



For Immediate Release
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OACAS and Children's Aid Societies Express Serious Concerns about Changes to the Ontario Child Advocate's Office

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies and Children's Aid Societies have serious concerns about the Ontario government plan to eliminate the Ontario Child Advocate's office and fold its responsibilities into the office of the Ombudsman. Ontario will join Prince Edward Island and the North West Territories as the only Canadian jurisdictions not to have an independent child advocate.

Although we are pleased that there will continue to be independent oversight, the unique needs of vulnerable children and their rights must be ensured in any new oversight structure. Supporting young people's rights is not just about oversight and investigations, it is also about listening and providing a platform to elevate their voices.

"The Ontario Child Advocate's office played a vital role as an independent body that had the necessary expertise to listen and respond to the unique needs of children and youth," said Mary Ballantyne, CEO of OACAS. "We are looking forward to working with the office of the Ombudsman to highlight how to best serve the needs of the province's most vulnerable children and youth."

OACAS is especially concerned about the impact of the closure of the Advocate's office on both Indigenous and African Canadian children and youth. These communities are over-represented in the child welfare, criminal justice, and mental health systems, and the Advocate's office has been important in supporting their expressions of concern and supporting change.

OACAS is also concerned about the government's decision to move the duties of the French Language Commissioner to the Ombudsman's office. The needs of Ontario's French families must continue to be well-served under this new structure.

Compassionate care for the children, youth, families, and communities of this province is paramount. We must continue to listen to the needs of vulnerable children and families in Ontario and place their well-being at the centre of all decision-making.

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About the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies: Since 1912, OACAS has represented Ontario's 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. <http://www.oacas.org>.