government.

Your government has made affordable housing a real priority and we applaud you on the investments you are making in providing much needed homes for British Columbians. Given the new social housing being developed, we believe that with careful planning over the coming months, we can adequately address the looming aging out of care emergency. Right now though, as we approach the start of September, we do not see how the deadline of the end of the month can be achieved without putting hundreds of young people on the street. We know a key pathway into youth homelessness is aging out of the foster-care system at age 19. In fact, we refer to it as the "super highway" to homelessness for youth. We are appealing to you for urgent support to ensure that the right actions are put in place to ensure that no young person aging out of the care system ends up homeless during this public health emergency.

Our request to you is to:

1. Ensure that urgent work be undertaken by the Ministry of Children and Family Development to identify the number of youths aging out in care per community on September 30, 2020, including information on the type of housing response that would adequately meet their needs. Have BC Housing with its partners in the non-profit housing sector and youth serving agencies identify youth as a priority for housing assistance on September 30th.
2. Postpone the September 30th deadline for youths aging out of care until a plan is in place for every youth to be housed appropriately.

Mr. Premier, we admire your leadership and compassion in addressing the real inequalities in the Province, many of which have become more glaring during this public health emergency. Nothing could be more important to addressing inequality than preventing youth homelessness. We are calling on you to lead a coordinated effort to ensure that young people coming out of care during this pandemic will have an appropriate home as a foundation for building healthy lives. And as a Coalition we are prepared to work alongside the Provincial government agencies to identify housing and appropriate supports for every youth coming out of care.

Yours sincerely,

BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness

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CC. Minister of Children and Family Development
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction