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PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

### **Moving Forward – More Work to be Done to Realize Children’s Rights in PEI**

CHARLOTTETOWN – PEI Child and Youth Advocate, Marv Bernstein, in a letter dated June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, written to Premier King, and copied to the Opposition Leaders, calls on the PEI Government to “develop and make public by the next National Child Day, November 20, 2023, in consultation with the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, a detailed Action Plan in response to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child’s June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022 Concluding Observations issued to Canada, with a view to the PEI Government prioritizing and effectively implementing those Committee recommendations falling within provincial jurisdiction..” In that letter, Bernstein adds, “The Concluding Observations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3978336?ln=en>,, constitute a road map that could prove transformational in improving the lives of PEI children.”

“It has been one year since the UN Committee released its Concluding Observations in response to the combined 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> periodic reports submitted by Canada, where the UN Committee expressed serious criticism of Canada’s continued failure to fully implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. While the federal government remains obligated to show leadership in the areas where it can effect change and work in partnership with provinces and territories, there is a corresponding obligation on the provinces and territories to show leadership in working towards the implementation of those recommendations falling within provincial and territorial jurisdiction”, states Bernstein.

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate opened in July 2020 and since this time, Bernstein indicates that he has been increasingly concerned about missed opportunities to raise the bar in the realization of children’s rights in this province. “While there is much goodwill and often promising initial discussions, there is a propensity for government to procrastinate and delay taking the action steps necessary to advance children’s rights and well-being. It is time to change the paradigm from a limiting needs-based system to a child rights- based system where every child can feel that their voice is meaningful and be given every opportunity to reach their full potential”, states Bernstein.

In his letter to Premier King, as posted to the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate website at [www.childandyouthadvocate.pe.ca](http://www.childandyouthadvocate.pe.ca), Bernstein expresses the view that “the government of PEI is well positioned, in consultation with the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, to showcase PEI as a provincial, national and international leader in advancing children’s rights.” Bernstein adds, “We are a jurisdiction small enough to get this right, but too small to get this wrong. Government leadership and investment in children’s rights through legislation, regulations, policy, education and child friendly

complaint resolution mechanisms are some examples of actions that will contribute to the advancement of rights and well-being for all PEI children and youth now and into the future. There is much work to be done and, when we work together, we have the ability to move the human rights bar forward for all PEI children and youth.”

In keeping with comments made in the PEI Legislature on March 28, 1990, in anticipation of Canada signing and ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Bernstein states “given we are nearing the 32<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Canada’s ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is time to move from simple expressions of good intentions to concrete on-the-ground action steps.”

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

**Penny Woodgate**, Office Manager – Executive Assistant  
Office of the Child and Youth Advocate/PEI  
902-368-5630 [spwoodgate@ocyapei.ca](mailto:spwoodgate@ocyapei.ca)