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CHANGES TO CHILD WELFARE FUNDING NEEDED, BC SOCIAL WORKERS

(Vancouver) BC's professional association for social workers is adding their voice to support the recommendations of a report calling for increased child welfare funding for Indigenous children and better fiscal accountability for the children's ministry.

On Tuesday, the Representative for Children and Youth in BC released a report examining federal and BC funding models for child welfare. "At a Crossroads: The roadmap from fiscal discrimination to equity in Indigenous child welfare" calls for the Ministry of Children and Family Development to stop discriminating against Indigenous children living off-reserve.

"This report is a call to recognize the unequal funding for Indigenous children compared to non-Indigenous children, and a call to see this inequity as a human rights issue," said Michael Crawford, president of the BC Association of Social Workers (BCASW). "BC continues to have a significant overrepresentation of children in government care because 68 per cent of all children in care are Indigenous, yet they make up only 10 per cent of the population."

The BCASW supports Representative Jennifer Charlesworth's three main recommendations in her report. Dr. Charlesworth offers the recommendations in the context of meaningful reconciliation and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, fiscal accountability, and human rights.

The Representative found that provincial funding for Indigenous children living off-reserve is far less than federal funding for on-reserve child welfare services and that this is fiscal discrimination. The Representative recommends that the Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD) adopt the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal principles of funding to ensure that funding does not discriminate against off-reserve Indigenous children and those living on-reserve where no Indigenous Child and Family Service agency exists.

The Representative found that the MCFD does not properly track expenditures and outcomes for Indigenous children. Additionally, because provincial funding is tied to the number of children in care, the Representative found the system discriminates against off-reserve Indigenous children by not directing funding toward prevention through strengthening families and communities.

To improve understanding and articulation of the needs of Indigenous children, the Representative calls for MCFD to collect disaggregated race-based data. Current data collection does not allow for an examination of the full impact of fiscal discrimination.

"Indigenous Child and Family Service agencies understand the need to engage in broad-based prevention efforts to ensure healthy children, families, and communities," said Crawford. "It's time for the BC government to respond fully to these calls with adequate funding."

At a Crossroads: The roadmap from fiscal discrimination to equity in Indigenous child welfare - <https://rcybc.ca/reports-and-publications/>

Michael Crawford, MSW, RSW | President
BC Association of Social Workers

The BC Association of Social Workers is a voluntary, not-for-profit membership association that supports and promotes the profession of social work and advocates for social justice.

We acknowledge that our office is in the unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations and that our members live and work in unceded territories across British Columbia.