

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Ontario's Advocate for Children and Youth urges call for public inquiry into child protection**

**TORONTO, ON** – A coroner's jury is expected to return its verdict tomorrow at the inquest into the death of Jeffrey Baldwin. The Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth reiterates his call for the Premier of Ontario to hold a province-wide public inquiry into the protection of children. The following is a statement from Irwin Elman, Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth:

“The parties with standing at the inquest into the death of Jeffrey Baldwin produced 137 recommendations for the jury to consider. This is a strong indication that more than small changes or ‘tweaks’ are required to better protect children and youth. The inquest has provided a snapshot of the deficiencies that currently exist in the way child protection works, not just how it worked at the time of Jeffrey's death.

The verdict that will be announced tomorrow will be based on lessons we have learned because of Jeffrey's life and death, but change needs to happen beyond the boundaries of this inquest. There are those who argue that an inquiry process is bad for workers, bad for the system and bad for kids. That it would be expensive and disruptive. I urge the Premier to reject these cautions and shift the dynamic and challenge the status quo.

A public inquiry will move us forward. The purpose is not to ‘dismantle’ the existing system, but to create a province where every child is safe and protected. Our province needs a child protection system that engages the public and all sectors of our society which can be points of protection for children and young people and goes beyond Children's Aid Societies.

We are grateful to the jury and have great respect for the common sense wisdom they bring to the inquest process. We look forward to hearing their recommendations. We know that the recommendations they make will not fix everything. We hope that the Government of Ontario will support our request for a public inquiry into child protection and child welfare because we know that this could happen again. Every child matters. No child should suffer the same fate as Jeffrey Baldwin. This is a turning point for our province. We have a chance to make the world a safer place for children. We must act now.”

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**About the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth**

The Office of the Provincial Advocate reports directly to the Legislature and provides an independent voice for children and youth, including children with special needs and First Nations children. The Provincial Advocate receives and responds to concerns from children and youth who are seeking or receiving services under the Child and Family Services Act and the Education Act (Provincial and Demonstration Schools). The Provincial Advocate identifies systemic problems involving children, conducts reviews and provides education and advice on the issue of advocacy and the rights of children.

**Provincial Advocate**  
*for Children & Youth*

**L'intervenant provincial**  
*en faveur des enfants & des jeunes*

The Office is guided by the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and has a strong commitment to youth involvement.

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