
For Immediate Release

Hundreds of Vulnerable Choices for Youth Program Participants Impacted by Lack of Approved Federal Funding Agreement

August 20, 2024 (St. John's, NL) – Choices for Youth (CFY) regrets to inform the public that they are being forced to make a significant reduction in service delivery due to challenges in finalizing a \$4 million funding agreement.

CFY has successfully secured investment from the Government of Canada for seven consecutive years and, following many months of federal engagement, anticipated receiving positive notification of four-year funding by March 31, 2024. Despite proactive efforts by CFY's leadership team and Board of Directors to emphasize the need for timely approval, the federal government was delayed in making final decisions on funding for social impact agencies across Canada. CFY requested \$20 million over four years, and was notified on June 20, 2024 that they would receive \$4 million total (\$1 million/year over four years), which is only 20 per cent of the funding requested. As an alternate, workable solution, CFY requested access to all of the funding in the current fiscal year to continue services at existing levels while working to secure alternate long-term support. Choices for Youth thanks the local Members of Parliament and other members of the federal government for their efforts to work towards a resolution. However, due to continued delays in approving this request, CFY has no choice but to make the heartbreaking decision to reduce costs and, accordingly, services and program delivery to vulnerable youth.

Over the past seven years, this federal funding has allowed CFY to provide housing, employment, and family and natural support **to over 350 vulnerable young people annually and employment for 35+ full-time staff positions**. Annually, this investment funds the following:

- Training, support services, and wages for 100 youth trainees employed through CFY's social enterprises, which is proven to lift youth out of poverty thus saving taxpayers millions of dollars over the long-term.
- Cost-effective housing and supportive services for 75 homeless youth, rapidly rehousing youth from the expensive shelter system into affordable supportive housing options.
- Momma Moments programming, including housing, mental health, and family supports, for 215 children and youth supporting long-term stability and independence *and*
- Wrap-around supports for over 350 young people annually, including 105 youth with disabilities, 110 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, and 100+ young moms

"Our funding allows youth to engage in social enterprise employment, providing a training ground for at-risk youth to prepare for the future. It gives young people the tools they need today to provide for themselves and their families into the future. It provides necessary services and supports that cost less, produce better outcomes, and are less harmful than the alternatives," said Jen Crowe, CFY's Executive Director.

While CFY is actively pursuing many different opportunities to mitigate the impact on young people and staff, the organization has been forced to proceed with large-scale operational changes and layoffs. As of Tuesday, August 20, the organization implemented layoffs for 16 full-time employees and 15 youth trainees employed through CFY's social enterprises. Additionally, the organization is unable to fill vacancies for 11 full-time staff and 16 youth employees. Furthermore, the organization has proceeded with significantly reducing housing supports for 70 youth, evicting eight young people from supportive housing, eliminating training and educational supports for 35 youth, and eliminating supportive services for 25 vulnerable young moms and 40 children. To date, these operational changes have directly impacted 45 youth with disabilities, 45 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, and 30+ young families.

"This federal investment is critical for keeping youth in housing today and giving at-risk individuals a chance at a brighter future, among other societal benefits. These results happen through the delivery of employment and training opportunities, supportive housing, and wrap-around services for hundreds of vulnerable young people in our province," said Geoff Davis, Choices for Youth Board Chair. "While we have been in close discussion with the federal government for many months related to this funding and explored multiple avenues to avoid this financial scenario, we have no choice but to proceed with this significant reduction in programs and services on which vulnerable youth rely."

CFY maintains its commitment to providing housing, health, education, employment, family and natural support services to the most vulnerable youth in our province and will continue to seek opportunities to invest in programming and support services that end youth homelessness and help youth achieve their goals.

"The federal government has been an excellent, trusted partner for seven years in providing critical services for vulnerable youth in our province. Thousands of community organizations receive grants and contributions from the federal government to provide cost-effective, community-oriented services across Canada. We recognize that the federal government seeks to achieve fiscal responsibility, and Choices for Youth delivers outstanding results with its resources. All levels of government must remain diligent in balancing its cheque book with the real, immediate needs of youth at risk of losing housing, employment opportunities, and the supportive services that offer them stability and positive direction. We know that the alternatives are much more harmful for young people, and costly for government." said CFY's Jen Crowe.

CFY produces an independent, third-party generated Social Return on Investment (SROI) score of \$8.93, meaning for every \$1.00 invested in CFY services, \$8.93 is generated in cost-savings to the provincial and federal government.

Choices for Youth is a non-profit, charitable organization that supports youth secure stable housing and employment while working toward family stability and better health, all through innovative programming and social enterprises.

The planned media availability for 10am tomorrow at CFY's Office located at 117 Ropewalk Lane will proceed for any media who would like to attend.

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MEDIA CONTACTS

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