



*Office of the Provincial Advocate
for Children and Youth*

*Bureau de l'intervenant provincial
en faveur des enfants et des jeunes*

Mitchell inquest raises alarming concerns about residential care in Ontario

Hamilton (July 14, 2015) – Yesterday, the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth submitted an affidavit to the coroner presiding over the inquest into the death of Guy Mitchell, which began on July 6th. Mitchell, a disabled adult, was found dead outside of his residential care placement in Ancaster, Ontario. An 11-year-old child with autism and another disabled adult were also residents of the same unlicensed placement.

The affidavit outlines the Office's expertise and experience in advocating on behalf of children and youth with special needs.

"While the scope of this inquest is focused on the adult residential services system, there are a number of alarming issues raised about the systems that exist in protecting and caring for children and youth with developmental disabilities as they transition into adulthood," said Diana Cooke, interim Director of Investigations, Provincial Advocate's Office. "We must ensure that as vulnerable young people transition into the adult system that the appropriate safeguards are in place with the capacity to react immediately and effectively when people raise concerns about the quality of care."

"I believe that our Office can help with this inquest by sharing our knowledge about the children's services system, both its strengths and frailties. Based on the Office's experience with vulnerable youth there are many lessons that can be learned," said Irwin Elman, Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

The Provincial Advocate's Office will continue to attend the inquest and has advised the coroner that it is prepared to offer expertise to all parties as needed.

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 advocates receive and respond to concerns from children, youth and families who are seeking or receiving services under the *Child and Family Services Act* and the *Education Act* (Provincial and Demonstration Schools). The Provincial Advocate may identify systemic problems involving children, conduct reviews and provide education and advice on the issue of advocacy and the rights of children.

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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