

Ontario's youth celebrate Children and Youth in Care Day at the Ontario Legislature

TORONTO - Over 100 children and youth in care will travel from across the province to attend a **Youth Civics Day** at the Ontario Legislature on Tuesday, May 10. The day-long event, which is hosted by the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS), YouthCAN, and Children's Aid Societies, is one of many activities taking place to mark the province's annual Children and Youth in Care day on May 14.*

"We look forward to this opportunity to celebrate the strength, determination, and contributions of the children and youth in our care," says Mary Ballantyne, CEO of OACAS. "The event offers our youth a unique opportunity to encounter the institution and MPPs who play such an important role in their lives."

Children come into the care of a Children's Aid Society when it is unsafe for them to remain at home because of abuse or neglect. While many children find lifelong connections through extended family and adoption, others grow up in foster homes where, in accordance with government regulation, they are required to leave when they turn 18.

The desire to improve the child welfare system has led many youth in care to become active citizens. "Influencing policy and legislation matters to us, because it impacts us," says Brian Van Du, who leads the Ontario Youth Communications Advocacy Network (YouthCAN). Through YouthCAN, youth in care are playing an increasingly important role in bringing about change in the child welfare system. Youth have played a key role in improving financial supports and post-secondary options for children and youth in care, as well as the extension of benefits to older youth who have transitioned from care.

During **Youth Civics Day** at the Ontario Legislature, youth in care will witness the process of introducing and debating legislation and attend a Question Period. They will also have the opportunity to meet and talk with their local MPPs.

***The *Children and Youth in Care Day Act* was proclaimed in 2014. The Act recognizes the strength, bravery, and resilience shown by these children and youth in the face of adversity.**

For more information:

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About YouthCAN (Communication, Advocacy, and Networking):

Ontario YouthCAN is the unifying voice for youth in the care of Children's Aid Societies in the province and is dedicated to improving the quality of care for youth in Ontario's child welfare system so that they are empowered, secure, and able to realize their fullest potential.

About the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies: OACAS is the trusted voice of child welfare in Ontario. Since 1912, OACAS has represented Children's Aid Societies in Ontario and provided service in the areas of government relations, communications, information management, education, and training to advocate for the protection and well-being of children.