



PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
Child and Youth
ADVOCATE

OCYA Statement of Concern and Calls to Action



Children's Rights Implications of the 2026-2027 PEI Budget



OCYA Statement of Concern and Calls to Action:

Children's Rights Implications of the 2026-27 PEI Budgeting Process

Introduction

Public budgets are blueprints of a government's priorities and are central to states' obligations to fulfil children's rights. The 2026-27 budget released by the Government of Prince Edward Island has generated significant legislative debate and public criticism regarding its impact on children and youth. While the budget includes notable investments such as the Island Essentials Benefit, investments in the PEI Child Benefit and capital infrastructure spending, public discourse, media reporting, as well as Hansard of debates in the Legislature point to a pattern of budget cuts or reductions that disproportionately affect children, youth and their families. The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (OCYA) notes with concern a pattern of budgetary decisions impacting Island children and youth.

Publicly reported concerns within the 2026-27 Provincial Operating Budget include: reductions or elimination of programs supporting children's recreation and development (e.g. the bicycle rebate program, literacy supports such as the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, and reductions to pedagogical support funding in Early Years Centres), which mostly target early years; scaling back or deprioritizing environmental and net-zero initiatives that carry long-term implications for children's health and well-being; and a perceived absence of a disaggregated analysis and the criteria used to reach fiscal decisions that impact children across age groups, particularly those aged 0-5 years old; as well as debt accumulation that will burden future generations. In the absence of a comprehensive list of budgetary cuts and reductions, the OCYA is mindful that there may be additional budgetary decisions impacting children and youth that have not yet reached the public discourse. Additionally, the OCYA raises concerns about the relocation of the Child and Youth Psychiatric Unit (CYPU); specifically, the fiscally-driven decision related to the Capital Budget to alter the original plans for a new Child and Youth Unit at Unit 9 of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and the imminent transfer to a smaller and less ideal space adjacent to the Emergency Adult Mental Health and Addictions Unit for an undetermined temporary period despite concerns voiced publicly by Unit staff.

These areas of concern, when taken together, raise substantive questions about whether the budget aligns with the PEI Government's obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), its supporting General Comments, and the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's 2022 Concluding Observations to Canada, which require the prioritization of

children in public budgeting decisions. The OCYA advances 7 Calls to Action, urging the Government of Prince Edward Island to ensure that the rights of Island children and youth are given ‘first call’, even in times of economic crisis and fiscal constraint.

Background

The work of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate/PEI is guided by the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC). Canada ratified the UNCRC in 1991, setting the obligation for all Canadian federal and provincial/territorial legislation, policies, programs and practices to align with the Convention. The UNCRC enumerates the core rights of every child and youth from birth to 18 years of age. Significantly, the UNCRC holds that States parties shall not discriminate against children on the basis of a number of grounds and their status in any way (Article 2); that the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children (Article 3); that States parties shall undertake measures for the realization of children’s rights to the maximum extent possible (Article 4); that States parties shall ensure the survival and development of children to the maximum extent possible (Article 6); that States parties shall give due consideration to the views of children in matters affecting them (Article 12); that States parties shall ensure that children with a disability enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, self-reliance and active participation in the community (Article 23); that States parties recognize the right of children to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to appropriate facilities (Article 24); that States parties shall ensure the right of children to access a quality education (Article 28); and State parties shall provide children with an education directed to the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential (Article 29). A consideration of the impacts of these various UNCRC Articles should have been the subject-matter of a Child Rights Impact Assessment prior to the finalization and public announcement of the 2026-2027 PEI Budget. In multiple General Comments, the UNCRC Committee has stated that such Child Rights Impact Assessment are to be made available to the general public.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child: General Comments and Concluding Observations

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child monitors reports from States parties on their implementation of the UNCRC and produces periodic reports of Concluding Observations to States Parties evaluating their achievements and challenges in implementing the UNCRC and upholding children’s rights in practice. The most recent such report to Canada was issued in [2022](#). The Committee on the Rights of the Child may, pursuant to Article 45 (d) of the UNCRC, make suggestions and recommendations to promote the implementation of the UNCRC. The Committee produces General Comments, which are [authoritative interpretations of the rights contained in the articles and provisions of the UNCRC](#), and which can provide guidance on new developments and clarify issues to strengthen the implementation of the UNCRC.

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Concluding Observations on the Combined Fifth and Sixth Periodic Reports of Canada (2022)

In its [most recent Concluding Observations to Canada](#), the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child called on Canada at par. 10 to:

- “(a) Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the budget needs of areas concerning children and allocate adequate budgetary resources, in accordance with article 4 of the Convention, for the implementation of children’s rights;*
- (b) Take a children’s rights-based approach in the elaboration of the State budget, by implementing a tracking system for the allocation and use of resources for children throughout the budget; the State party should also use the tracking system for impact assessments on how investments in any sector may serve the best interests of the child;*
- (c) Define budgetary lines for all children, with special attention given to those in disadvantaged or vulnerable situations that may require affirmative social measures, such as children of indigenous persons, Canadians of African descent or members of other minority groups and children with disabilities, and make sure that those budgetary lines are protected even in situations of economic crisis, natural disasters or other emergencies.”*

There is an expectation that Canada and the Provinces/territories will take the necessary steps to comply with the recommendations set out in these Concluding Observations and that Canada will report back to the Committee on its own implementation of these recommendations, as well as the implementation by the Provinces/Territories.

General Comment No. 19 and the Protection of Children’s Rights in Budgets

Further to the UNCRC, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has elaborated upon the contexts and implementation of various articles of the UNCRC, including in [General comment No. 19 \(2016\) on public budgeting for the realization of children’s rights \(art.4\)](#), which provides guidance to governments in planning, enacting, executing and following up on public budgets that protect and promote children’s rights.

The Committee emphasizes that prioritizing children’s rights in public budgets has “long-lasting positive impacts on future economic growth, sustainable and inclusive development, and social cohesion” (par. 12). Specifically, the Committee urges governments to avoid “withdrawing funding or diverting resources away from existing programmes providing for children’s enjoyment of economic, social or cultural rights” (par. 27(a)). In fact, the Committee states that governments should not allow the existing level of the enjoyment of children’s rights to deteriorate. Rather, “**in** times of economic crisis, retrogressive measures may only be considered after assessing all other options and ensuring that children are the last to be affected, especially children in vulnerable situations;” and any measures that reduce the enjoyment of children’s rights shall be “necessary,

reasonable, proportionate, non-discriminatory and temporary (with) any rights thus affected...restored as soon as possible” (par. 31).

Non-discrimination of children

Article 2(1) of the UNCRC guarantees to every child the right to be free of any form of discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, language abilities, or any other status. This would include protection from discrimination on the basis of age and the fact that they are not eligible to vote.

In General Comment 19, the Committee emphasizes that “State Parties, at all administrative levels, should serve to prevent discrimination and shall not directly or indirectly discriminate against children in budget-related legislation, policies or programmes, in their content or implementation” (par. 41). The Committee also addresses the issue of equitable allocation of financial resources in its statement that “States parties should take proactive measures to ensure positive outcomes for all children in relation to legislation, policies and programmes by mobilizing sufficient revenue and allocating and spending funds accordingly. In order to achieve substantive equality, States parties should identify groups of children that qualify for special measures and use public budgets to implement such measures” (par. 42). In the same vein, and again in General Comment No. 19, the Committee states “To achieve budgets that contribute to positive outcomes in terms of children’s enjoyment of their rights, States parties are required to address inequalities among children by reviewing and revising relevant legislation, policies and programmes, by increasing or reprioritizing certain parts of the budget, or improving the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of their budgets” (par. 44).

The Best Interests of the Child

Article 3(1) of the UNCRC holds that the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children. In General Comment No. 19 at par. 45, the Committee on the Rights of the Child emphasizes that States parties to the UNCRC are obligated to apply the principle of the best interests of the child “in all legislative, administrative and judicial proceedings that have a direct or indirect impact on children, including budgets”. The Committee asserts at par. 46 that “this obligation is crucial when States weigh up competing budget allocation and spending priorities. States parties should be able to demonstrate how the best interests of the child have been considered in budgetary decision-making, including how they have been weighed against other considerations,” aligning with the principle that children’s rights should be the last to be affected and considered only after exhausting other options to reduce program spending.

The Views of Children to be Meaningfully Considered

Article 12 of the UNCRC establishes the right of every child to freely express their views in all matters affecting them, and for those views to be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. In General Comment No. 19, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child underlines that

governments “should regularly hear children’s views on budget decisions that affect them, through mechanisms for [their] meaningful participation” and that “participants in those mechanisms should be able to contribute freely and without fear of repression or ridicule” and receive feedback from government. “In particular, States parties should consult with children who face difficulties in making themselves heard, including children in vulnerable situations” (par. 52).

Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA)

[The Government of Canada](#) posits that laws, policies, programs, budgets and other initiatives can have a significant impact on children, even where they do not specifically target children, or where at first glance they do not appear to affect children. A Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) is a tool to assist officials in assessing the potential impact of a proposed initiative on children, to ensure that children’s best interests are protected and that children’s perspectives are taken into account in decision-making. In 2021, the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island passed [Motion 70](#) unanimously to “...urge government to develop and share a CRIA tool to be used in all policy and legislative development within government,” including unanimously passing the subsequent amendment to the Motion to “...urge government, in consultation with the Child and Youth Advocate, to develop and share a CRIA tool to be used in all policy and legislative development within government” and “to publicly share any and all CRIA analyses that are completed.” The OCYA applauds the Government of Prince Edward Island for its resolutions and commitment to applying CRIA analyses in decision-making across departments and sectors. However, the proof is in the implementation.

General Comment No 19 reiterates the importance of CRIA at par. 47: “States parties should conduct child rights impact assessments in order to ascertain the effect of legislation, policies and programmes on all children at the national and subnational levels, especially children in vulnerable situations who may have special needs and therefore require a disproportionate share of spending in order to have their rights realized. Child rights impact assessments should be part of each stage of the budget process and should complement other monitoring and evaluation efforts...The child rights impact assessments should be informed by stakeholders, such as children, civil society organizations, experts, State government structures and academic institutions. The analysis should result in recommendations for amendments, alternatives and improvements and should be publicly available.”

A CRIA is a fundamental tool to apply during the budget cycle planning process, as it allows for any potential impacts of decisions on children and youth to be identified, and ideally mitigated, early in the budget process. This avoids the current situation of public scrutiny of budget cuts in services and programming for children and youth and subsequent walk backs and reversals of budget decisions following public opposition. Government has been questioned on the floor of the Legislature regarding the [specific criteria used to justify budget cuts and reductions](#), specifically in relation to supports for Island children and youth. Despite the OCYA’s understanding that the

province adopts a government-wide approach to using CRIA, the OCYA questions if the Department of Finance and Affordability applied a CRIA analysis during the budget cycle process; and if the Department of Education and Early Years, Department of Health and Wellness and Health PEI, and the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy applied CRIA analyses to guide and support decisions. Consistent with Motion 70, the OCYA urges government to publicly share the results of any CRIA analyses applied during the budget cycle process.

Protecting Children’s Access to the Highest Standard of Health: The Child and Youth Psychiatric Unit (CYPU)

Article 24(1) of the UNCRC provides for “the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health” and holds that “States parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right to access to such health care services”. The Committee also cautions in General Comment No. 19 at par. 31 that the immediate and core obligations of supporting children’s rights to education, attaining the highest possible standard of health, and their right to social security, shall not be compromised by any retrogressive measures, even in times of economic crisis.

The OCYA has followed with concern the public discourse surrounding opposition to the relocation of the CYPU from Hillsborough Hospital to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, in the former adult mental health and addictions short-stay unit next to the adult mental health emergency department. The current CYPU serves vulnerable children and youth ages 6 to 17. The concerns expressed by front-line CYPU staff in a letter to their union have been well documented in the media in 2 articles ([CBC PEI](#) and [The Guardian](#)). Among other things, that letter is reported as stating, “There is a high potential for the young patients to be exposed to traumatizing communication from/action by these adults” and that due to spatial constraints, “increasing the scope of practice in this confined space will increase the likelihood of emotional and physical dysregulations of patients resulting in potential physical harm to patients and staff.”

The OCYA has had the opportunity to meet with representatives from the Union of Public Sector Employees (UPSE) and PEI Nurses’ Union (PEINU), and OCYA staff has toured the existing CYPU and the new location to see for themselves the inter-relationship between infrastructure and service delivery that supports vulnerable youth in need of acute treatment.

With recognition of the limitations of the older site at the Hillsborough Hospital, the OCYA supports the concerns of UPSE and PEINU in response to what appears to be a capital budget-saving decision to relocate the CYPU to a smaller space without assurances of the term of the “temporary” tenure in this space, which could be the norm for at least 10 years, or even remain as the CYPU’s permanent space; in separating unit staff offices from patient rooms; in providing insufficient space for projected patient needs, including any potential changes to the scope of practice of the CYPU; the lack of

immediate access to recreational and outdoor space for children and youth in the Unit; and the inability to consistently separate the noise and traffic of the safe and secure rooms in the adjacent adult mental health emergency department from vulnerable children and youth, particularly those with autism or other sensory sensitivities, who are already in crisis.

During the walkaround by OCYA staff at the proposed new location at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, there was an acknowledgement by our guides of the potential for noise transfer to the new proposed site to be a legitimate issue and outside of their control. Another concern observed by OCYA staff was the smaller space with shared bathrooms and a single shower, which will limit the privacy of the children and youth on the Unit. The OCYA is particularly alarmed at the potential for specialized, highly trained staff to leave in opposition to the relocation, recognizing the acute impacts that any loss of critical CYPU staff could have on children and youth facing mental health crises, now and in the future. This concern is especially acute given that Unions have identified a lack of staff trained specifically in child and youth mental health provision in community and open-access care, where practitioners are predominantly trained to work with adult patients.

In a communication directed to the OCYA, Kim Sears, President of the PEI Nurses' Union, has stated, among other things, on behalf of the nurses on staff at the CYPU their concerns that "Both the front and rear doors have a fire door with a 15 second delay. This means that a child could push on the door for 15 seconds and it will open and allow them access to the adult side of the Mental Health and Addictions Emergency Department and Short Stay Unit (EDSSU) or the larger QEH Emergency Department. While there is a security desk on the adult side, they may not always be present if they are doing the rounds or are on break." There is also the concern about noise transmission. "Noise bleed from the adult side of the EDSSU remains a huge concern. We are told that adult patients may scream and yell obscenities for hours on end. This can be extremely traumatizing for children to be exposed to. When the Unit was built, it was designed for adult population and was not sound proofed. We have been made aware that sound proofing is not an option and only noise reduction measures can be taken such as noise dampening installed in the ventilation system or dusters along the bottoms of the doors" and "Finally, it is concerning that Health PEI and government is rationalizing the move to the EDSSU rather than investing money in a spot that is designed specifically with children and youth in mind by pointing to the low admission rate. Cost should never play a role in in best practice and evidenced base care for our children and youth."

The OCYA supports this litany of concerns as expressed to union leadership by CYPU staff as being legitimate and well-articulated. It is the firm position of the OCYA that a CRIA should be [conducted at the early stage of development of any initiative](#). The OCYA has been informed that a CRIA on the relocation of the CYPU remains in progress, despite the fact that [the decision to relocate the CYPU to the short-stay unit has already been made and will proceed](#). In the absence of a completed CRIA, it is unclear how the concerns of the Unions representing CYPU staff, and how the voices of children, youth and their families have been meaningfully sought and considered to mitigate the concerns

surrounding the CYPU relocation. CRIA best practice requires conducting the analysis at the earliest possible opportunity while all options are still on the table and not using the CRIA as a mere checkbox to validate decisions already made.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child in its [*General Comment No. 15 on the right of the child to the highest attainable standard of health \(2013\)*](#) confirms at par.19 that “Article 12 highlights the importance of children’s participation, providing for children to express their views and to have such views seriously taken into account, according to age and maturity. This includes their views on all aspects of health provisions, including, for example, what services are needed, how and where they are best provided, barriers to accessing or using services, the quality of the services and the attitudes of health professionals, how to strengthen children’s capacities to take increasing levels of responsibility for their own health and development, and how to involve them more effectively in the provision of services, as peer educators. States are encouraged to conduct regular participatory consultations, which are adapted to the age and maturity of the child, including research with children, and to do this also but separately with their parents, in order to learn about their health challenges, developmental needs and expectations.” In total, such data informs the design of effective interventions and health programmes.

Early Years

In its General Comment No. 15, the UNCRC Committee underlines that “children have varying needs at different stages of their growth and development. In their budget decisions, States parties should consider all factors required for children of different ages to survive, grow and develop. States parties should show their commitment to children’s rights by making visible the parts of their budgets that affect children in different age groups.” (par. 49).

[*General Comment No. 7 \(2005\) Implementing child rights in early childhood*](#) emphasizes the importance of education programming across children’s age ranges and developmental stages at par. 30: “The Committee calls on States parties to ensure that all young children receive education in the broadest sense...which acknowledges a key role for parents, wider family and community, as well as the contribution of organized programmes of early childhood education provided by the State, the community or civil society institutions. Research evidence demonstrates the potential for quality education programmes to have a positive impact on young children’s successful transition to primary school, their educational progress and their long-term social adjustment.”

While it has been noted in the Legislature that no cuts were made to K-12 Education, cuts to literacy programs and reductions of pedagogical supports in the Early Years sector are especially concerning, as the Committee highlighted in *General Comment No. 19* at par. 50: “The Committee acknowledges that investment in early childhood development has a positive impact on children’s ability to exercise their rights, breaks poverty cycles and brings high economic returns.

Underinvestment in children in their early years can be detrimental to cognitive development and can reinforce existing deprivations, inequalities and intergenerational poverty.” Aligned with General Comment No. 19, disaggregating budgets to make clear which items may directly or indirectly impact children across age groups and developmental stages can ensure that expenditures, and cuts, are evenly distributed so that no group experiences inequity. The OCYA is concerned that there is no evidence that a CRIA was completed prior to budgetary decisions affecting the Early Years sector, as no CRIA has been publicly released or that any meaningful consultation took place with the early years sector, with the community or with the OCYA.

In a communication directed to the OCYA, a group of concerned Directors of Early Years Centres expressed concern about the recently announced funding cuts to the Early Years sector, stating, among other things, “These cuts will have lasting impacts on children in our communities, and we must speak up for our most vulnerable” and further “We are at a time when our children are in need of more support, not less...Cutting from the Pedagogical Support role will only harm our children, especially those who do not have access to funding to support their individual needs. In cutting from this role, children are losing a consistent source of support in childcare settings. This is a stage of life where consistency is a key to healthy development and attachment. Not all children have access to healthy adults at this stage of life. This funding cut will have deeper impacts on some children longer term, due to sudden disruption in care and relationships.” The communication from the Directors concludes, “Early Childhood Education is not just about being an economic engine to keep the workforce moving; it’s about building the brain and developing our future, from the ground up...”

A Lack of Meaningful Consultation

In addition to publicly reported concerns that that [the Early Years sector was not consulted](#) prior to implementing cuts to pedagogical supports, there was no outreach to nor consultation with the OCYA regarding budgetary decisions affecting children and their families with respect to the Early Years sector. Additionally, with respect to the CYPUR relocation, there is no clear evidence indicating that a representative number of children, youth and families, particularly current and past patients of the CYPUR, have been consulted before the decision was made to change the location of the CYPUR. The OCYA confirms that representatives from Health PEI reached out and provided a briefing to the Advocate and staff when UPSE and PEINU concerns first appeared in the media; however, the OCYA was not involved in any consultation processes leading to decisions to alter the original plans to situate the CYPUR on Unit 9 at the QEH. Combined with the lack of publicly available CRIAs that could provide justification for budget decisions and fiscally-driven decision-making affecting children and youth, the OCYA is concerned that decisions with significant implications for Island children and youth are being made in a vacuum, without meaningful consultation with children, youth and their families, the OCYA and other stakeholders.

Future Generations

The Committee maintains in *General Comment No. 19* at par. 51 that “ensuring the right to life, survival and development includes the need to consider budgets for different groups of children within the current generation, while also taking future generations into account by developing sustainable multi-year revenue and spending projections.” Also, at par. 63, the Committee notes “the best interests of current and future generations of children should be given serious consideration in all budget decisions.” In this regard, the Province’s mounting deficit, that is projected to increase over the coming years, has been [identified by the Auditor General](#) as long-term constraint on PEI’s future – a cost that will be paid through the lifetimes of today’s children, and by future generations of Islanders. Furthermore, in a [review of the 2025-2026 Budget for that province](#), the New Brunswick Advocate highlighted that the long-term costs of services to remediate impacts exceed the costs of supporting the education, health, and social security of vulnerable children and youth in the present. The OCYA echoes this cautionary note.

The OCYA also notes the elimination of the word “Climate” from the title of the Department of Land and Environment with concern in terms of the impacts on both current and future generations of Island children and youth. At first glance, cuts to energy rebate programs, such as EV and heat pump rebates are not budget decisions that affect children. However, the Committee on the Rights of the Child explains at par. 11 of [General Comment No. 26 \(2023\) on children’s rights and the environment, with a special focus on climate change](#) that “while the rights of children who are present on Earth require immediate urgent attention, the children constantly arriving are also entitled to the realization of their human rights to the maximum extent. Beyond their immediate obligations under the Convention, with regard to their environment, States bear the responsibility for foreseeable environment-related threats arising as a result of their acts or omissions now, the full implications of which may not manifest for years or even decades.” Through the lifetimes of the children of today, and of future generations of Islanders, today’s budgetary decisions that negate climate change mitigation, adaptation and resiliency are indeed cuts that affect children and youth.

OCYA Calling on PEI Government to Take Action

Pursuant to the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, the Advocate is responsible for:

- Section 12 (1) (a) advocating for children, youth and their families respecting reviewable services;
- Section 12 (1) (a) (ii) representing the rights, interests and viewpoints of children and youth who are receiving or eligible to receive reviewable services;
- Section 12 (1) (e) promoting the rights of children and youth in relation to Government legislation, policies, protocols, practices and reviewable services to children and youth

In response to the ongoing public discourse presented by Island families and concerned citizens, the media, and all 3 political parties in the Legislature, as well as the frontline service provider concerns received directly by the OCYA from the Early Years sector, UPSE and PEINU, this OCYA Statement of Concern urges transparency and accountability from the Government of Prince Edward Island with respect to budgetary decisions that impact Island children and youth. The OCYA respectfully advances 7 Calls to Action to government, urging that a child-rights lens be applied to decision-making processes to ensure that budgetary decisions are aligned with PEI's obligations under the UNCRC, its supporting General Comments, and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's most recent (2022) periodic report of Concluding Observations to Canada.

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate Calls Upon the PEI Government to:

1. Produce, and publicly disclose, a comprehensive and exhaustive list of all budgetary cuts and reductions, including all eliminated or narrowed programs and service delivery streams, impacting children and youth in the 2026-2027 PEI Operating Budget.
2. Reconsider cuts and reductions to services and programs for children and youth that have been earmarked in the existing 2026-2027 PEI Operating Budget, including reductions to pedagogical supports in Early Years Centres;
3. Apply a child rights lens to the existing 2026-2027 PEI Operating Budget to avoid negative present and long-term consequences to present and future Island children and youth, giving special emphasis to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment No. 19 and 2022 Concluding Observations to Canada;
4. Publicly disclose the criteria for making budgetary decisions affecting Island children and youth, including the disclosure of all Child Rights Impact Assessments that have been conducted during the budget cycle process;
5. Reconsider the decision, made pursuant to the 2026-2027 Capital Budget, to immediately relocate the Child and Youth Psychiatric Unit to the location of the former Adult Mental Health and Addictions Short-Stay Unit at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, pending the completion and public disclosure of a Child Rights Impact Assessment and giving special consideration to the voices of children, youth and their families and to Unit staff, as well as to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comments No. 15 and No. 19;
6. Apply a child rights lens to future PEI budgets to avoid negative consequences for present and future Island children and youth, giving special emphasis to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment No. 19 and 2022 Concluding Observations to Canada; and

7. Commit to meaningful consultation, in which voices are sought and duly considered in decision-making, with frontline service providers, children, youth and their families, and the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, as part of any budget cycle process in which the rights and best interests of children and youth are affected.

Conclusion

The 2026-27 PEI budget reflects both meaningful investments and significant areas of concern regarding Island children and youth. The OCYA respectfully advances 7 Calls to Action urging the Government of Prince Edward Island to ensure that the rights and best interests of children and youth are prioritized, even in times of fiscal restraint. It is incumbent upon the Government of Prince Edward Island to align budgetary policy and decisions with Canada's obligations to the UNCRC and its interpretative General Comments, and to consider the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's most recent set of Concluding Observations to Canada (2022). The OCYA advances these Calls to Action to hold the PEI Government to the highest standards of transparency and accountability to ensure that the rights of children and youth are given 'first call', even in times of economic crisis; and to uphold the principle that given their unique vulnerabilities, children and youth should always be the last group of citizens to be impacted by any retrogressive measures in fiscal decision-making.

Respectfully released this 20th day of May 2026, on behalf of the PEI Office of the Child and Youth Advocate by:



Marvin M. Bernstein, B.A., J.D., LL.M.

Child and Youth Advocate

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate /PEI