

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**First Nations families and children must receive equitable child welfare services says
Ontario's Advocate for Children and Youth**

TORONTO, ON (October 19, 2014) -- This week, the hearings held at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal to examine the inequitable support provided by the Federal Government to First Nation Child Welfare services will come to an end. Ontario's Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth has followed the hearings closely and has stood as a witness to the incredible struggle First Nation children face.

First Nations children and youth are one of the most vulnerable populations of young people in Canada. Many live in extreme poverty and have no access to basic levels of education, housing or health care.

"This is a children's rights issue, not simply an issue about funding and jurisdictions," says Irwin Elman, [Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth](#). "The result of the hearings will have a significant, real-life impact on thousands of First Nations children and youth in child welfare care or in the margins of care. It will impact the resources and supports available to meet their needs and build the foundation for their future."

The Provincial Advocate continues to push for all children to be afforded equal access to the services they need to fulfill their potential. "Our country's apology to First Nations people made only a few years ago must be manifested in our actions," said Elman. "The results of these hearings will offer the opportunity to take a step towards true reconciliation."

The closing submissions by all parties at the Hearings will be live webcast the beginning at 9:15 a.m. on October 20, 2014 and ending later this week. Web cast will be provided by the First Nation Child and Family Caring Society at <http://www.fncaringsociety.ca/i-am-witness>

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[The Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth](#) reports directly to the Ontario Legislature and provides an independent voice for children and youth, including children with special needs and First Nations children. The Provincial Advocate receives and responds to concerns from children and youth who are seeking or receiving services under the *Child and Family Services Act* and the *Education Act* (Provincial and Demonstration Schools). The Provincial Advocate identifies systemic problems involving children, conducts reviews and provides education and advice on the issue of advocacy and the rights of children. The Office is guided by the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and has a strong commitment to youth involvement.

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