



## Southeast Edmonton Early Childhood Community Coalition

October 7, 2016

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices  
c/o Committee Clerk  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 9820 – 107 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 1E7  
OR CYAARReview@assembly.ab.ca

The South East Edmonton Early Childhood Coalition appreciated the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices' request for input to the review of the Child and Youth Advocate Act. As a volunteer organization with a focus on the early years, we do understand the importance of support for children, youth and families, especially those who are most vulnerable. However, as we do not provide services nor have legal expertise, our comments are general and based on feedback from families and service providers with whom we have collaborated.


As typically children and youth cared for under the auspices of a government act do not have consistent and strong family and community support, it is critically important that they all have easy access to a service that protects their rights, interests and viewpoints. Thus, we strongly support the Advocate Office and any efforts to better ensure that those eligible for the service are aware of it.

For many, if not most, of these children and youth, engaging or re-engaging with family or extended family is a hope and a goal. Thus, we recommend that the Child and Youth Advocate Act contemplate and enable involvement of family in the service provision. Ultimately, the service should result in the children or youth feeling they have a long-term plan, are supported in community and know they have a place where they belong. Further to this, we feel it is important to minimize distractions for children and youth, such as school changes.

Because the Advocate Office usually becomes involved when something has broken down within the government system currently serving the child or youth, we underscore the importance of the advocate's insights influencing changes in the particular system, recommendations being implemented and being publicly reported. Our understanding is that the Advocate Office currently has no authority to ensure the recommendations are acted upon, leading to needed changes not being made and other children and youth experiencing similar problems.

We applaud the government for reviewing the Child and Youth Advocate Act and seeking out a broad range of input.

Sincerely,

  
Gloria Chalmers and Muriel Dunnigan  
Co-chairs, South East Edmonton Early Childhood Community Coalition  
[www.earlychildhoodedm.ca/southeast](http://www.earlychildhoodedm.ca/southeast)