

REPORT IN RESPONSE TO

FORSAKEN: The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry

2020 STATUS UPDATE



Ministry of
Public Safety and
Solicitor General

Contents

- MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER** 4
- INTRODUCTION** 6
- UPDATES ON ACTIONS BY THEMES** 8
 - 1. Compensation and Healing 8
 - Healing, Rebuilding, and Reconciliation (Rec. 3.3)* 8
 - 2. Improvement to Policing 11
 - Provincial Policing Standards (Rec. 4.1, 4.2, 4.12)* 11
 - Monitoring High Risk Offenders (Rec. 5.13)* 13
 - 3. Supports for Missing Person Investigations 13
 - Trauma-Informed Practice (Rec. 4.9, 4.12)* 13
 - Supports for Families of Missing Persons (Rec. 7.9)* 15
 - 4. Safety for Marginalized Women 15
 - Services for Marginalized Women (UM#1, Rec. 6.3, 6.4)* 15
- CLOSING REMARKS** 20
- APPENDIX OF REFERENCED MWCI RECOMMENDATIONS** 21

Message from the Minister

As B.C.'s Solicitor General and Minister of Public Safety, I am pleased to present the 2020 status update in response to *Forsaken: The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry* (the Report).

In the year since the release of the 2019 status update, significant progress has been made to address recommendations outlined in the Report, and more broadly, to address the systemic causes of violence against women and girls. This includes investment in actions that not only enhance public safety and healing, but also address critical needs related to poverty reduction, housing, mental health and addictions and other factors that impact community wellness and welfare.

For example:

In March 2019, the Province released its Poverty Reduction Strategy, *TogetherBC*. The strategy outlines policies to achieve the targets introduced in the 2018 *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act*: a 25% reduction in B.C.'s overall poverty rate and a 50% reduction in the child poverty rate by 2024. The Province is required to release an annual progress report on the targets beginning in 2020.

In June 2019, we announced *A Pathway to Hope*, which lays out government's 10-year vision for mental health and addictions care that gets people the services they need in order to tackle problems early on and support their well-being. It identifies the priority actions government will take over the next three years to help people immediately and reduce demand on services down the road. The focus is on supporting the wellness of children, youth and young adults, supporting Indigenous-led solutions and improving access and quality of care.

Over the course of summer 2019, the Province sponsored a series of Indigenous-led, community-based engagement sessions throughout B.C. to understand priorities and early opportunities to build a *Path Forward to Ending Violence* in response to the release of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Women and Girls, and in reference to historical recommendations provided by family members, survivors and those with lived experience.

In November 2019, the Province became the first in Canada to bring into force legislation to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The B.C. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) aims to create a path forward that respects the human rights of Indigenous peoples while introducing better transparency and predictability in the work we do together.

In March 2020, the First Nations Justice strategy was endorsed by the Province and the First Nations Justice Council, with support from the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, the First Nations Summit, and the BC Assembly of First Nations. The First Nations Justice Strategy sets a path for the partners involved in the strategy and the criminal justice system to work together to:

- reduce the number of First Nations people who become involved with the criminal justice system;
- improve the experience of those who do;
- increase the number of First Nations people working within the justice system; and
- support First Nations to restore their Indigenous justice systems and structures.

In addition to these initiatives, the 2020 status update outlines targeted actions the Province has taken to respond to the recommendations in the Report, and to demonstrate our commitment to ending violence against women and girls, and supporting those who have been impacted.



Honourable Mike Farnworth
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Introduction

IN SEPTEMBER 2010, the Lieutenant Governor in Council issued an Order in Council establishing the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry (MWCI), which examined the conduct of police investigations into the disappearance of nearly 50 women reported missing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside between 1997 and 2002. In December 2012, the Commission released *Forsaken – The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry (MWCI Report)*¹, outlining 63 recommendations – 54 of which were directed to the Province – and two urgent measures.

In November 2013, the Province published a status report² that described progress made to implement the recommendations of the Commission and enhance the safety and security of women in British Columbia (B.C.). In December 2014, a second and final status report³ provided information on further progress made since 2013, and spoke to how

the intent of the recommendations would be used to inform future government action, including efforts to end violence against women and girls.

In December 2016, the BC Office of the Auditor General (OAG) released *Follow-Up on The Missing Women Commission of Inquiry*⁴, examining the degree to which the Province responded to the 21 recommendations and two urgent measures selected for audit by the OAG. The report found that eight recommendations had been implemented, six recommendations had been partially implemented, five had not been implemented, and four recommendations were not far enough along to determine whether the Province's approach would address the intent of the recommendation. The report issued one recommendation: that the Province report publicly each year on how government's actions are meeting the intent of the Commission's recommendations.

-
- 1 Missing Women Commission of Inquiry (2012). *Forsaken – The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry*. <http://www.missingwomeninquiry.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Forsaken-ES-web-RGB.pdf>
 - 2 Government of British Columbia (2013). *Safety and Security of Vulnerable Women in B.C.: A Status Report in Response to: Forsaken – The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry*. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/about-bc-justice-system/inquiries/bcgovstatusreport.pdf>
 - 3 Government of British Columbia (2014). *A Final Status Update Report in Response to: Forsaken – The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry*. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/about-bc-justice-system/inquiries/mwci_report_2014.pdf
 - 4 BC Office of the Auditor General (2016). *Follow-Up On The Missing Women Commission of Inquiry*. https://www.bcauditor.com/sites/default/files/publications/reports/FINAL_MWCI_2.pdf

The Province subsequently committed to implementing the OAG’s recommendation, and in February 2018, released a status update⁵ that reported on activities undertaken since 2014. This was followed in February 2019 with the release of a status update detailing progress since the previous year.⁶

This *2020 Status Update* continues the Province’s commitment to annual reporting on initiatives undertaken since 2019 related to the MWCI recommendations. Similar to the 2019 status update, additional initiatives that are aligned with the objectives of the MCWI Report are included to provide broader information related to government actions to address the systemic causes of violence against women and girls.

.....

5 Government of British Columbia (2018). *Report in Response to Forsaken – The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry: Status Update*. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/about-bc-justice-system/inquiries/mwci-status-update-2018.pdf>

6 Government of British Columbia (2018). *Report in Response to Forsaken – The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry: Status Update*. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/about-bc-justice-system/inquiries/mwci-status-update-2019.pdf>

Updates on Actions by Themes

1. Compensation and Healing

HEALING, REBUILDING, AND RECONCILIATION (REC. 3.3)

Supporting Indigenous-led Solutions to Mental Health and Wellness

Government has made important investments to support Indigenous-led solutions to mental health and wellness and substance use. In 2018, the Province (represented by the Ministries of Health, Mental Health and Addictions, Children and Family Development, and Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation), signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Canada and the First Nations Health Council to improve mental health and wellness services. The partners collectively committed \$30 million over a two-year period to support First Nations to plan, design and deliver new mental health and wellness services based on their health plans and priorities. A key focus for the partners is supporting First Nations to design a full continuum of care that affirms, promotes and restores the mental health and wellness of First Nations in BC and that contributes to healing, Nation rebuilding and reconciliation. A number of new service delivery models for mental health and wellness are already emerging across the province as a result of this partnership approach.

This tripartite partnership is complemented by new investments by the Province to support the diverse healing journeys of First Nation individuals, families and communities. This includes new funding for Indigenous land-based healing and a commitment of \$40 million by the Province and the First Nations Health Authority to support the renovation, replacement and construction of First Nation-run treatment centres throughout BC.

Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Remediation Grants

Government continues to prioritize community-led projects that promote healing and rebuilding of Indigenous individuals, families and/or communities affected by violence and trauma. Since 2014, just over \$3.7 million in grant funding has been provided through the Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Remediation Grant Program to community-led projects supporting healing and rebuilding from violence in Indigenous communities. In 2019/2020, 36 Indigenous healing and rebuilding projects totalling just over \$1 million in grant funding were implemented, including projects that have a specific focus on Indigenous women and girls. Examples include:

- **\$29,967** to the Northern Society for Domestic Peace for the “MMIWG Family Gatherings” project in Smithers. Family members and survivors who contributed to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women were invited to a therapeutic retreat and offered support to address grief and complex trauma, through the facilitation of skilled Indigenous trauma therapists.
- **\$29,300** to the British Columbia Bereavement Helpline’s “Sisters in Strength Healing Retreat” project. The initiative provided bereaved Indigenous women impacted by violence – specifically the violent death or missing status of their female family members – a safe space to explore culturally-appropriate, traditional healing practices.
- **\$30,000** to West Kootenay Women’s Association for the “Heal the Earth, Heal Ourselves” project, an eight-week healing and wellness program for Indigenous women in Nelson. The initiative focused on providing access to culturally-relevant land-based practices to support women’s journey towards healing.
- **\$30,000** to Women Against Violence Against Women Rape Crisis Centre for the “Indigenous Counseling and Outreach” project offering outreach, trauma-informed one-to-one counselling and support groups to Indigenous women, Two-Spirit and gender diverse people who have experienced sexualized violence.

Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Remediation Grant Program

ESTABLISHED IN 2006, the Civil Forfeiture Office, located within the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, operates to undermine the profit motive behind criminal activity by taking away the tools and proceeds of crime and putting them back into programs that support community crime prevention and remediation initiatives.

Through the Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Remediation Grant Program, one-time funding is provided to crime prevention and remediation projects that align with funding streams chosen on an annual basis. Since 2012, the annual grant program has included funding streams to support projects that address violence against women, human trafficking and sexual exploitation, help implement the MWCI recommendations, and support healing and rebuilding in Indigenous communities.

More information about Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Remediation Grant Program and the application process can be found here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/crime-prevention/community-crime-prevention/grants>.

Crime Victim Assistance Program

The Crime Victim Assistance Program (CVAP) assists victims, immediate family members, and, in some cases, witnesses in coping with the effects of violent crime. It provides financial benefits to help offset financial losses and assist in recovery. CVAP continues to support victims and their immediate family members through access to financial benefits that support healing, including funding for counselling or memorial services. In 2018/19, CVAP provided a total of \$14.7 million to claimants.

Giving Voice Project

In 2018/19, the Province committed to providing \$400,000 over two years to the Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women Giving Voice Project. Additional funding was provided in 2019/20 which meant a total of 54 projects have been funded to date for a grand total of \$546,000. Giving Voice projects promote healing from gender-based violence by providing safe spaces for Indigenous women and girls to speak about issues of violence and create community-based solutions, both on- and off-reserve. Projects include traditional activities like knowledge workshops and healing circles. It also includes more community-focused projects, such as monthly dinners, guided community dialogues, cultural retreats and workshops on healthy masculinity.

Community Healing and Rebuilding

THE MINISTRY OF INDIGENOUS RELATIONS AND RECONCILIATION

provided funding to support healing and rebuilding among families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). In 2019/20, \$54,000 was provided to Quatsino First Nation to host a community-based family gathering for the families of MMIWG, which took place May 21-22, 2019. Organizer Cary-Lee Calder partnered with Quatsino First Nation to host the family gathering in the Vancouver Island Kwakwaka'wakw community. This two-day Gathering offered the families a place to share their stories, let go of their grief, and begin healing through their connection to culture. It provided all who attended an opportunity to experience transformation and growth while fostering mental, physical, social, spiritual and emotional well-being. Participants also increased their knowledge of cultural models of wellness which are fundamental to their identity.

Moosehide Campaign

In 2018/19, the Province committed \$2 million over four years to support the Moose Hide Campaign, which is a grassroots movement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous men and boys who are standing up against violence towards women and children. As part of the Province's ongoing commitment to ending violence, the B.C. Public Service co-sponsors and participates in the Moose Hide Campaign Annual Provincial Gathering and Day of Fasting. At the 2020 Provincial Gathering, approximately 730 public servants participated.

Provincial funding for the Moose Hide Campaign Development Society has provided resources the past two years to work with K-12 schools, now with 27 communities participating, as well as post-secondary institutions to expand its anti-violence message with children and youth.

The Moose Hide Campaign collaborates with post-secondary institutions with their Sexualized Prevention Offices, Indigenous Education Departments, Student Unions and Residence Departments and many campuses host Moose Hide Campaign Day events.

The Campaign has also developed a First Nations outreach and engagement strategy.

A few examples of this work include:

- **USING** the B.C. First Nations Leaders Gathering as a platform to engage with First Nations representatives from all parts of the province.
- **ACTIVELY** engaging and getting support from Indigenous political leadership in B.C.
- **WORKING** with the First Nations Health Council to explore community-based programming, and
- **LIAISING** with communities regarding what they are doing on the ground to end violence against women.

2. Improvement to Policing

PROVINCIAL POLICING STANDARDS (REC. 4.1, 4.2, 4.12)

Unbiased Policing

The MWCI Report included a series of recommendations aimed at ensuring equality in the delivery of policing services and supporting effective police responses to vulnerable people. As part of the continuing work on these recommendations, the Director of Police Services is developing Provincial Policing Standards (standards) on the promotion of unbiased policing. The development of the standards builds on targeted engagement with stakeholder organizations in fall 2017 and an online engagement process in 2018 where the Province sought the public's input on what types of issues are important to include in the standards to ensure police services are

delivered in a manner that is fair, equitable, and responsive to the needs of vulnerable groups. Throughout 2019, the Director of Police Services sought input on drafts from policing and community-based stakeholders through various processes and committees.

Engaging a wide range of stakeholders was a central theme of the MWCI recommendations and is important to ensure that the resulting standards are meaningful, effective, and reflect a broad spectrum of input.

The purpose of the standards is to promote unbiased policing by standardizing policies and procedures, including those related to access to justice, the protection of rights and better responses to vulnerable individuals; ensuring community engagement on policing priorities and service delivery; promoting diversity in police forces; and mandating training in areas such as Indigenous cultural safety, fair and impartial policing and trauma informed practice. The input received is currently being considered as the Province is working to finalize these standards.

Police Stops

IN 2019, the Director of Police Services established standards to address concerns regarding the police practice often referred to as ‘street checks’, including concerns about the over-representation of Indigenous and racialized persons. The standards on Police Stops 6.2.1 took effect January 15, 2020 and are available here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/policing-in-bc/policing-standards>. The standards require that police agencies provide policy direction to officers about police stops, to ensure practices are in line with existing law. Policies must be consistent with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (sections 7, 9, 10 and 15) and the values they reflect, including the right to be free from arbitrary arrest and detention; to move freely in society subject only to reasonable restrictions imposed by law; and to equal protection and benefit of the law, without discrimination. The standards also establish that police stops cannot be random or arbitrary, or based on a person’s race, social or economic status. The standards require police agencies to provide guidance to officers on the steps that must be taken to ensure a person’s rights are upheld during a stop. They also require procedures regarding record-keeping and audits, and that policies be accessible to the public. These standards were implemented in 2020 following targeted consultation, to provide interim direction to police agencies on key areas. The Province continues to engage with stakeholders to further develop these standards.

Police Training

In September 2016, a new recruit curriculum was developed for independent municipal police officers and implemented at the JIBC Police Academy, moving from a model of lecture-based theory with simulation days, to a competency-based framework, learner centred method of program delivery. To help ensure that the recruit training program is of the highest quality and meeting the needs of communities and primary stakeholders, the new curriculum was examined in 2019. The review assessed the extent to which the curriculum integrates the principles of cultural competency, bias-free policing, and the treatment of vulnerable persons, and specifically that recommendation 4.12 of the 2012 Missing Women Commission of Inquiry Report (2012), have been integrated into recruit training. In order to continually enhance the overall quality of training at the JIBC PA, a process is currently underway with key stakeholders to implement improvements to the curriculum including those related to cultural competencies.

MONITORING HIGH RISK OFFENDERS (REC. 5.13)

In 2019, the Province provided a grant to the BCACP to develop a protocol for monitoring high-risk offenders and facilitate information sharing among agencies. Two separate reports were produced:

- **A RESEARCH** report which documents the various complementary strategies in place to share information about high risk offenders and to manage them in the community; and,

- **A REFERENCE** and resource guide to assist operational police officers dealing with predatory offences and managing predatory offenders in a particular police jurisdiction.

The reports were endorsed by the BCACP at its February 2020 meeting.

3. Supports for Missing Person Investigations

TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE (REC. 4.9, 4.12)

Trauma-Informed Practice Curriculum

With the support of the Department of Justice Canada, B.C. is currently in the final year of a five-year project to develop and implement a cross-sector trauma-informed practice (TIP) curriculum for the justice, public safety and anti-violence community sectors. The TIP curriculum, which consists of a self-directed online course and a facilitated one-day, in-person course delivered regionally across the province, was launched in June 2019. As of March 2020, 1,500 participants have registered in the online course. After completing the TIP curriculum participants will be able to:

- **RECOGNIZE** and understand trauma and its possible effects on victims and witnesses, and have a clear understanding of how violence and abuse may shape victim responses;
- **ASSESS** their own practices and processes with a trauma informed lens; and,

- **INCORPORATE** trauma informed learnings to reduce potential re-traumatization experienced by victims and witnesses participating in the justice system.

The curriculum is available free of charge to personnel in the following areas: police, corrections, Crown, lawyers, and victim service/anti-violence programs. A companion webinar series that builds off of the foundational online and in-person courses launched in December 2019.

Enhancements to Court Testimonial Accommodations

IN AN EFFORT TO MITIGATE THE CHALLENGES experienced by vulnerable and intimidated witnesses involved in the criminal justice system, the Province – through the support of the federal Department of Justice – has expanded the availability and accessibility of testimonial accommodations. This five-year, \$400,000 initiative aims at purchasing, testing and distributing equipment such as privacy screens, voice amplification systems, assistive listening equipment and videoconferencing to be utilized in courtrooms across British Columbia.

Examples of testimonial accommodations include:

- **WITNESSES** *testifying behind a screen or other devices that allow them not to see the accused, and/or not to be seen by members of the public;*
- **VICTIMS** *presenting a victim impact statement by reading it behind a screen or other devices that allow them not to see the accused, and/or not to be seen by members of the public*

Since 2017, the Province purchased and distributed testimonial accommodation kits for every courthouse in B.C., including 24 assistive listening, 10 soft spoken kits and 23 sensitive witness microphones, based on needs and gaps identified through feedback and inventory exercises.

BC Provincial Policing Standards Governing Missing Person Investigations

BC Provincial Policing Standards governing missing person investigations were completed in 2015 and took effect in 2016. These standards address MWCI recommendations 7.1-7.4. The standards were amended in late 2019 to make participation in the Provincial Dental Databank program mandatory for BC police agencies, as recommended by a Coroners Inquest in 2018.

The Provincial Dental Databank is unique to British Columbia. It uses a more precise process for recording dental work compared to other Canadian police information systems, and identifies associations or 'hits' between found remains and missing person cases. These 'hits' provide investigative leads that can help solve cases. At the time of the Coroners Inquest, some B.C. police agencies were not submitting dental records to this program. The standards now require that, if a person remains missing for more than 90 days, any dental records obtained must be

submitted for entry into the Provincial Dental Databank.

SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES OF MISSING PERSONS (REC. 7.9)

BC Family Information Liaison Unit

In early 2020, the federal government announced that it would extend funding for FILUs for an additional three years, supporting continued support for the family members of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

When a family member contacts the BC FILU for assistance, frontline family support staff work with them to request the information they are seeking from system and/or government partners (e.g. RCMP, BC Coroners Service, Crown Counsel). The BC FILU then works with these partners to coordinate sharing the information with the family in a trauma-informed and culturally appropriate manner. In addition to serving families' information needs, BC FILU frontline staff also coordinate with local services to ensure that family members have access to the healing and wellness supports they need (e.g. counselling, cultural supports).

Since launching in July 2017, BC FILU staff have engaged in over 275 outreach and awareness activities with over 550 community agencies, Indigenous organizations, and band or tribal councils in over 110 communities who work with families of missing or murdered Indigenous women and girls throughout the province to support greater awareness of and access to FILU services.

In addition to the BC FILU, family members and friends of a missing loved one – including all women and girls – can access supports and services through over 160 provincially-funded victim service programs providing emotional support, information, referrals, and practical assistance to victims of crime. This includes 68 community-based victim service programs that serve victims of sexual violence and their families and operate out of non-profit organizations as well as 91 police-based victim service programs that service victims of all types of crime and trauma and assist police and communities in situations involving multiple injuries or deaths and operate out of RCMP detachments and municipal police departments.

4. Safety for Marginalized Women

SERVICES FOR MARGINALIZED WOMEN (UM#1, REC. 6.3, 6.4)

Supportive Housing

In 2019, through BC Housing, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing continued to support the Getting Home Project. This project is a partnership between The BC Society of Transition Houses, BC Non-Profit Housing Association, The Co-operative Housing Federation of BC, BC Housing and Vancity Community Foundation. The Getting Home Project: Overcoming Barriers to Housing after Violence Project is a three-year (2018-2021), community-based project, focusing on reducing barriers to safe, secure, and affordable housing for

women fleeing violence in BC. The project is working towards community-based solutions and policy recommendations that alleviate barriers to women accessing appropriate housing. The Getting Home Project has established several community-level initiatives. Some examples of these initiatives include:

- **IN VANCOUVER**, the initial stages of the development of sustainable partnerships between second stage houses and the Co-operative Housing Federation of BC to provide long-term and affordable housing units to women;
- **IN THE COMOX VALLEY**, exploring the feasibility of private funding for flexible supplements to the Homeless Prevention Program;
- With partners throughout the **LOWER MAINLAND**, researching the unintended consequences of the National Occupancy Standards as a barrier to housing for single mothers and intergenerational families; and,
- With 6 representatives from **ACROSS THE PROVINCE**, established a Rural Housing Advisory Committee to highlight key housing barriers, research best-practices and brainstorm solutions for safe homes and transition house programs in rural, remote and isolated communities.

WISH Drop-in Centre

IN 2019/2020, the WISH Drop-in Centre Society received \$264,340 from the Province as annual funding to support the Mobile Access Project (MAP) Van. The MAP Van trains and employs former sex workers to deliver services across Vancouver to women working in the street-based sex trade. It provides a safe place of respite with referrals, support and supplies for women who are vulnerable to violence and sexual exploitation.

Civil Forfeiture Crime Prevention and Remediation Grants

These one-time grants from civil forfeiture proceeds support community-driven projects that complement existing services and meet the unique needs of individual communities. In 2019/2020, 78 projects that address human trafficking, violence and sexual exploitation of marginalized and vulnerable women were implemented across the province, totalling just over \$2 million in grant funding. Examples include:

- **\$30,000** to Lake Babine Nation's "Empowering Lake Babine Women through Community Preparedness and Resources" project. This project enhanced understanding and awareness of sexual assault and domestic violence within the community through support-focused approaches, including workshops and community meetings;
- **\$30,000** to Prince George Sexual Assault Centre's "Peer Support Mentorship Program".

The initiative provided culturally competent, trauma-informed crisis drop in, outreach and skill building opportunities to marginalized women facing multiple barriers to access traditional counselling services;

- **\$28,000** to Ditidaht First Nation's "Bridging the Gap – Counselling for Success" project. This initiative provided counselling services to Indigenous women and girls survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse within the First Nation community of Ditidaht (Port Alberni); and,
- **\$25,000** to New Opportunities for Women (NOW) Society for a project offering Kelowna's sex workers the option to transition out of the sex trade through access to safe and supported housing, a four-month life-skills program and individualized psychosocial support.

Domestic Violence Units

THE PROVINCE PROVIDES STABLE, ANNUAL FUNDING to Domestic Violence Units (DVUs), an evidence-based model of co-located service delivery that pairs dedicated police officers with community-based victim services and, in some communities, a child protection worker to improve case coordination and collaboration in highest risk cases of domestic violence. DVUs operate in Abbotsford, Capital Region, New Westminster, North Shore (North Vancouver and West Vancouver), Surrey, Nanaimo, Kelowna, Vancouver and Prince George and served 528 new clients in 2019.

Violence Against Women Programs

The Province currently provides over \$37 million annually in funding to support over 400 victim service and violence against women programs across B.C. This includes over 240 counselling and outreach programs providing assistance to women and children who are impacted by violence:

- **94** Stopping the Violence Counselling programs;
- **55** Outreach programs;
- **11** Multi-cultural outreach services; and,
- **86** Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling and Empowerment (PEACE) programs for children who have witnessed abuse, threats, or violence in the home.

Building BC: Indigenous Housing Fund

IN 2019, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing continued its 2017 and 2018 budget commitments to create new social and supportive housing for vulnerable women and their children. Through its \$550 million investment in the Building BC: Indigenous Housing Fund, the province, over ten years, will build and operate 1,750 units of social housing, both on- and off-nation. The first 1,100 new housing units in 30 projects were announced in November 2018, and this included almost 780 off-nation units and close to 370 on nation units. These projects will be located in 26 communities across the province. As of December 31, 2019, there were 1,165 units initiated, in development or under construction through the Indigenous Housing Fund:

- **314 units under construction;**
- **73 units in development; and**
- **778 units initiated.**

Some examples of this new housing investment providing supports specifically to vulnerable Indigenous women and their children includes:

- *The Aboriginal Mother Centre in Vancouver, which will provide **42 homes** for vulnerable women and their children;*
- ***48 units of housing for low income Indigenous individuals and families in Terrace which will be operated by the M'Akola Housing Society; and,***
- ***42 units of housing for women and children fleeing violence in Kitimat which will be operated by the Tamitik Status of Women Association.***

Community Housing Fund and Rapid Response to Housing

Some examples of new projects initiated through the Community Housing Fund across the province includes:

- **KELOWNA:** \$4 million to NOW Canada Society to provide 40 homes for families, seniors and women with children;
- **MAPLE RIDGE:** \$2.1 million to Cythera Transition House Society to provide 21 homes for women and families recovering from violence;
- **CAMPBELL RIVER:** \$4.7 million to Campbell River and North Island Transition Society to provide 40 homes for women and their families; and,
- **VICTORIA:** \$19 million to Pacifica Housing to provide 130 homes for Indigenous people, seniors and women and children fleeing violence.

Some examples of new housing for vulnerable women initiated through the Rapid Response to Housing program includes:

- **NEW WESTMINSTER:** 44 units of supportive housing for women operated by the Elizabeth Fry Society;
- **ABBOTSFORD:** 39 units of supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness operated by the Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver.

Closing Remarks

While a significant amount of work has taken place since the 2019 status update, we know that more must be done to build on these actions and improve safety for all British Columbians.

We recognize the heightened incidence and impact experienced by women and girls in particular, and that addressing violence not only requires improvements to policies and practices related to criminal justice and victim services, but a stronger system of supports and resources that address the root causes of this violence - such as poverty, homelessness, and mental health and addictions.

The Province of BC remains committed to ending violence against women and girls and over the course of the coming year, will work collaboratively with communities, families and individuals to identify priorities and articulate additional actions to improve outcomes.

Appendix of Referenced MWCI Recommendations

Urgent Measures	1	To provide funding to existing centres that provide emergency services to women engaged in the sex trade to enable them to remain open 24 hours per day.
	2	To develop and implement an enhanced public transit system to provide a safer travel option connecting the Northern communities, particularly along Highway 16.
Restorative Measures	3.2	That Provincial Government establish a compensation fund for the children of the missing and murdered women.
	3.3	That Provincial Government establish a healing fund for families of the missing and murdered women. These funds should be accessed through an application process pursuant to established guidelines.
Equality-Promoting Measures	4.1	That the Minister of Justice direct the Director of Police Services to undertake equality audits of police forces in British Columbia with a focus on police duty to protect marginalized and Aboriginal women from violence. These audits should be carried out by an external agency and with meaningful community involvement.
	4.2	That Provincial Government set a provincial standard establishing that police officers have a general and binding duty to promote equality and to refrain from discriminatory policing.
	4.3	That Provincial Government amend the BC Crown Policy Manual to explicitly include equality as a fundamental principle to guide Crown Counsel in performing their functions.
	4.4	That Provincial Government develop and implement a Crown Vulnerable Women Assault Policy to provide guidance on the prosecution of crimes of violence against vulnerable women, including women engaged in the sex trade.
	4.5	That Provincial Government adopt a policy statement in the BC Crown Policy Manual requiring that a prosecutor's evaluations of how strong the case is likely to be when presented at trial should be made on the assumption that the trier of fact will act impartially and according to the law.

	4.8	<p>That Provincial Government fund three law reform research projects on aspects of the treatment of vulnerable and intimidated witnesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The effects of drug and alcohol use on memory and how to support those experiencing dependency or addiction to provide testimony; ➤ Police, counsel and the judiciary's bias and perceptions of credibility of people with drug additions or who are engaged in the survival sex trade; and ➤ Potential changes to the law of evidence to better allow vulnerable witnesses, including those who have been sexually assaulted, those suffering from addictions, and those in the sex industry, to take part in court processes.
	4.9	<p>That Provincial Government develop guidelines to facilitate and support vulnerable and intimidated witnesses by all actors within the criminal justice system based on the best practices identified by the Commission through its review of protocols and guidelines existing in other jurisdictions.</p>
	4.11	<p>That the BC Association of Municipal Chiefs of Police and the RCMP establish a working group to develop a best practices guide for the establishment and implementation of formal discussion mechanisms to facilitate communication and collaboration that transcends the institutional hierarchy within a police agency.</p>
	4.12	<p>That police officers be required to undergo mandatory and ongoing experiential and interactive training concerning vulnerable community members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Active engagement in overcoming biases, rather than more passive sensitivity training (sometimes called anti-oppression training); ➤ More intensive and ongoing training in the history and current status of Aboriginal peoples in the province and in the specific community, particularly with respect to the ongoing effects of residential schools and the child welfare system; ➤ Training and resources to make prevention of violence against Aboriginal women a genuine priority; ➤ Training to ensure an understanding of violence against women in a range of settings including family violence, child sexual exploitation and violence against women in the sex trade; in particular, the scenarios used in police training should incorporate issues of cultural sensitivity and violence against women; and ➤ Training in recognizing the special needs of vulnerable individuals and how to meet those needs, including recognition of a higher standard of care owed by the police to these individuals.

Measures to Enhance the Safety of Vulnerable Urban Women	5.13	That the BC Association of Municipal Police Chiefs and the RCMP, with support from the Director of Police Services, should develop a protocol containing additional measures to monitor high-risk offenders, including recommendations for the efficient and timely sharing of information.
Measures to Prevent Violence Against Aboriginal and Rural Women	6.1	That Provincial Government fully support the implementation of The Highway of Tears Symposium action plan, updated to the current situation and in a manner that ensures involvement of all affected communities along Highway 16.
	6.3	That Provincial Government provide additional funding to Aboriginal women's organizations to provide more safe houses and counselling programs run for and by Aboriginal women and youth.
	6.4	That Provincial Government provide additional funding to Aboriginal women's organizations to provide more safe houses and counselling programs run for and by Aboriginal women and youth.
Improved Missing Person Policies and Practices	7.7	That provincial authorities create and maintain a provincial missing person website aimed at educating the public about the missing persons process and engaging them in proactive approaches to prevention and investigation.
	7.9	That provincial authorities develop an enhanced, holistic, comprehensive approach for the provision of support to the families and friends of missing persons. This should be based on a needs assessment carried out in consultation with the provincial partnership committee on missing persons.
Enhanced Police Investigations	8.5	That Provincial Government take active steps to support the development of a National DNA Missing Persons Index and to assist in overcoming the impasse on outstanding concerns over its creation and operationalization.
Increase Police Accountability to Communities	11.3	That additional steps need to be taken to ensure representation of vulnerable and marginalized members and Aboriginal peoples on police boards.



Ministry of
Public Safety and
Solicitor General