



Canadian Friends
Service Committee
(QUAKERS)
www.quakerservice.ca

Honorable Doug Ford
Premier's Office
Room 281
Legislative Building,
Queens Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Open Letter re: Ontario Child Advocate

26 November 2018

Dear Premier Ford,

I am writing to you on behalf of Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC), the peace and social justice agency of Quakers in Canada. We are writing to express our concern about the decision to repeal the *Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act, 2007* and therefore to close the Ontario Child Advocate's Office and transfer its duties to the Ombudsman. We ask you to reconsider the decision and maintain an independent Child and Youth Advocate position and office to protect the rights of children in Ontario. We are concerned that the closure of this office will put children at risk and take away an essential way that children and youth have their voices heard.

Quakers in Canada are deeply committed to the protection and promotion of the rights of the child. In our multiple roles as parents, siblings, friends and supporters, we are part of the Canadian community that values and celebrates children. The rights of the child must be a priority because the protection of children and youth ensures a healthier and safer community as a whole. In our society, the children who will be affected most by this decision are the most marginalized - children in care, youth in the justice system, children with disabilities and special needs. These children and youth are particularly vulnerable to institutional mistreatment, violence and abuse when protections are not in place to ensure accountability or an avenue for children to have their voices directly heard. While the Ombudsman provides an avenue for complaint and investigation, it would not provide a specialist office for children, which takes a child centered approach, with the broad mandate to advocate for the promotion and protection of the rights of children.

Ontario had the first child advocacy office in Canada, created in 1978, the International Year of the Child. At this time, Ontario was not only a leader in Canada, but an international leader in children's rights. The decision to close the Ontario Child Advocate's Office would mean Ontario would fall behind best practice and international standards. This would diminish Ontario's position as a leader and model for governments in this country and as a leader in advocating for children's rights worldwide, working to create a society that protects children from violence, exploitation, abuse and discrimination.

National Child Day was held last week to commemorate the day in 1989 that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was first adopted. National Child Day has been celebrated across Canada since 1991, when we first ratified the Convention. This is an opportune moment to renew Ontario's commitment and recognition of the rights of the child.

The decision to close the Ontario Child Advocate's office would be a short-term financial gain with long term detrimental effects for the Ontario society. We encourage you to reconsider this decision and ensure the continuation of an independent Child and Youth Advocate. With the continued investment in children's rights and systems that protect children and youth in Ontario, Ontario can be at the forefront of child and community safety.

In Friendship,

Stephen Bishop
CFSC Clerk



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