



# MANDATE LETTERS FOR BC CABINET MINISTERS

## OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS

The Federation of Community Social Services of BC has reviewed the mandate letters sent to each newly appointed Cabinet Minister as well as select Ministers of State. We have flagged key items from each and analyzed them according to recent discussions from our ongoing membership engagement activities.

### Early Years

1. Implement a universal child-care plan that provides affordable, accessible, and high-quality care and early learning to every child whose family wants or needs it, starting with infant/toddler programs. *(Minister of State for Childcare)*
2. Provide additional investments in the Early Childhood Educator workforce through training, education, and fair wages. *(Minister of State for Childcare)*
3. Accelerate the creation of new child-care spaces in communities across the province. *(Minister of State for Childcare)*

### Children, Youth & Families

1. Enhance and improve child-protection services. *(Minister of Children and Family Development)*
2. Invest in child-protection services; hire additional social workers and staff to support social workers; implement incentives to attract social workers to rural and under-served regions. *(Minister of Children and Family Development)*
3. Work to implement the recommendations from Grand Chief Ed John's report; provide better supports to keep Aboriginal children at home and out of care; prioritize reducing the number of Aboriginal children entering our care system. *(Minister of Children and Family Development)*
4. Work to ensure Delegated Aboriginal Agencies are able to offer services at the same level as those offered to non-Aboriginal children. *(Minister of Children and Family Development)*
5. Increase funding for Agreements with Young Adults; expand the tuition fee waiver program and improve supports for former youth-in-care who pursue post-secondary education. *(Minister of Advanced Education, Skills, and Training and Minister of Children and Family Development)*
6. Increase annual funding to support women who experience domestic violence, sexual assault and other crimes. *(Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General)*

### Seniors

1. Work with the Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors to improve and strengthen services to ensure seniors receive dignified and quality care. *(Minister of Health)*
2. Through partnerships with local governments, the federal government, private, and not-for-profit sectors, begin to build 114,000 units of affordable market rental, non-profit, co-op, supported social housing, and owner-purchase housing. *(Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing)*



## Housing & Homelessness

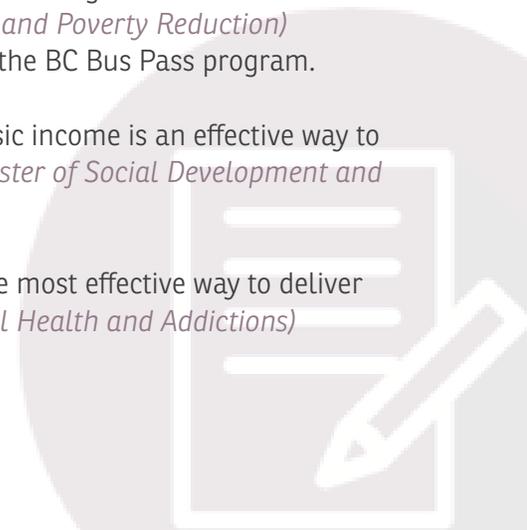
1. Develop a homelessness action plan to reduce the homeless population through permanent housing and services; as part of the plan, conduct a province-wide homelessness count. *(Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction)*
2. Develop a basic-income pilot to test whether this is an effective way to reduce poverty, improve health, housing, and employment. *(Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction)*
3. Design and implement a province-wide poverty-reduction strategy with legislated targets and timelines. *(Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction)*
4. Through partnerships with local governments, the federal government, private, and not-for-profit sectors, begin to build 114,000 units of affordable market rental, non-profit, co-op, supported social housing, and owner-purchase housing. *(Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing)*
5. Work in partnership to develop a homelessness action plan to reduce the homeless population through permanent housing and services; as part of the plan, conduct a province-wide homelessness count. *(Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing)*
6. Amend the Residential Tenancy Act to provide stronger protections for renters; provide additional resources to the Residential Tenancy Branch. *(Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing)*

## Employment & Income

1. Immediately raise all income assistance and disability rates by \$100 per month. *(Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction)*
2. Support assistance recipients as they re-enter the workforce by allowing an additional \$200 a month in earnings exemptions. *(Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction)*
3. Further support those on disability assistance by fully restoring the BC Bus Pass program. *(Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction)*
4. Develop a basic-income pilot to test whether this is an effective way to reduce poverty, improve health, housing and employment. *(Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction)*
5. Provide greater access to adult basic education and English-language learning programs by eliminating fees. *(Minister of Advanced Education, Skills, and Training)*
6. Establish a Fair Wage Commission to support the work of implementing the \$15-per-hour minimum wage by 2021 and to bring forward recommendations to close the gap between the minimum wage and livable wages. *(Minister of Labour)*
7. Review and develop options with WorkSafeBC to increase compliance with employment laws and standards put in place to protect the lives and safety of workers. *(Minister of Labour)*

## Inclusion

1. Immediately raise all income assistance and disability rates by \$100 per month. *(Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction)*
2. Support assistance recipients as they re-enter the workforce by allowing an additional \$200 a month in earnings exemptions. *(Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction)*
3. Further support those on disability assistance by fully restoring the BC Bus Pass program. *(Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction)*
4. Develop a basic-income pilot to test whether giving people a basic income is an effective way to reduce poverty, improve health, housing and employment. *(Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction)*
5. Re-establish the Human Rights Commission. *(Attorney General)*
6. Consult with internal and external stakeholders to determine the most effective way to deliver quality mental health and addiction services. *(Minister of Mental Health and Addictions)*



## Mental Health & Substance Use

1. Work in partnership to develop an immediate response to the opioid crisis that includes crucial investments and improvements to mental health and addictions services. *(Minister of Mental Health and Addictions)*
2. Create a mental-health and addiction strategy to guide the transformation of BC's mental health-care system; include a focus on improving access, investing in early prevention and youth mental health. *(Minister of Mental Health and Addictions)*
3. Consult with internal and external stakeholders to determine the most effective way to deliver quality mental health and addiction services. *(Minister of Mental Health and Addictions)*
4. Lead the provincial government's planning for the safe implementation of legalized cannabis. *(Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General)*
5. Support police efforts to disrupt the drug supply chain and push for increased penalties for dealers who knowingly distribute deadly drugs. *(Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General)*
6. Work in partnership to implement the Surrey Accord and provide the Surrey Wraparound program with increased, stable, and secure annual funding. *(Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General)*

## Reconciliation

1. Work collaboratively and respectfully with First Nations to establish a clear, cross-government vision of reconciliation to guide the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, and the Tsilhqot'in Supreme Court decision. *(Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation)*
2. In partnership with First Nations, transform the treaty process so it respects case law and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. *(Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation)*
3. Provide reliable, dedicated funding and support for Friendship Centres. *(Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation)*
4. Work to implement the recommendations from Grand Chief Ed John's report and provide better supports to keep Aboriginal children at home and out of care; make reducing the number of Aboriginal children entering our care system a priority. *(Minister of Children and Family Development)*
5. Work to ensure Delegated Aboriginal Agencies are supported to offer services at the same level offered to non-Aboriginal children. *(Minister of Children and Family Development)*

## OMISSIONS AND AREAS REQUIRING ATTENTION

While there are many significant and promising objectives mapped out in the mandate letters, there are also some omissions that will need to be addressed over the coming months and years. Some are included in the Supply and Confidence Agreement between the NDP and the Green Party. Others will require increased advocacy from the community social services sector to make sure they are not ignored. Across all areas mentioned below, The Federation remains committed to advocating for increased funding to community-based services and greater involvement of the community sector in policy planning and development.

We used the work of Federation members (from the February 2017 Social Policy Forum) to analyze and organize the list of areas still requiring attention. The issues included below reflect the priorities flagged by Federation members—community social services organizations from all across BC.

**EARLY YEARS.** The investment in workforce development is very much needed and encouraged. Such efforts need to be expanded across social care ministries. As important as more child care spaces are, there is an equal need to support families with young children at home and in the community.

**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES.** BC needs to do a better job of supporting kids in care. While implementing the recommendations from Grand Chief Ed John's report is a noteworthy and significant inclusion, there is no mention of the recommendations from the 2012 Residential Review Report co-authored by MCFD and The Federation (which speak to significant issues such as permanency, raising the age of support for youth-in-care, increasing community-based supports, and culturally-appropriate placements that remain largely unaddressed). Also omitted is the need for improved supports for families both in moments of crisis and to help prevent crises from happening. And while The Federation very much welcomes increased support for women in domestic violence situations, additional services are also required to address the perpetrators of family violence and for children experiencing trauma as a result.

**SENIORS.** Recent devolution of seniors care and services from the Ministry of Health to contracted service providers (and, more often than not, family members) has resulted in increased isolation of seniors, increased administrative costs, and increased reliance on voluntary (unpaid) caregivers. Increased oversight is required for both home support and residential services across the province and initiatives responding to elder abuse must go above and beyond phone lines and websites. There is also a growing need for inclusive care spaces for LGBTQ2S older adults and for those seniors with developmental special needs.

**HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS.** Increased community supports to help people stay in their homes can have as much of an affect as the development of new units and should be prioritized (and invested in) as such. Better integration of supports for people discharged from hospitals (especially those with mental health and/or substance use issues) could help reduce both homelessness and re-admission.

**EMPLOYMENT & INCOME.** The extent to which the government will reinstate and increase funding to community-based employment programs and services remains unclear. While much attention has been paid to job creation over the past decade, precarious employment and inadequate wages will need to be addressed in a coordinated manner. Poverty reduction efforts and basic income pilot programs look promising, but a lot needs to be done to address inequality in BC.

**INCLUSION.** Transitioning from childhood to adulthood remains particularly challenging for people with disabilities in BC and will require significant attention. More and more families are serving as primary care providers (and/or filling in gaps between services) and require increased support.

**MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE USE.** The creation of this new, dedicated ministry has been met with mixed feelings. Currently, beyond the term "stakeholders," there is little clarity about the role of community-based service providers in this work, nor is there recognition of the important role community social services play in prevention, early intervention, and safe access.

**RECONCILIATION.** Many of the issues that have been raised over the past years are addressed in this ministry's mandate letter. However, Jordan's Principle remains absent. And while reducing the number of Indigenous children in care is an important (and overdue) objective, the need for culturally-appropriate supports for children and youth who must be placed in care should not be ignored.

