

**Advocate for Children and Youth Commends the Provincial Government
for Announcing Poverty Reduction Strategy**

SASKATOON – Bob Pringle, Advocate for Children and Youth, commends the Government of Saskatchewan for announcing a poverty reduction strategy in the Speech from the Throne that opened the 27th session of the Legislative Assembly today.

“I am very pleased that the provincial government is making a commitment to tackle poverty in a comprehensive way,” says Pringle, “as are many others in the province. I believe that this will help us advance the goals of the Saskatchewan Child and Family Agenda: children get a good start in life; youth are prepared for their future; families are strong; and communities are supportive.”

The Advocate for Children and Youth has been calling on the provincial government to develop and implement a poverty reduction strategy for some time, including making this recommendation in *Two Tragedies: Holding Systems Accountable*, the child death report released in May into the death of a child in foster care.

Pringle has said previously that advocacy and investigations undertaken by his office show that we are reaching many children too late. “By the time their families come to the attention of the Ministry of Social Services or First Nations Agencies, they are facing many challenges that are difficult to overcome. We need to focus on prevention and early intervention, before families get so overwhelmed and vulnerable.”

Factors that place children at risk include poverty-related conditions, mental illness, addictions, family violence, and disabilities. “Children often have multiple risk factors which layer on their lives, violating their rights and putting them further and further from reaching their full potential.”

Pringle would like to see the same level of commitment from the federal government, who fund services to children, youth and families on reserve. As he has said previously, “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.”

This issue is critical in Saskatchewan, as a study cited in the Advocate’s 2013 Annual Report, based on analysis of census data, showed that two-thirds of status First Nations children are living in poverty – the highest rate in the country.

The Advocate for Children and Youth is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. He leads a small team of regional 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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