

**An Introduction to  
Bill 25, *Children First Act***

May 7, 2013

# Purpose

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- Update and amend legislation designed to improve the well-being, safety, security, education and health of children.
- Enhance the tools, process and policies that impact how government and service providers deliver programs and services for children and youth.
- Provide alignment with and support the work of other initiatives including: the Social Policy Framework, Early Childhood Development Strategy, Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Information Sharing Strategy.

# Elements of the Bill

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- Allow for the establishment of a **Children's Charter** focused on the following principles:
  - dignity and respect for children.
  - recognition and respect for a child's familial, cultural, social and religious heritage.
  - children's needs are a central focus in the design and delivery of programs and services.
  - prevention and early intervention are fundamental in addressing social challenges that affect children.
  - while parents, guardians and families have the primary responsibility for their children, all individuals, families, communities and governments have a shared responsibility for the well being, safety, security, education and health of children.

# Elements of the Bill

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- Provide for a **government-wide review of all policies, programs and services** that impact children.
- Enhance the role and mandate of the **Child and Youth Advocate** by:
  - providing for investigations into the serious injury or death of a young adult receiving post-care and maintenance, and
  - permitting the advocate to participate in appeal panels under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*.

# Elements of the Bill

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- Provide for **greater information sharing** among government departments, law-enforcement and other service providers when dealing with children.
  - change the test within the **FOIP** and ***Health Information Act*** by changing “imminent danger” to “risk of harm to the health or safety of a minor” when a decision regarding information sharing is being made.
  - provides authority in legislation for government departments to disclose necessary information to the **Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research** for research purposes. This will enhance data analysis that supports improvements to government programs and services for children and youth.
  - create a “tent” around individual children that allows for information sharing among parents and service providers for the purpose of providing services or benefits to the child.

# Elements of the Bill

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- Establish a **Family Violence Death Review Committee** to bring together representatives from multiple sectors to identify trends, and risk factors, and make recommendations that will help develop new programs, services and policies. Representatives will include:
  - Child Protection/Family Violence Worker
  - Crown Prosecutor
  - Probation Officer/ Manager
  - Police Officers
  - Family Law Lawyer
  - Mental Health Professional
  - Victim Advocate
  - Academic researcher

# Elements of the Bill

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- Allow Alberta courts to recognize **family violence protection orders** issued in other jurisdictions to reduce risk, additional costs and court appearances for those seeking similar protections they had elsewhere in Canada.
- **Increase access to justice** by:
  - allowing children under 12 to appeal court orders made under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*, and
  - allowing guardians to apply for a review of a permanent guardianship order.
- Extend the ***Premier's Council on Alberta's Promise Act*** through 2018.

# Elements of the Bill

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- Enable the **Child Support Recalculation Program** to collect timely and accurate information to ensure families receive appropriate levels of court-ordered financial support.
- Clarify that the Victims of Crime Fund and Civil Forfeiture Fund may be used to **fund programs that help child victims of crime**.
- Improve the **offence provisions** under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*, *Drug-Endangered Children Act* and *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act*.
  - removing the term “wilfully” in these acts will ensure that those who put children at risk are held accountable in appropriate circumstances, regardless of their intention or motivation.



# Elements of the Bill

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- **Enhance relationships between front-line workers** and the families they serve, by clarifying roles and responsibilities.
  - Child intervention workers make important decisions about the children and families they serve, however current legislation requires decision-making at various levels by various people throughout the organization.
  - The *Children First Act* recognizes the importance of having decisions made by staff working closest to the child.
  - The amendments will clarify roles and responsibilities and further enable front-line workers, foster parents and kinship care providers to work together with their teams to make decisions in the best interests of the children and the families they serve.
  - This act also provides liability protection in legislation for front-line workers who act in good faith and within the scope of their positions.