



The Hon. Doug Ford, MPP Etobicoke North
Premier of Ontario
Premier's Office
Room 281
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1
doug.ford@pc.ola.org

November 29, 2018

Dear Premier,

Re: Closure of the Ontario Child Advocate Office, and the repeal of The Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act, 2007

Reassignment of Provincial Advocate Staff to the Office of the Ombudsman

I am writing today on behalf of the 5,000 members of the Ontario Council of Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW Ontario Council). We understand and appreciate the financial responsibility of reducing the \$14.5 billion dollar deficit and the government's commitment to the people of Ontario to bring us into a balanced fiscal state.

We appreciate the announcement to hold round tables to thoroughly explore the approaches to the child protection system.

However, the closure of the Ontario Child Advocate Office may not bode well for our Ontario marginalized and vulnerable children and youth unless there are assurances that the same processes currently in place are transferred along with the staff to the Office of the Ombudsman.

Understandings of the current situation:

- The functions of the Child Advocate Office include:
 1. Individual rights advocacy,
 2. Investigations,
 3. Systemic advocacy, and
 4. Community development -for the following segments: child welfare, First Nations, provincial and demonstration schools, youth justice and youth in holding cells, children's mental health, and children with special needs.
- The specialized staff are trained experts able to listen to, work with, and speak for vulnerable children and youth.
- Ontario was the leader in the creation of these offices thanks to former Premier Bill Davis. We are gratified and proud to see that most of the other provinces, as well as other countries, have followed our lead.

The proposed legislation:

Under Bill 57, Child Advocate Office will be closed effective May 1, 2019. Staff and investigations will be transferred to the Office of the Ombudsman.

Recommendations:

1. **Retain the Ontario Child Advocate Office as is.**
2. **If not:**
 - a. **Retain all functions, including the independent systemic advocacy, all within a specialized separate unit within the Office of the Ombudsman, with its own website and current telephone number. It is critical for our vulnerable youth to have ready access to person-to-person contact.**
 - b. **Move the Ontario Child Advocate Office intact and seamless, so that all areas of expertise and current contacts remain in place and can be located easily, especially by distraught children and youth.**
3. **Do not replace the work of the Ontario Child Advocate Office with the roundtables. These should act as a complement to it.**

One of the mandates of CFUW Ontario Council is to give voice to our members and their communities. Because of this, we understand the need for vulnerable children and youth to have their own voice be heard, and to have easy access to those who can support this voice, especially in times of critical need. Those voices do include both the individual desperation and the collective call for change.

It is for this reason that we request that you reconsider the closing of the Child Advocate Office. It is well known and documented that this agency's work is paramount in securing the future of our vulnerable children and marginalized youth.

Ontario Council of the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW Ontario Council):

We are a voluntary, self-funded, non-profit organization with 51 clubs across the province, which is affiliated with the national CFUW that has consultative NGO status with the United Nations.

Our mandate is to promote education and life-long learning, to encourage the participation of members in their communities, and to enhance the status of women and girls. Our main concerns include high quality public education, universal health care, a clean safe environment, the economic security of women as well as the prevention of violence against women.

Yours truly,



Sandra Thomson
President, CFUW Ontario Council
president@cfuwontcouncil.ca
president.cfuwontario@gmail.com
www.cfuwontcouncil.ca