

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

PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday, March 24, 2021

For Immediate Release

Child and Youth Advisory Committee of the PEI Office of the Child and Youth Advocate is recruiting

There are three vacancies on the Child and Youth Advisory Committee of the PEI Office of the Child and Youth Advocate. The volunteer posting for membership, which is made up exclusively of children and youth, is active with applications due by March 31, 2021.

Child and youth applicants are encouraged to have an understanding and ability to address serious topics, seeing issues through the lens of their own experiences, and having empathy for others. Having a passion for the rights of children and youth, a willingness to be a voice for others, to seek others' input, are vital components of this appointed volunteer role.

"Child and Youth Members offer ideas and opinions about topics related to the safety and well-being of children and youth in Prince Edward Island, leading and participating in discussions, consultations, and issuing reports, all to inform the work of this Office. They provide a direct voice on topics they and my Office consider in need of advocacy", shared Marv Bernstein, Child and Youth Advocate.

To balance the perspectives, experiences, and networks of the membership, a matrix model is utilized for recruiting. Experiences with a diversity of the following elements of life is valued including:

- Adoption Services
- Child Protection Services
- Early Childhood Development and Child Care
- Educational Programs and Services
- Health, Mental Health and Addiction Services
- Justice Services
- Social Assistance programs and services
- Other community organizations with government funded reviewable programs and services provided to children, youth and their families

"Lots of children and youth experience struggles to speak up, they don't have a voice. That can break down self-esteem. This is a way to be heard. This is a way to build up confidence and know that you can help people." shared the current members in a joint statement.

Over the past months, current founding members have led and taken part in a variety of high-level activities to advance priorities they have identified. This includes accessibility to mental health services, affordable and accessible housing, Indigenous cultural representation matters, foster to adopt programming, environmental issues, and lowering the voting age, as well as the Recommendations for Canada from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. They have held consultations with:

- UN Ambassador Bob Rae;
- representative of the Prime Minister's Youth Council;
- Senators and staff of the Senate of Canada;
- elected members of Government, Official Opposition and the Office of the Third Party;
- the Premier of Prince Edward Island, the Honourable Dennis King twice;
- Ministers, Deputy Ministers; and
- leaders of community organizations from across PEI.

All topics discussed are examined in a non-partisan manner, using the rights-based perspective of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. By exercising child and youth participatory rights, members examine matters that impact the rights, interests and well-being of PEI children and youth.

HOW TO APPLY

- Submit a one-page document outlining why you are applying;
- Create a biography of yourself in any format you wish – written, visual, video – about who you are and what you value;
- State what you believe is the top priority the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate should be spending time on.

Anyone seeking the full recruitment posting can connect by calling, 902-368-5630, e-mailing voiceforchildren@ocyapei.ca, on Instagram @childandyouthadvisorycompei or visit www.childandyouthadvocatepei.ca

Backgrounder

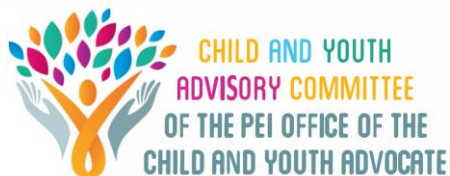
In May 2020, the Province of Prince Edward Island announced the creation of the PEI Children and Youth Table to promote and protect the rights of children and youth during COVID-19 while the province awaited the formal appointment of the independent Child and Youth Advocate and enactment of the PEI *Child and Youth Advocate Act*.

On July 15, 2020, Marv Bernstein was sworn in as an independent officer of the PEI Legislative Assembly as PEI's first independent Child and Youth Advocate. The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate officially opened on the same day.

In recognition of the independence of the Child and Youth Advocate, membership of the former PEI Children and Youth Table was revised to child and youth representatives only who serve in an advisory role to the Child and Youth Advocate. There has also been a name change, and the revised Child and Youth Advisory Committee of the PEI Office of the Child and Youth Advocate now reports directly to the Child and Youth Advocate to help amplify matters of importance to children and youth.



Tag Line: From left to right, founding members Shauna Bjornson, Shaylee Bjornson, June Horne (retired), George Martin, Payge Kowalski, Jade Ward (retired), Maggie Bain (retired), Sarah Knockwood. Behind, Michael Zimmerman (former staff), Rona Smith and Wraychel Horne, current staff of the Office of Child and Youth Advocate www.childandyouthadvisorycommitteepei.ca



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