

Advocate for Children and Youth Challenges Saskatchewan Citizens to Honour the Power of Youth Voice

SASKATOON— The Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth, Corey O'Soup, encourages the people of Saskatchewan to participate in National Child Day activities across the province and throughout the week.

November 20th of each year commemorates the adoption of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) to the UN General Assembly in 1989. This day is dedicated to raising awareness and educating all people on the rights of children and youth which Canada adopted in 1991.

"While we look forward to National Child Day every year as an opportunity to celebrate the rights of children and youth, our Office, the Canadian Council for Child and Youth Advocates, and all of the allies of our young people work tirelessly to ensure the rights, wellbeing and voice of children and youth are respected and valued year-round," said O'Soup.

The UNCRC is comprised of 54 articles that outline unique rights on the protection, provision and participation pertaining to children and youth, including specific provisions for our most vulnerable populations. The right to having their voice heard is one of these 54 articles.

O'Soup states that, "being in a position that elevates youth voice has been the most humbling and valuable experience of my professional career. While our mandate provides us with a tool to independently influence child and youth serving ministries, it is truly the insight of the children and youth of this province that informs our recommendations and calls to action.

Article 12 of the UNCRC highlights that children and youth have an explicit right to have a voice in all matters and decisions that may impact them. Giving children in Saskatchewan a voice on the topic of suicide through the *Shhh...LISTEN!! We Have Something to Say: Youth Voices from the North* report has shown that young people can be part of change.

"These young people live in a very challenging time, a world transformed by technology and a constantly evolving social network that has taken bullying and abuse to a new level. Our report provided a platform for Saskatchewan citizens and beyond to learn from youth about their needs to address what is deemed one of the most serious and pervasive issues affecting entire communities," said O'Soup.

Children and youth have unique rights to safety and protection, to culture and identity and to their overall well-being. Rights that provide access to education, healthcare and adequate living conditions. In Saskatchewan, many children are not being afforded these rights where governments, communities and individuals are falling short in providing for these children regardless of effort or intention. Often a child's voice is absent when decisions are being made for them in many of these forums.

"Today I challenge you all to be advocates for the children and youth in your lives. I challenge Government, communities, families and friends of young people. Listen to what these young people have to say, encourage them to use their voice and allow their ideas to influence and guide the decisions which impact their lives," said O'Soup.

The Advocate for Children and Youth is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. He leads a team of professionals who work on behalf of the province's young people. Our vision is that the rights, well-being and voice of children and youth are respected and valued.

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