

Child Poverty – Time for Action

SASKATOON – Bob Pringle, Advocate for Children and Youth, reiterates his expectation that immediate action be taken to eliminate poverty affecting children, youth and families in Saskatchewan and Canada.

Pringle is responding to the recent report indicating fifty percent of First Nations children and youth in Canada live in poverty. In Saskatchewan, two of three children on reserve live in poverty. This rate is significantly higher than the national average. Pringle says, “The dire economic and social conditions of Aboriginal children and youth, is the number one human rights issue in the country. The human, economic, social and cultural cost of such pervasive poverty is staggering.”

Pringle states this level of child poverty in Canada and Saskatchewan is deplorable and must be addressed. “We need to place our children at the front of our agenda to give this issue the attention it requires. Surely we can do more than just say we value children. Action is required here.”

Pringle highlights the rights of young people in accordance with the 54 Articles of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, reminding governments that Canada has ratified the Convention. The Advocate continues to call both federal and provincial governments to embed these rights in domestic law.

“Meeting the basic needs of children is a shared responsibility of parents, communities and governments,” states Pringle. “We must partner to address the social, education, employment, economic, housing and health disparities affecting our children.”

Pringle chaired the Child Welfare Review (2010) that speaks directly to the issue of child and family poverty. One of the key recommendations of that Review was to address the conditions that cause poverty, because poverty drives child neglect and a host of other social problems. Pringle continues to highlight this issue in each of his Annual Reports, and many other official forums.

“I support efforts underway to transform our child welfare system and provincial investments in training, education, and early childhood development, but as a society we will never eliminate child abuse and neglect until we get at the root causes – and number one on that list is poverty,” said Pringle.

“The national study puts the onus on the federal government to show leadership in this critical area. We urge collaboration to develop and implement a viable anti-poverty plan,” concludes Pringle.

The Advocate for Children and Youth is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan with responsibility to advise the provincial government on matters related to children and youth.

- 30 -

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