

## **Discontinuation of the Office of the Provincial Child and Youth Advocate**

### Background:

The Ontario Government announced its intention to discontinue the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. This Office ensures young people have a voice about things that affect their lives. This decision is especially devastating for young people living on the margins, Black youth, Indigenous youth, young people living in the care of public institutions like child welfare or youth justice and those with special challenges or disabilities. Since 1984, the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth has worked hard to center the voices of youth, to facilitate their meaningful participation when decisions are being made about them and to influence government policy regarding the wellbeing of children and youth in Ontario. This Office has called out provincial governments on harsh treatment or abuses in custody facilities, a lack of transparency and accountability with respect to serious occurrences in residential care, inadequate and poor quality care for children and youth who don't live with their parents and the inadequate oversight on the part of child welfare as highlighted in several child death inquests.

The current Ontario government has said they will transfer some of the functions of the Office of the Provincial Advocate to the Ombudsman of Ontario, a much larger office that deals with consumer complaints by adults in a wide range of public services, but that has no experience dealing with child welfare, child and youth mental health and youth justice sectors. Young people involved in those sectors are unfamiliar with the Ombudsman, and there are no opportunities for a collective voice. The Advocates Office would be subsumed under an institution that deals solely with adults. An independent Office of the Child and Youth Advocate must be maintained to ensure the appropriate support and care of Ontario's most vulnerable children and youth.

Points to consider in your letter:

1. For the greatest impact avoid CCing. When addressing your email, it is imperative that each name and associated email address warrant a separate email. However, consider copying and pasting your message into separate emails, one for each contact
2. Your letter should be heartfelt and reflect your personal views from your own unique perspective. Try to avoid “cookie cutter” or standard emails.
3. Write to the Minister, the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition Party, the leader of the Liberal Party and your local member of the provincial Parliament. All contact information is listed below.
4. Begin the letter with who you are (Citizen, parent, youth, student, teacher, child and youth care practitioner, doctor, lawyer etc.)
5. Write why this issue is important to you (your personal interest or your professional interest)
6. Write how this decision will influence you, your family, those who you care about.
7. Ask the government to reverse its decision to amalgamate the Office of the Provincial Child and Youth Advocate with the Ombudsman’s Office. Ask that the Child Advocate maintains its independence and remains as a strong voice with and for children and youth of Ontario.
8. Send your email out promptly.

**Your support in promptly addressing this devastating news is contributing to a social action strategy that recognizes the power in numbers as a catalyst for change.**

**Contact Information:**

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Contact link for all MPPs in Ontario

<https://www.ola.org/en/members/current>

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