

For Immediate Release  
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## **CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES APPLAUD ONTARIO GOVERNMENT CHANGES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

TORONTO – The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) welcomes the Government of Ontario's new initiatives to increase adoptions in Ontario and help youth in care succeed.

"We appreciate Minister Broten's strong commitment to this comprehensive and very thoughtful set of proposals. Yesterday's announcement is another important step to improve the lives of some of the most vulnerable children and youth in Ontario," said Mary Ballantyne, Executive Director, OACAS.

Ontario's youth in the care of Children's Aid Societies (CAS) have been advocating for youth to have the same opportunities as those who live with their families. The government has announced that it will make it easier for a Crown ward to attend college or university by exempting CAS benefits from an Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) assessment. Proposed legislative changes will also allow 16 or 17 year olds whose wardship is terminated or who have chosen to leave the CAS care to return to their CAS for help until the age of 21.

"For 16 and 17 year olds, if they leave care they cannot come back to CAS for help. Once they leave, the door is closed. It is great that the government is making sure the door is kept open so that youth who need help can go back," said Adam Diamond, YouthCAN Coordinator.

The announcement also includes proposals to reduce barriers to adoption for Crown wards by removing court ordered access. We look forward to working with government and other stakeholders to find the best approach to eliminate this barrier. OACAS welcomes the changes announced which include making it easier for parents to find information and having access to adoption resources. For several years, OACAS has been asking the government for changes in the areas of adoption home studies and ongoing financial supports for adopting parents and similar supports for legal custody arrangements. CASs also look forward to learning more about customary care to ensure that more Aboriginal children can remain connected to their communities.

### **About the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies**

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. We are the voice of child welfare in Ontario.

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