



Statement

April 10, 2017

For Immediate Release

On March 9, MLA Gordon Hogg introduced the *Safe Care Act* to the British Columbia Legislature, a Private Member's Bill that would permit the involuntary confinement of children and youth with severe substance misuse issues, or those being sexually exploited. This proposed legislation would establish a legal process that would enable a court to authorize the placement of these children and youth in a secure setting for a short period of time in order to stabilize their emotional and physical health while allowing time to assess their needs and develop a community plan.

In both 2015 and 2016, my Office recommended to the provincial government that the Ministry of Children and Family Development explore the creation of a form of secure care – with all the appropriate legal safeguards – that would allow for the removal of vulnerable children and youth from their community to a safe placement that could respond appropriately to their trauma and high risk of self-harm.

However, before secure care is implemented, a significant weakness that has been identified in several RCY reports must be addressed – that is, the current lack of a well-integrated and robust cross-ministerial network of supports and services for children and youth in B.C.

Secure care must be one component of a comprehensive system that includes culturally safe and competent voluntary, community-based and residential services that are well integrated and coordinated, and established networks of services and supports both locally and throughout the province focused on best practices and sound research.

Secure care options and legislation must be carefully considered with the understanding that this is neither a short-term fix nor a simple solution to complex issues. I strongly encourage government to consult widely on this subject, engaging the full participation of stakeholders, including Indigenous leadership and groups, to explore all aspects of secure care and treatment and the necessary safeguards that would be required.

My Office looks forward to working constructively with government in any way possible and appropriate to improve services to B.C.'s vulnerable children, youth and their families.

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