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**The Honourable John Horgan, Premier of British Columbia**  
Office of the Premier  
West Annex Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

**The Honourable Minister Carole James**  
Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier  
Room 153 Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

July 20, 2020

**RE: Recommendations for Recovery by YWCA Metro Vancouver**

Dear Premier Horgan and Minister James:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on how best to invest the \$1.5 billion Economic Recovery Fund. I am writing to you today on behalf of YWCA Metro Vancouver. As one of the largest and most diversified non-profit organizations in the province, the YWCA focuses on supporting a person's path to economic independence, wellness and safety. In 2019, 48,572 people accessed the YWCA through 66 programs in 75 locations across Metro Vancouver.

The YWCA's vision is to achieve women's equality. To make strides toward this goal, the organization focuses on housing, early learning and child care, employment, single mothers' support, violence prevention, youth development and advocacy. The YWCA operates two social enterprises - a hotel and a health and fitness centre - to financially support our programs and contribute to the local economy. We have also established a strong network of donor and government funding.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the remarkable work the BC Government has done to support our communities during the COVID-19 crisis. I was also pleased to be consulted as part of your Framing the Future discussion, and would be happy to be of service going forward, including through future consultations, advisory groups and planning efforts.

The recommendations below are based on the YWCA's frontline experience, as well as consultations with a range of women leaders working on gender equity issues across Metro Vancouver.

## **Commit to a feminist recovery**

The COVID-19 pandemic has and will continue to have a disproportionate impact on women. This impact deepens significantly for poor women, racialized women, Indigenous women, senior women, LGBTQ2S+ women and women of various abilities. An approach to emergency response and recovery planning that is gender-responsive, and that takes into account these intersecting layers of discrimination, is necessary to reach those most impacted and those who have the least access to resources.

Poverty in BC is gendered and COVID-19 is deepening it. Given that women are concentrated in jobs and sectors hardest hit by the pandemic, and make up the majority of part-time and minimum wage workers, the YWCA is extremely concerned about the period when supports and subsidies come to an end. We anticipate an even deeper economic impact on women who have lost their jobs and income sources. We may face a push to reduce public spending and introduce austerity. This would further challenge our public systems and could impoverish civil society and the non-governmental organizations that safeguard and advance equity during a time when we anticipate demands on our services to increase.

### **Our recommendations:**

1. Apply Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) approach to public policy and spending related to pandemic recovery in BC, informed by a diversity of voices.
2. Engage women, women-led organizations and equity-seeking groups as a part of recovery planning.
  - Establish a Gender Advisory Council that provides feedback on government pandemic policies.
  - Ensure gender balance on Recovery Task Forces or Steering Committees.
3. Gather disaggregated data on the impacts of the pandemic using an intersectional lens, with specific focus on racialized people, disability status and other protected grounds and use it to inform planning.

## **Support BC's non-profit charitable sector**

British Columbia's non-profit sector is vast in size, scope and impact. It provides more than 86,000 jobs and generates billions of dollars towards our provincial GDP.

According to a [new report](#) about the impacts of COVID-19 on BC's non-profit sector, 40% of non-profits anticipate service disruption and 74% anticipate reduced revenue from fundraising. One in five non-profits have closed or anticipate closing due to financial shortfalls brought on by the pandemic.

Organizations like the YWCA deliver programs and services that improve the social determinants of health for women and families who face intersecting oppressions. This includes responding to increases in gender-based violence, supporting women and

children with safe, affordable housing, improving food security for low-income families, providing emergency child care and maintaining a flexible response to community needs throughout the pandemic.

**Our recommendations:**

1. Provide a targeted stabilization fund to ensure the long-term stability of the sector. This fund should be developed in partnership with the sector and apply a Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) approach.
2. Through core multi-year funding, invest in organizations that advance gender equity and women's rights, alongside equity for racialized women, newcomers, poor women and others who are discriminated against.
3. Engage charitable and non-profit organizations as part of recovery planning.

We know that gender equity is a priority for the BC government. A stabilization fund will ensure women, who make up 74% of the not-for-profit sector, stay employed. A fund will also allow the YWCA and other organizations that serve women and people who experience discrimination, oppression and violence, to continue safely providing services in-person and virtually. BC's non-profits and charities are leaders in anti-racism and social justice work, and important providers of community-based health and wellbeing programs.

**Invest in social infrastructure**

Recovery must include large-scale investment in social infrastructure, including access to accessible, quality, affordable early learning and child care.

BC's post-pandemic economic recovery depends on building a public child care system with fairly compensated early childhood educators. With a reliable system in place, parents can return to work and redistribute more of their income back into the economy, families can leave income assistance, businesses are bolstered with employable prime-age applicants and the BC economy benefits from nearly 70,000 new jobs.

As BC completes the third year of a 10-year plan to implement a quality, accessible and affordable child care system, we urge the province to identify and protect the funds for the remaining years of the plan with a goal of full implementation within that timeframe.

**Our recommendations:**

1. Begin moving all currently licensed child care programs to \$10 a day child care sites, with no fees for families earning under \$45,000/year.
2. Implement a competitive province-wide wage grid for early childhood educators to ensure BC has the educators needed to restart the economy. Raising median

wages will also support gender equity across the province, as the child care sector is mostly comprised of women.

3. Expand public child care spaces through infrastructure investments.
4. Build a durable governance structure for child care that prioritizes public and community run programs.

Once again, thank you for inviting and considering this feedback in your recovery planning. I urge you to continue to work with equity and equality seeking groups to stabilize our economy and strengthen public wellbeing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deb Bryant". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Deb Bryant, CEO  
YWCA Metro Vancouver