



June 8, 2016

Dear Ministers Fielding and Wishart,

The Ontario Association of Child and Youth Care (OACYC), established 1959, is the professional association representing child and youth care practitioners—professional members, students, and associates in the province of Ontario. We provide a voice for over 8,000 child and youth care practitioners across the province. Child and youth care practitioners provide front line supports to the most vulnerable children and youth, parents, and partners within residential treatment facilities, hospitals, schools, and communities through relational practice, evidence based practice, life space interventions, restorative practices, social skill development, and crisis management. Child and youth care practitioners work in the spaces where children and youth live their lives.

On May 29, 2016, in Manitoba, two Child and Youth Care Practitioners were attacked and beaten by two youth in their care. Our thoughts are with all those involved, all those hurt, all those affected.

The OACYC stands in solidarity with the Child and Youth Workers' Association of Manitoba in expressing concern about the safety of Child and Youth Care Practitioners in the workplace. Safety, standards and qualifications must be in focus when providing for the care of our children and youth. Our young people deserve safe places to live and the trained staff who provide for their care deserve safe places to work.

The attack on a Child and Youth Care student and practitioner in Manitoba is a symptom of inadequate standards both in terms of staff child/youth ratios and minimal educational qualifications. The working conditions our Child and Youth Care Practitioner's face every day are high risk across the country including Ontario. Just recently, on June 6, 2016, in Ontario, police responded to a disturbance where a youth worker along with five young people required medical attention.

Young people, living in Ontario residential care, recently released their own report with the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth and they too pointed to a need for minimum standards. Everyday, 24 hours a day, somewhere in Ontario and in Manitoba, a Child and Youth Care Practitioner is attending to a child who is engaged in self-harm, engaging young people in learning to express their anger appropriately and supporting young people while they process the emotional scars of trauma and abuse.

We ask the people of every province to join with us in calling on the government to care for vulnerable children and ensure that all child and youth serving staff hold the minimal diploma qualification of a Child and Youth Care Practitioner. Our young people deserve it and as a society we owe it to our young to help guide them successfully to adulthood. Shouldn't our most hurt, who are in the most need of connection and those most at risk, be able to trust that there is a qualified hand reaching out to help them? The time is now for all provinces of Canada to safeguard the most vulnerable young people and to give to them the most basic support of adequately trained staff available to help them transform their troubled lives.



We support the Child and Youth Care Workers' Association of Manitoba as it sheds light on the crisis in this system and advocates for meaningful change to ensure the needs of these vulnerable children and youth are being met. The changes must include qualified specialized staff, supervision and support to front line staff, and staffing ratios that increase the number of staff available to the young people who need them. We need to see adequate funding to make these necessary changes for safety. We need to see this in Manitoba. We need to see this in Ontario. We need to see this across the country.

Thank you,

Christine Gaitens, BA CYC-P
President of the Board
Ontario Association of Child & Youth Care