



## Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### MANITOBA ADVOCATE RELEASES GOVERNMENT COMPLIANCE REPORT

Advocate calls for bold action for all those who share the responsibility of ensuring the rights of young people in Manitoba are respected, protected, and fulfilled.

**FEB. 1, 2024 – TREATY 1 TERRITORY, HOME OF THE RED RIVER MÉTIS, Winnipeg, Man.**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth, Sherry Gott, has released her office's yearly government compliance report, which summarizes progress made by the provincial government to implement recommendations issued since *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act* came into force in March 2018.

"Issuing recommendations and monitoring progress toward their implementation is one of the ways our office supports the Government of Manitoba in fulfilling its children's rights obligations," said Manitoba Advocate, Sherry Gott. "It is a collaborative process intended to help ensure public services for children, youth, and young adults are effective, responsive, and comply with human rights standards."

This year's report, *Moving the Dial on Children's Rights in Manitoba*, is the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth (MACY)'s fourth compliance report. It summarizes the assessment of progress made by public bodies in the last fiscal year to implement recommendations from 11 special reports. This year's report also reviews overall progress since the publication of MACY's first compliance report in 2020, as well as the degree to which this process has been able to move the dial on children's rights in the province.

The report highlights some encouraging indicators of progress, including:

- 32% of recommendations are now fully complete;
- 75% of recommendations now have positive or mid-level assessments, an increase of 15% from last year;
- 98.5% of recommendations now have demonstrated actions toward their implementation; and
- Overall compliance by special report, systemic issue, and government department continued to see improvements this fiscal year.

At the same time, the report highlights some regrettable findings, including:

- 48% of all recommendations undergoing their second, third, or fourth assessment this year recorded no progress;
- There is a concerning lack of progress in relation to improving mental health, addictions, and disability services for children and youth; and
- Many of the systemic issues the recommendations strive to address have seen no improvements on the ground, including the enduring youth suicide and addictions crises, as well as substantial barriers to accessing disability services.

“For many issues, there is a discrepancy between the overall progress that is being reported on paper and the lived reality and experiences of young people and their families,” explained Gott. Responsibility for this is borne by all parties involved and partially relates to deficiencies both in the way in which some recommendations have been structured, as well as in how the various public bodies can and choose to address them.

The report grapples with this challenge and explores how it can be addressed in order to advance children’s rights in Manitoba more effectively. It sets out important lessons learned and MACY’s vision for moving forward in a good way, beginning with a collaborative review of the objectives and methods underpinning its current compliance process.

“We need bold action to drive real and meaningful change for children, youth, and young adults in Manitoba,” said Gott. “At MACY, we believe this must begin with a critical evaluation of our own policies, practices, and processes, and a commitment to making changes if they are not helping us to achieve this sacred goal.”

“Of course, working to ensure the rights and needs of children, youth, and young adults are being met is an enormous shared responsibility,” said Gott. “I am grateful to work alongside partners who demonstrate commitment and who value collaboration, and I look forward to continuing our pursuit of big ambitions together.”

To read the Advocate’s compliance report, please visit: <https://manitobaadvocate.ca/reports-publications/special-reports/>

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#### ***About the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth***

*The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth (MACY) is an independent, non-partisan office of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. It represents the rights, interests, and viewpoints of children, youth, and young adults throughout Manitoba who are receiving or entitled to public services, including child and family, adoption, disability, mental health, addictions, education, victim supports, or youth justice. The office does this by advocating directly with children and youth, or on their behalf with caregivers and other stakeholders. Advocacy also involves reviewing public services after the death of any young person when that young person or their family was involved with a reviewable service as defined in The Advocate for Children and Youth Act (the ACYA). Additionally, the Manitoba Advocate is empowered under provincial law to make recommendations to government and other public bodies, conduct child-centred research, disseminate findings, and educate the public on children’s rights and any other matter under the ACYA.*