

## **CFUW BC Council Policy: Youth Aging Out of Foster Care**

University Women's Club of Vancouver, 2016

This policy calls for urgent systemic, community, and government level reforms to extend support for young people aging out of foster care until they turn 25, to develop a caring and comprehensive plan to ease these transitions, to review policy and practice in collaboration with young people, and to take steps to reduce stigma and increase permanency.

### **Background**

In BC, at any time, approximately 10,000 children and youth are in government care. Some 700 youth in various kinds of government care turn 19 each year. Within six months, nearly half apply for income assistance. Another two-thirds apply for disability assistance, while the remainder apply for welfare placing a tremendous economic burden on our system.

According to the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth of BC (*On Their Own*, 2014), the transition to adulthood is difficult for all young people and these challenges are amplified for young people aging out of care. Approximately 21% of BC's youth in care graduate from high school compared to 78% of the general youth population. More than half of youth in care have been diagnosed with a mental health issue at least once in childhood. Approximately 55% of youth in government care are Aboriginal.

Some 70% of British Columbians believe that 19-year olds do not have the necessary skills and resources to live away from home and support themselves independently. In fact, most parents, who have 19 to 28-year-old children living at home provide emotional as well as economic support. Without an extended and gradual process of transition, young people aging out of foster care face major life challenges with fewer supports than their peers.

### **All Candidates Meeting Question**

**Given that youth aging out of care in BC at 19 are unprepared to support themselves and face major life challenges without the emotional and financial supports that their peers receive from their families, and given that this situation results in long term financial costs and enormous negative social consequences, are you and your party committed to:**

- 1. Extending support for foster youth aging out of care until they turn 25;**
- 2. Developing a caring and comprehensive plan to ease the transition into adulthood;**
- 3. Engaging young people who have aged out of care in ongoing reviews of relevant policy and practice; and**
- 4. Supporting communities to reduce stigma and foster permanency?**