



MEDIA RELEASE
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Advocate for Children and Youth Tables 2016 Annual Report

SASKATOON – Corey O’Soup, Advocate for Children and Youth, tabled his first *Annual Report* in the Legislative Assembly today. The report reflects the work of his predecessor, Bob Pringle, to October 31, 2016 and highlights Mr. O’Soup’s vision and priorities for his upcoming term that commenced on November 1, 2016.

“As a First Nations person and former educator, I look forward to serving as an independent voice for children and youth in Saskatchewan, particularly, for our most vulnerable population, First Nations and Metis children and youth, said O’Soup. “I believe in an approach that fosters positive relationships, collaboration and engagement with First Nations and Metis government, agencies, and communities to achieve better outcomes for these children,” says O’Soup.

As Advocate, O’Soup says he will prioritize the work of the office as a voice for children and youth and empower them to use their voice. “Our young people know best what challenges they face and what they need. I want to be on the ground, listening to our youth to assist them in obtaining the positive changes they seek for their future.”

In his report, O’Soup identifies some longstanding systemic issues that continue to compromise the rights of children and youth in this province such as barriers to mental health services in remote and rural regions, persistent issues in youth custody, and a lack of supports in many of our schools, particularly on reserve schools. He is particularly concerned with the disparity between on and off reserve funding for child welfare and education.

“The disparity in funding between on and off reserve education is unacceptable,” says O’Soup, “We must work together to address the lack of resources and to tackle the disparity in graduation rates between our First Nations and Metis and non-First Nations and Metis students. This is one of my top priorities.” O’Soup emphasizes that children getting a good start in life and being school ready is critical to their future success.

The report also profiles the impact of the Advocate’s work and recommendations made to government between 2011-2016. “It is evident that a tremendous amount of work was done during Mr. Pringle’s tenure that led to some necessary improvements in the child welfare system benefiting children and youth in these systems,” O’Soup said, “but more needs to be done and it will be important for all systems to work together to find creative solutions toward better outcomes for our children”.

In the report O’Soup calls on the province to fully implement all legislative amendments to *The Child and Family Services Act* stating, “these amendments will address the longstanding recommendations we’ve made to government that we know will result in better outcomes for children and youth.” Although he commends the government for moving forward on some of the recommendations, “many of the amendments delayed are the ones that are integral to a renewal of the child welfare system.”

The Advocate for Children and Youth is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. He leads a team of advocates, investigators and other staff who work on behalf of the province's young people. Our vision is that the rights, interests and well-being of children and youth are respected and valued in our communities and in government legislation, policy, programs and practice.

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