



United Way
British Columbia

Working with communities in BC's
Interior, Lower Mainland, Central
& Northern Vancouver Island

NEWS RELEASE

Merger creates new United Way British Columbia – working with communities in BC's Interior, Lower Mainland and Central & Northern Vancouver Island

Kelowna, British Columbia – June 22, 2021 – Six United Ways have merged as a single organization to increase impact in local communities around the province, including in Central and Northern Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland, Thompson Nicola Cariboo, Southern Interior, Trail and District, and East Kootenay.

The strategic transformation was guided by a shared mission to strengthen vital connections over the long term to create healthy, caring, inclusive communities. By merging, the six United Ways will share resources and expertise across six regions of the province. Four Regional Councils will ensure donations are maximized at the local level and the Chair of each Regional Council will sit on the Board of Directors.

“By coming together as one organization, we can help more people and make a bigger difference,” said Michael McKnight, CEO of the new organization. “We are excited to amalgamate as a single entity because we will be stronger together. This is the natural next step for us and will help ensure strong, healthy and caring communities.”

“Together we are committed to maintaining local programs and staff in all of our communities,” said Dot Neary, Board Chair, United Way Central & Northern Vancouver Island. “Donors want to see tangible outcomes at the local level. That’s why dollars raised locally will stay local.”

More than ever before, communities in B.C. need help to address critical social issues. A recent United Way survey of 234 social service agency professionals in B.C. sheds light on the wide-ranging impacts of COVID-19 and highlights the need for stronger collaboration within the not-for-profit sector.

Three quarters (75 per cent) of the agencies surveyed in April 2021 say the pandemic has challenged their ability to carry out their work. The biggest impact has been increased needs and requests for support, with 89 per cent of respondents reporting a rise in demand for services. The new organization will address critical issues in local communities, through programs such as Better at Home, Healthy Aging, Youth Futures Education Fund, United Way Food Hubs and other programs.

Following the approval of United Way members at special general meetings held June 15, the new organization officially begins operations on July 1, 2021. Work in communities is proceeding as normal, including delivery of the supports and programming undertaken in partnership with the provincial and federal governments.

April 2021 Survey Data

When asked about impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- 89 per cent of social service agencies reported a rise in demand for services
- 61 per cent have experienced staffing challenges such as employee retention, recruitment and engagement
- 53 per cent have experienced a decrease in donations
- 41 per cent have experienced volunteer shortages

Survey respondents were asked to identify their top three priorities among seven key social issues faced by communities in B.C.:

- mental health was cited by 54 per cent of respondents, followed by:
- children and youth – 52 per cent
- poverty – 45 per cent
- homelessness and housing – 42 per cent
- food security – 32 per cent
- support for seniors – 32 per cent
- social isolation – 21 per cent

The online survey was conducted by United Way, with a total of 234 social service agency representatives responding from communities across British Columbia.

About United Way British Columbia – working with communities in BC’s Interior, Lower Mainland and Central & Northern Vancouver Island

United Way supports healthy, caring and inclusive communities by strengthening vital connections that support people in need. Representing the six regions of Central and Northern Vancouver Island, East Kootenay, Lower Mainland, Southern Interior, Thompson Nicola Cariboo, and Trail and District, our organization serves a population of more than 4 million people, with a focus on kids and youth, seniors, poverty, mental health and food security.

www.uwbc.ca

Media contact:

Renata Lima

RenataL@uwbc.ca

250-864-6128

Images and video are available for download at the following link: [Press release assets](#) (Copy and paste link URL into web browser)