



A Voice for Youth

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 24, 2011

Children's Advocate Says 2011 Provincial Budget Lays Out Important Framework for a Better Future for Vulnerable Children, Youth and Families

SASKATOON — Saskatchewan's Children's Advocate, Bob Pringle, views the Government of Saskatchewan's 2011 provincial budget as laying the foundation for a long-term strategy for addressing the needs of vulnerable children and youth in their communities.

The budget, which was tabled in the Legislative Assembly yesterday, included funding of \$34 million for a new Saskatchewan Children and Youth Agenda, and an initial \$15.3 million in response to the recommendations of the Child Welfare Review, of which Pringle served as Chair in 2010.

"As the Office charged with promoting the well-being and interests of children and youth in Saskatchewan, we look at each provincial budget with great interest," said Pringle. "Our concern is always whether any budget will address short-term priorities and issues of the day, or if a long-term investment in the lives of children, youth and their families will be supported. The Children's Advocate Office staff and I were anxious to see the extent to which the Child Welfare Review recommendations would be acted on by the Saskatchewan government in 2011. In this budget, we see critical first steps and commend the government for its response."

The 2011 budget included a number of recommendations from the Child Welfare Review being funded, some on a pilot basis. These include intensive family supports and support for extended families caring for children, improved supervision of children in care, a range of supports for First Nations and Métis employment, enhancement of funding to the First Nations Family and Community Institute and funding for Aboriginal engagement in the Saskatchewan Children and Youth Agenda, among others.

Pringle also highlighted the establishment of the Cabinet Committee on Children and Youth, a forum for improved inter-ministry planning, as having put forward a Children and Youth Agenda. This resulted in funding allocations in four critical and related areas—Child Welfare Review Investments, Autism Strategy and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Strategy, Saskatchewan Police and Partners Strategy to Reduce Crime and Violence, and a First Nations and Métis Education and Employment Strategy.

"Better communication and collaboration among all child-serving ministries is a positive and necessary preparatory step to better services and programming for children and youth," said Pringle. "We support the themes identified in the budget and recognize they do tie a number of issues together: the focus on common clients, using evidence-based research to support action, the priority of prevention and early intervention, and the effective engagement of First Nations and Métis people provide a good basis for planning and action across sectors of government."

"Disparities are great in our province and many children and youth do not get a good start in life," said Pringle. "Poverty related conditions continue to create great challenges for many families, their

children, and for our community leaders. Although much remains to be done, the budget announcements are a strong step forward. Our Office will support the ongoing work of the Cabinet Committee on Children and Youth, and looks forward to further development of the Saskatchewan Children and Youth Agenda and a more formal response to the Child Welfare Review recommendations later this spring.”

- 30 -

For more information contact or interview requests:
Laura Beard, Director of Public Education and Communications
(306) 933-6700