

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the Upcoming Federal Budget

Covenant House Vancouver

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RECOMMENDATIONS

FUNDING / BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

#1 — Introduce a ‘**Universal Basic Income**’ to ensure everyone has an income sufficient to meet their basic needs and live with dignity.

#2 — Ensure that all new social / subsidize housing developments allocate no less than **10% of units for youth ages 16 to 24**.*

#3 — Provide additional **funding** to youth housing organizations to hire staff and expand services to reach more **Indigenous** and **LGBTQ2 youth**, as well as general supports for all youth who are, or are at risk of becoming homelessness.

#4 — Provided additional **funding** to social service agencies to help address the various challenges associated with **human trafficking**.

#5 — Provide a place on the **Prime Minister’s Youth Council** for a youth who is homeless and therefore residing in a supportive housing facility.*

**Recommendations tied to current funding / government initiatives.*

OVERVIEW

Recommendation #1 — Introduce a ‘Universal Basic Income’ to ensure everyone has an income sufficient to meet their basic needs and live with dignity.

Basic income supporters span the political spectrum. There are many reasons for that support, and they shape the way a basic income is designed in different places. Around the world, having a basic income is recognized as a highly effective way to support important societal goals, including the reduction and elimination of poverty and insecurity; the narrowing of extreme income and wealth inequalities; shared citizenship; and improved democratic and economic functioning.¹

As a Vancouver-based non-profit agency we see first-hand the impact the high cost of living has on people; not only those who are low income, but also as one of the most expensive cities to live-in in Canada, even those who identify as "middle-class" often struggles just to get by. It has been said that most Canadians are just two paycheques away from being in serious financial trouble where they to lose their job or encounter other, unexpected financial hardships.

Of course, the high cost of living goes beyond simply the issue of affordable housing. From food security to recreational opportunities (such as enrolling your children in sports), many Canadians are already having to make challenging decisions.

Through this lens, introducing a 'Universal Basic Income' fosters both strong social (healthcare, crime reduction, etc.) and economic (cost of living, employment, etc.) outcomes for Canadians. Indeed, the ever increasing data on the subject points to the conclusion that a 'Universal Basic Income' supports both positive social and economic outcomes; and while cynics will suggest that it would create a disincentive to work, other jurisdictions around the world have debunked this myth.

Recommendation #2 — Ensure that all new social / subsidized housing developments allocate no less than 10% of units for youth ages 16 to 24.

Further to the Government’s commitment to finalizing the design and implementation of the Housing Supply Challenge (CMHC), coupled with the Government’s historical commitment to build 41,800 new affordable housing units through the National Housing Strategy, ensuring that *no less than 10% of housing is allocated for youth ages 16 to 24* is crucial.

Historically, youth have often struggled to secure housing (even if they are employed). Landlords often have reservations renting to youth. The younger they are the less likely their application will be accepted. And, for those who are still in high school but cannot live with family for circumstances beyond their control, there are very few housing options.

Finally, given that housing is vital for the purposes of helping a young person create a long-term foundation for themselves – coupled with food, clothing, support services, medical care, education, etc. – it is crucial that a percentage of units are allocated for some of Canada’s most vulnerable; keeping in

¹ https://www.basicincomecanada.org/about_basic_income

mind that a youth who can conquer their challenge with homelessness is far less likely to become a homeless adult.

Recommendation #3 — Provide additional funding to youth housing organizations to hire staff and expand services to reach more Indigenous and LGBTQ2 youth, as well as general supports for all youth who are, or are at risk of becoming homelessness.

Approximately 30% of homeless youth identify as Indigenous, while 29.5% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ2. Moreover, 85% of homeless youth suffer high levels of distress and have mental health concerns; 35% have experienced an overdose that required hospitalization; and, 42% had attempted suicide at least once.

As housing is essential to life outcomes, and whereas youth make-up between 10 to 15% of the total homelessness count across the nation, more supports for young people are crucial to ensure today's youth have the best possible chance for a future filled with opportunities.

***Notation:** As the Government is already well-aware, youth have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, budget allocations dedicated to youth must be a key priority in the Government's next budget.*

Recommendation #4 — Provided additional funding to social service agencies to help address the various challenges associated with human trafficking.

As outlined in the 2018 Human Trafficking Consultations Report², prevention, partnerships and knowledge are among those themes identified to combat human trafficking. To that end, increased funding for the following activities are recommended:

- Greater public awareness of human trafficking to foster collective prevention, intervention and prosecution efforts.
 - Awareness campaigns designed to de-stigmatize those who have been / are being trafficked as a means to encourage them to self-report.
 - Funding for increased collaboration and engagement opportunities with victims and survivors of human trafficking, in particular, NGOs, community service providers, justice officials, and government officials.
 - Training for social service agencies to better understand the need for a multi-faceted and holistic approach to ensure the inclusivity of certain aspects, such as perspectives, cultures, and genders are taken into consideration when assisting victims of human trafficking.
 - The collection of more reliable data and the creation of a national service provider database to disseminate relevant information among stakeholders.
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Recommendation #5 — Provide a place on the Prime Minister's Youth Council for a youth who is homeless and therefore residing in a supportive housing facility.

² <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrcs/pblctns/2018-hmn-trffckng-cnslttns-rprt/index-en.aspx#s424>

Covenant House Vancouver recognizes that it cannot speak to the current composition of the Prime Minister's Youth Council. However, it respectfully submits that having a young person on the Council who is currently homeless (or at risk of becoming homelessness) would provide an important, much needed perspective.

COVENANT HOUSE VANCOUVER

Established in 1997, Covenant House Vancouver (hereafter abbreviated 'CHV') is a leading expert in British Columbia – and Western Canada's largest agency – dedicated to serving homeless and at-risk youth.

With values rooted in unconditional love and absolute respect, CHV offers a continuum of services using evidence-informed theories and practices that ensure we care for the entire person – mind, body and spirit. Ranging from outreach and drop-in services, to residential and support services that enable youth to transition into independence successfully, we understand the unique challenges homeless and at-risk youth face on a daily basis.

At the core of our success is our “one size, fits one” approach, tailored to the specific needs of each individual youth. This ensures that precise supports – be they life skills, housing support, clinical counselling or otherwise – are made available to our youth based on their respective journey as we endeavour to meet their unique needs.

Since opening our doors 23-years ago CHV has helped over 20,000 homeless and at-risk youth and continues to serve over 1,200 vulnerable youth on an annual basis. Moreover, we are presently in the midst of an aggressive expansion. This expansion – the result of a \$50+ million-dollar fundraising campaign – will yield two new buildings (2022); thus, ensuring that no homeless youth need ever be turned away due to a lack of space (something that continues to happen all too often within Metro Vancouver).

A PERFECT PARTNER FOR GOVERNMENT

As a mission drive, values-based agency, CHV is dedicated to listening to government, understanding their objectives and partnering with them to foster the best possible outcomes for youth and the broader community. More specifically, CHV has a unique value proposition – one we hope government will take into consideration when reviewing our recommendations.

First and foremost, CHV is part of an international federation with over 30-chapters throughout the Americas' serving youth ages 16 to 24. Collectively, over one-million³ young men and women have benefited from the services provided by the Covenant House network. Thus, when we state we are a 'leading expert' dedicated to serving homeless and at-risk youth, it is not rhetoric or political posturing – it is a reality.

Not only are we committed to excellence in our service practices, we are also committed to excellence in our organizational and stewardship practices. From ongoing leadership development training for our

³ Covenant House International (<https://www.covenanthouse.org/homeless-charity#>)

employees as we aspire to become an 'employer of choice', to stewardship practices that see approximately 95% of our funding come from private and corporate donors, CHV's innovative and thoughtful practices truly set us apart for all other service providers within British Columbia, and the majority of services providers across the country.

Finally, we are pleased to say that CHV constantly aspires to be responsive to the government's priorities. From poverty reduction, to housing, to mental health, CHV seeks to be seen as an agency dedicated to working collaboratively. In that spirit, we are pleased to share that in the coming-year we will be increasing our commitment to being responsive to government by launching a series of new and innovative advocacy and thought leadership initiatives we believe can be leveraged by both elected officials and various government entities.

Simply put, not only are we making recommendations to government... we are also offering to assist! Whatever our agency can do to partner with government towards real, long-term solutions we stand ready to engage with you.

CONCLUSION

Poverty, inequality and homelessness are inextricably linked. For homeless and at-risk youth, their impacts make the transition to adulthood even more complex. Our recommendations, if implemented, will help to improve the lives of youth across the country by allowing us to meet both their basic and critical care needs; thus, substantially increasing their potential to become productive members of their community as adults. Together, in partnership with the Government of Canada, we believe now is the time to change the landscape forever.

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