



Family Alliance *Ontario*

an alliance of citizens that offers knowledge, tools and networking opportunities to individuals with disabilities and their families to assist them to realize a vision that includes having valued relationships, choice and control in their lives, and enables inclusion through meaningful contribution and participation in their communities

November 29, 2018

Honourable Premier Ford:

We are outraged that you have decided to eliminate the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth! We were optimistic that you as a Premier who was 'for the people' would not turn your back on the most vulnerable and marginalized citizens of this great province of Ontario. Many families in Ontario are struggling to support children with disabilities often with very complex medical challenges. These families are often pushed to the worst possible point of 'giving their children up to the system' because they can't receive the necessary support to help them care for their children at home.

In 2009, Ontario closed the large institutions such as the Huronia, Rideau and Southwest Regional Centres where children were housed because they had disabilities. Many suffered horrible unmentionable, physical, mental and sexual abuses. They had **no where to turn**. Many of these people continue to live with the effects of the harm inflicted on them by employees of the government of Ontario.

Our children are protected under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and under the Rights of Persons Living with Disabilities to which Canada is a signatory and as such Ontario is obligated to protect them under these rights. Having an independent office where children can contact an advocate to receive assistance when they are at risk is absolutely essential. To lob this into an already overburdened Ombudsman's office which deals mainly with issues relating to adults is denying these children their rights.

We have seen the results of the Ombudsman's multi-year investigation into the systemic problems in the developmental services sector, identified in the "Nowhere to Turn" report. This report was released in 2016 which identified the very serious flaws in the system. There were 60 recommendations yet 2 ½ years later, very little has changed for the majority of people and their families who are in need of supports to claim their right to be fully included in their community.

When children and youth do not have the ongoing protection of their parents, there needs to be additional safeguards put in place. We know what happens when the system monitors itself...just ask those individuals who tell the stories of the horrors they endured in the large institutions.

c/o Durham Family Network

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The Ontario Child Advocate is an independent voice for our children and youth which reports directly to the Legislative Assembly on Ontario. This is a much needed safeguard which not only investigates individual complaints but also looks at systemic problems which deny children and youth their inherent rights as citizens. Our children our own most valuable resource. They must be protected and having that independent voice offers that protection.

We urge you to consider finding efficiencies and savings for this province in the multi-levels of bureaucracy within the many governmental programs rather than by eliminating this critical and important safeguard for our most marginalized citizens.

Sincerely,



Cindy Mitchell
President
Family Alliance Ontario