

The following is distributed on behalf of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate/PEI

PRESS RELEASE

August 17, 2022

For Immediate Release

Child and Youth Advocate to Investigate Child Death

CHARLOTTETOWN- Prince Edward Island's Child and Youth Advocate, Marv Bernstein, has given notice to family members and reviewable services of his intention to investigate the death of Olivia Ruth Rodd following his review of her death. "I wish to express condolences to the Rodd and White families in the tragic deaths of their loved ones and I wish them strength as they continue to cope with their grief and loss" stated Bernstein.

A reviewable service is defined under the *Act* as a program or service funded by Government and provided to a child or youth or their family. Examples include programs and services provided by child protection, adoption, social assistance, early childhood development, education, justice, health, mental health and addictions and community organizations.

Olivia Rodd died in July 2020 at the age of nine years. A Coroner's Inquest into the deaths of Olivia Rodd and her mother Danielle White determined that Olivia's death was a homicide, and that her mother, Ms. White, died by suicide.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank members of the Coroner's Jury for their public service, their deliberations on the facts surrounding the tragic deaths of Olivia and her mother and their recommendations to inform prevention opportunities moving forward which I will take into account in my investigation" states Bernstein.

As an independent officer of the PEI Legislature appointed pursuant to the PEI *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, the Child and Youth Advocate has statutory authority to review, investigate and report on the serious injury or death of a child or youth. "I have completed my review of Olivia's death and I have given notice that I am proceeding to investigate the factors surrounding her death, in more detail and through a child rights lens, which is different from a Coroner's Inquest" states Bernstein.

Child death investigations conducted by the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate are confidential. The purpose is never to find fault, rather, to learn from the tragic death of a child, through a child-centered process, with the goal to help prevent future deaths of children.

Reviews and investigations conducted under the PEI *Child and Youth Advocate Act* seek to:

- identify systemic issues that may arise from a review of the child or youth's circumstances,
- identify potential enhancements to legislation, policy, practices and resources that could benefit children or youth who receive services in the future,

- make recommendations to improve systems that serve children and youth and,
- where possible, make recommendations about how similar child or youth deaths may be prevented in future.

Bernstein states, “I believe, we as a province can contribute to honoring Olivia’s memory by putting every effort into learning all we can about opportunities to improve programs and services provided to children, youth and their families so that no other child, family or community ever has to experience a tragedy such as this in the future”.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Rona Smith, Executive Director

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate/PEI

902-368-5566

ronasmith@ocyapei.ca