



# **Policy Priorities 2026 - 2028**

**Leaving No One Behind**

## Territorial Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that our main office is located on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, and that our work across British Columbia spans the territories of more than 200 First Nations. We also acknowledge the First Nations, Métis and Inuit who live in our communities.

YWCA BC is committed to truth and reconciliation. This includes understanding the truth and impact of our shared colonial history, making positive changes within our organization and taking actions that advances safety, justice and equity for Indigenous peoples.



## Introduction and Context

British Columbia enters 2026 in a period of economic uncertainty and system strain.

Global trade instability, fiscal pressures, housing affordability challenges, labour market shifts and rising service demand are shaping government decision-making. Ministries have been directed to demonstrate efficiency, prioritize implementation over expansion and ensure public investments deliver measurable outcomes.

At the same time, communities are experiencing something more immediate and personal: rising precarity.

Across YWCA BC programs — in housing, child care, training and employment services, income navigation and violence prevention — a consistent pattern is emerging. Women are disproportionately impacted within systems that were not designed with their realities in mind.

- Women are more likely to live in core housing need.
- Women are more likely to leave the workforce due to caregiving gaps.
- Women remain overrepresented among those fleeing violence.
- Women leaving income assistance face steep benefit cliffs.
- Women entering skilled trades are not staying in those sectors.
- Urban Indigenous women continue to face compounded safety risks.
- These outcomes are not isolated failures. They are the result of system design gaps.

While the Province has made important commitments across violence prevention, poverty reduction, child and youth wellbeing, reconciliation, labour force participation and infrastructure development, implementation across systems remains uneven. Programs often operate in silos, eligibility rules do not reflect real household conditions and prevention investments remain limited compared to crisis response.

YWCA BC approaches advocacy through an *intersectional lens*, recognizing that women experience systems differently depending on race, income, disability, Indigeneity, immigration status, family structure and other structural factors. Effective policy responses must acknowledge and address these intersecting realities.

The goal of this framework is not to introduce entirely new systems. Instead, it focuses on practical policy adjustments over the next two years that improve how existing systems function — reducing instability before it escalates into crisis.

## Why 2026-2028 Requires a Focused Approach

YWCA BC recognizes the fiscal and political environment facing government. New spending proposals face heightened scrutiny, and ministries are under pressure to demonstrate efficiency and implementation outcomes.

For that reason, the 2026-2028 Policy Framework focuses on practical, implementation-ready policy shifts that can be advanced provincially over the next 12–24 months.

The framework emphasizes:

- Adjustments to existing programs rather than entirely new systems
- Pilots that are measurable and costable
- Prevention investments that reduce long-term public costs
- Better coordination between programs that already exist
- Strengthening implementation of commitments government has already made

Targeted, well-designed policy adjustments can produce significant impacts when they stabilize families before crisis occurs.

Over the next two years, YWCA BC will focus its advocacy on a targeted number of priorities that are practical, evidence-based and aligned with government priorities. In addition, the organization will:

- Ground advocacy in frontline experience and measurable outcomes
- Validate priorities with sector partners and Indigenous leadership
- Maintain a non-partisan and solutions-oriented approach
- Align recommendations with existing provincial commitments and programs

Urban Indigenous Women and Girls remains a standalone priority, reflecting the distinct safety and systemic challenges faced by Indigenous women living in urban environments.

## The North Star

Women and families in British Columbia are safe, economically secure and able to participate fully in their communities — supported by systems and services that are predictable, preventative and designed around real-life conditions.

Safety, housing stability, child care access, economic mobility and violence prevention are interconnected. Policy responses that address these issues together produce stronger long-term outcomes for women, families and communities.

# Gender-Based Violence

## Prevention and Survivor Stabilization

### Context

Gender-based violence remains one of the most significant safety issues affecting women in British Columbia. Service providers consistently report that financial insecurity is one of the primary barriers preventing survivors from leaving abusive relationships.

At the same time, prevention education remains inconsistent across schools, and trauma-informed responses across public systems vary significantly.

Addressing gender-based violence requires both preventative education and stronger, more integrated stabilization supports for survivors.

### Policy Priorities

YWCA BC is calling on the Province to:

1. **Make substantive progress toward implementing the recommendations from Dr. Kim Stanton's *Systemic Review of the Legal System's Treatment of Sexual and Intimate Partner Violence*, including:**
  - A. **Strengthening public education and prevention efforts** related to gender-based violence and healthy relationships by improving and standardizing existing prevention education in schools using trauma-informed and evidence-based approaches (Aligns with recommendation 4A).
  - B. **Implementing trauma-informed training standards across public systems**, including first responders, policing and justice services, to ensure survivors encounter consistent and informed responses across systems (Aligns with recommendation 4C).
2. **Establish targeted financial transition supports for survivors leaving violence**, aligned with emerging policy recommendations from anti-poverty organizations and research from the provincial Universal Basic Income panel. These supports should provide rapid and flexible financial stabilization combined with access to housing and wrap-around services.
3. **Prevent and counteract workplace sexual harassment, including:**
  - A. **Restricting non-disclosure agreements** in cases of workplace discrimination or harassment.
  - B. **Extending the filing window** for sexual harassment complaints at the BC Human Rights Tribunal
  - C. **Expanding public education and awareness** to shift norms, clarify rights and employer duties and improve reporting and early resolution.

Together, these measures would strengthen prevention infrastructure while ensuring survivors have the financial resources needed to safely leave violence.



# Housing

## Stability for Women and Families

### Context

Housing instability remains a major driver of poverty and vulnerability for women and children. Many affordability programs do not reflect the realities of women-led households, particularly single parents.

At the same time, housing policy discussions often blur the distinction between capital investments in housing supply and short-term stabilization supports that prevent housing loss.

Both are necessary but serve different purposes.

### Policy Priorities

YWCA BC is calling on the Province to:

1. **Update affordability definitions and portable housing subsidy eligibility** to better reflect the realities of women-led and single-parent households.
2. **Re-fund, prioritize and expand the Women's Transitional Housing Fund**, recognizing the program's demonstrated impact in supporting the development of transitional housing for women leaving violence.

These actions would strengthen the housing continuum by preventing eviction and housing loss while continuing to expand transitional housing capacity.



# Child Care

## Stabilizing the System and Advancing Universal Access

### Context

The Province has made some progress toward a universal child care system through the \$10-a-day initiative. However, expansion has paused due to a range of challenges, including with the current funding model.

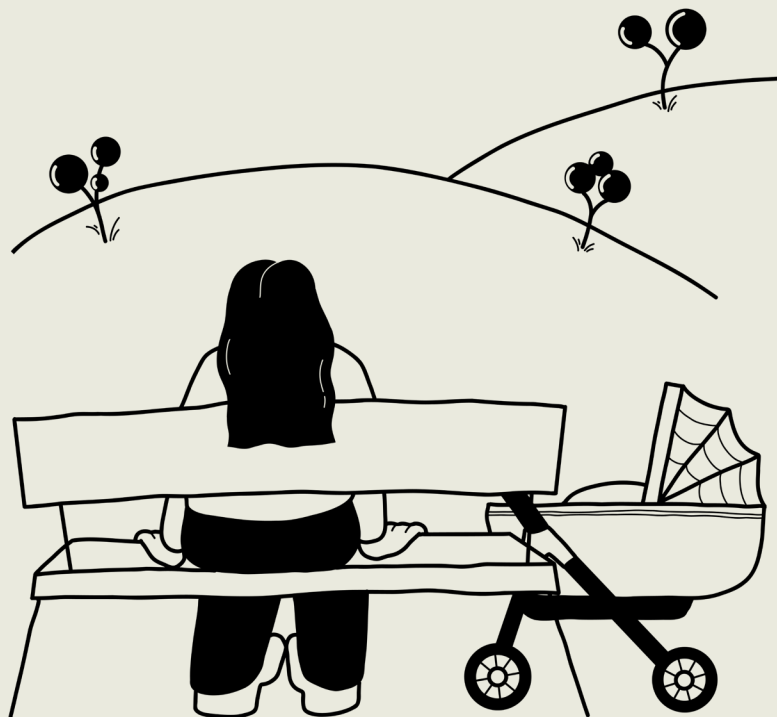
As a result, access to affordable child care remains uneven across the province, with only about 10 per cent of families currently able to access \$10-a-day spaces.

At this stage, the priority is not additional program expansion but stabilizing the system and advancing a clear path toward universal access.

### Policy Priorities

YWCA BC is calling on the Province to:

1. **Reaffirm its commitment to delivering on a universal child care system**, ensuring that affordable child care remains a core component of the province's economic and social infrastructure.
2. **Stabilize and improve a universal child care funding model** to ensure the sustainability of licensed child care providers, with adequate salaries for early childhood educators and support further system expansion.
3. **Move toward consistent and predictable fee structures across licensed child care**, ensuring families are not facing dramatically different costs depending on where they live or which centres they access.



# Women's Economic Well-being

## Context

Economic security is foundational to safety, stability, and long-term wellbeing. Yet women continue to face structural barriers to full participation in the labour market, particularly in sectors receiving large amounts of public investment.

At the same time, the application of a gendered analysis across government policy and infrastructure decisions has weakened in recent years.

Strengthening economic participation requires both stronger gender analysis in policy and funding decisions, and greater transparency in workforce outcomes.

## Policy Priorities

YWCA BC is calling on the Province to:

1. **Recommit to meaningful application of a gendered analysis** across government decision-making, ensuring gender equity considerations meaningfully shape policy outcomes.
2. **Introduce public reporting of gender-disaggregated workforce data for publicly funded infrastructure projects**, including participation and retention rates for women, as well as data on pay equity.
3. **Develop a provincial action plan to improve participation and retention of women in infrastructure and skilled trades**, based on the findings of this data.

These steps would improve accountability for gender equity outcomes in major public investments.



# Income Security and Employment Pathways

## Context

Many individuals receiving income assistance face significant risk when attempting to transition into employment. Benefit cliffs, complex eligibility rules, and the risk of losing supports can discourage people from entering the workforce.

For survivors of violence and single parents in particular, economic instability can create barriers to long-term independence.

## Policy Priorities

YWCA BC is calling on the Province to:

1. **Create an enhanced employment support program for survivors of gender-based violence** modeled on the successful Single Parent Employment Initiative (SPEI).
2. **Strengthen employment transition supports**, including earning exemptions, child care supports, transportation assistance and navigation services that help individuals move sustainably from income assistance to employment.
3. **Pilot structured transition pathways that reduce the risks associated with leaving income assistance**, allowing individuals to pursue employment without facing immediate loss of essential supports.

These changes would create safer and more realistic pathways to economic mobility.



## Standalone Priority

# Urban Indigenous Women and Girls

Urban Indigenous women experience disproportionately high rates of violence, housing instability and systemic barriers to services.

YWCA BC supports policy approaches that align with the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, while recognizing that Indigenous-led organizations must guide the design of solutions.

Policy priorities include:

- Supporting the development of **rapid response protocols for missing Indigenous women**, inclusive of urban contexts.
- Securing **multi-year funding for Indigenous-led urban family navigation and support services**.
- Working in partnership with Indigenous leadership to strengthen service coordination and safety supports for Indigenous women and families.

YWCA BC will seek validation and guidance from Indigenous partners as this work evolves.



## Appendix A: Policy Priority Grid – YWCA BC

| Policy Priority                                               | Policy Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Strategic Alignment                                                                                                                                                                   | Indicators of Progress                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Gender-Based Violence – Prevention and Survivor Stabilization | Improve and standardize prevention education in schools; implement trauma-informed training standards across first responders and public systems; pilot targeted financial transition supports for survivors leaving violence.                                                                                  | Aligns with provincial commitments to gender-based violence prevention, community safety, and poverty reduction. Strengthens early intervention and reduces downstream crisis demand. | Standardized prevention education implemented; trauma-informed training adopted across relevant systems; pilot income stabilization supports launched; reduction in repeat crisis service use.     |
| Housing Stability for Women and Families                      | Update affordability definitions and portable housing subsidy eligibility to reflect women-led households; refund and expand the Women's Transitional Housing Fund.                                                                                                                                             | Supports provincial housing affordability priorities and homelessness prevention strategies while reducing pressure on emergency shelter systems.                                     | Increased housing stabilization supports issued; improved housing retention rates for women-led households; expanded transitional housing units for women leaving violence.                        |
| Childcare – Stabilizing and Advancing Universal Access        | Reaffirm commitment to universal childcare; stabilize and improve the operating funding model; move toward predictable fee structures across licensed childcare. YWCA to support sector coordination and employer engagement while system adjustments occur.                                                    | Aligns with labour force participation, economic development, and childcare expansion commitments under federal–provincial agreements.                                                | Increased stability for licensed childcare providers; progress toward consistent fee structures; expanded access to licensed spaces; cross-sector partnerships supporting workforce participation. |
| Women's Economic Well-being                                   | Recommit to meaningful application of a gendered analysis across government decision-making; require gender-disaggregated workforce reporting for publicly funded infrastructure projects; develop an action plan to improve participation and retention of women in skilled trades and infrastructure sectors. | Aligns with infrastructure investment strategies, labour shortages, and commitments to gender equity in public investment.                                                            | Public workforce reporting implemented; participation and retention data published; provincial action plan developed; improved retention rates for women in infrastructure and trades sectors.     |
| Income Security and Employment Pathways                       | Expand the Single Parent Employment Initiative to include survivors of gender-based violence; strengthen transition supports that help individuals move from income assistance to employment while maintaining access to key supports.                                                                          | Supports Poverty Reduction Strategy goals and labour force participation by reducing barriers to workforce entry.                                                                     | Increased employment participation among participants; reduced re-entry into income assistance; improved stability for single parents and survivors transitioning to employment.                   |
| Urban Indigenous Women and Girls                              | Support development of rapid response protocols for missing Indigenous women inclusive of urban contexts; secure multi-year funding for Indigenous-led urban family navigation and support services.                                                                                                            | Aligns with provincial reconciliation commitments and the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.                           | Development of rapid response protocols; increased funding stability for Indigenous-led navigation services; improved access to culturally appropriate supports for Indigenous women and families. |

