



October 6, 2016

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices  
 c/o Committee Clerk  
 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
 9820 – 107 Street  
 Edmonton, Alberta  
 T5K 1E7

**RE: Review of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act***

Dear Committee,

Thank you very much for considering Edmonton John Howard Society (EJHS) when inviting organizations to respond to the current Child and Youth Advocate Act. Our organization is committed to youth and especially those compromised or disenfranchised by systems designed to provide safety and well-being.

I gathered a two other individuals from our organization to collaborate with me in a response from EJHS. We talked about each of the discussion questions in your guide. Some questions were thought provoking and others we simply agreed with and had no additional information and/or questions to offer. Following are our responses to specific questions in the discussion guide that initiated conversation and/or suggestions.

*Question 2. Does the Act permit the Advocate to provide appropriate services to children and youth? Should the Advocate provide services to children and youth who are receiving other government services?*

We agreed with the Act. Yes, under the scope of Human Services and Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, Advocates provide appropriate services. We did consider other areas such as children and youth with disabilities, they too would be supported through Human Service programs if they were in need of any kind of guardianship.

*Question 3. What the Advocate can do is make possible by the Child and Youth Advocate Act. In your opinion, should the role of the Advocate stay the same? Is the Advocate able to do*

*enough, or should the Advocate be able to do more? Please discuss your answer and provide suggestions, if possible.*

Our group felt that the role should stay the same. However, we did discuss for the level of authority and influence that an Advocate has, Advocates should be held to a high level of professional standards, competency and accountability.

*Question 4. Does the Act provide the Advocate with sufficient powers to conduct the roles and functions as stated in the Act? Are other powers necessary?*

We feel the investigative powers of the Advocate should be high and they should stay as such. We are not certain on the power of the Advocate has to enforce their recommendations. Our concern is that recommendations are only as useful as their conscientious implementation. The Advocate role is someone unserviceable if their recommendations are not implemented and follow-up upon. Who is responsible to ensure recommendations are moved to the next level (higher level) of change, implementation and accountability.

*Question 5. Is the information provided by a child to an advocate sufficiently protected? Is the information provided for an investigation sufficiently protected?*

We consider the information is sufficiently protected. We have a question regarding the disclosure of information to other individuals who may benefit from the information. For example, are parents provided information regarding the well-being of a child they surrendered for permanent guardianship? Would they be provided the amount of information they request?

*Question 6. What the Advocate can investigate is made possible by the Act. Should the Advocate be able to investigate the same, more, less of different issues? So you agree with how the Act enables the Advocate to conduct investigations? Please discuss your answer and provide suggestions.*

We had another clarifying question. How is “serious injury” defined? Does this statement include emotional, mental, and spiritual injury as well as physical? We would consider the emotional, mental and spiritual well-being of a child to be included in determining “serious injury”

*Question 7. What the Advocate can report after an investigation is set by the Act. Do these reports contain enough information? Should these reports contain the same, more or different information? Please discuss you answer and provide suggestions.*

As in question 4, our response comes in the form of questions. When an investigation has come to completion how are the professionals, organizations, systems involved managed? Are they held responsible and is their accountability enforced? Additionally, if a system is identified as responsible what is the process of ensuring policies and procedures are changed to ensure similar incidents do not happen again?

I hope our thoughts and questions will be useful to your review.

Sincerely,

Clare Gallant  
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Residence

Alanna Manchak  
Assistant Director  
Youth Residential Services

Kaela Hendra  
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