



October 21, 2024

Statement by the Child and Youth Advocate

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate is an independent Statutory Office that supports the province's children and youth by advocating for their rights and interests in dealing with child serving systems. The Office works tirelessly to ensure their voices are heard - and elevated - in matters that affect them.

"Given recent public discourse, I am gravely concerned with the conversation as it relates to the recent Order in Council that directed me "to review, investigate and report on the policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety and well-being of children and youth in receipt of protective intervention services where a report is received alleging that a child or youth has been sexually abused or exploited." I adamantly believe the focus needs to return to the fundamental rights, well-being, and the safety of vulnerable children and youth in our province. Young people need to have their voices heard, rights respected, and their issues responded to appropriately. This is my promise and responsibility to them, and should be everyone's promise to them," said Linda Clemens Spurrell, Child and Youth Advocate.

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate is well positioned, with its legislative authority and decades of investigative expertise, to do this work while remaining solely focused on children and youth. Furthermore, the **Child and Youth Advocate Act** outlines the powers and duties of the Advocate including receiving, reviewing and investigating a matter relating to a child or youth or a group of them, whether or not a request or complaint is made. Through the investigative process, the Advocate also has subpoena powers and can require a person to give information relating to a matter being investigated, to produce documents related to the matter, and may summon and examine, on oath or affirmation, a person who in the opinion of the Advocate is able to give information relating to the investigation. These powers position the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate to fulfill its mandate with impunity.

“I was appointed by resolution of the House of Assembly and there are processes in place to address any potential conflict of interest – these processes were undertaken with great diligence. Given the recent public discourse I can share that work has commenced and required documents have been requested from the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development,” said Linda Clemens Spurrell, Child and Youth Advocate. “However, I want to ensure that the focus remains on what is the foundation of my role - the rights, safety and well-being of our province’s children and youth – that is my priority.”

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