

Legislative
Assembly
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Bill 297

An Act respecting children, youth and young adults and the COVID-19 pandemic recovery

Co-sponsors:

Ms M. Stiles

Ms J. Bell

Private Members' Bill

1st Reading May 19, 2021

2nd Reading

3rd Reading

Royal Assent



EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Bill enacts the *Centering Youth in Pandemic Recovery Act, 2021*. The Act provides that the Premier of Ontario shall develop and publish a Post-Pandemic Child & Youth Action Plan in consultation with youth leaders and experts in education, child development and mental health. The Premier shall review the plan every two years.

The Bill also establishes the COVID-19 Recovery Youth Secretariat, which shall assist the Premier with the development, revision and implementation of the Post-Pandemic Child & Youth Action Plan and review legislation and regulations to determine the potential effects on the well-being of children, youth and youth adults.

The Bill also provides that a standing committee shall be appointed to review the development, revision and implementation of the Post-Pandemic Child and Youth Action Plan every two years, review data and research conducted by the COVID-19 Recovery Youth Secretariat and report to the Legislative Assembly.

An Act respecting children, youth and young adults and the COVID-19 pandemic recovery

Preamble

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the life, learning and well-being of Ontario's children, youth and young adults.

The social and economic progress of Ontario depends on ensuring the well-being of children and young people who have had their education, mental health and opportunities waylaid by this pandemic. To mitigate these effects, we need a whole-of-government approach as we seek to recover from COVID-19.

Young people are the engines behind our future economy, one that must be fuelled by a creative, healthy and resilient workforce. Their economic and social well-being is directly linked to their health. Experts around the globe are already flagging the long-term cost to our healthcare and social support systems. While so many children, youth and young adults have been affected by the educational, social and economic disruption caused by the pandemic, it is also well-established that Black, Indigenous, low-income and other marginalized children, youth and young adults have been disproportionately affected.

Ontario's policymakers need to place children, youth and young adults at the centre of our work in upcoming COVID-19 recovery programs and in developing policies to improve their economic and social well-being—for years to come. Only then will our economic recovery truly be a just one.

Therefore, Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario, enacts as follows:

Post-Pandemic Child & Youth Action Plan

1 (1) The Premier of Ontario shall develop and publish a Post-Pandemic Child & Youth Action Plan.

(2) The Action Plan shall be developed in consultation with the following:

1. Youth leaders, predominately from equity-seeking groups most harmed by the pandemic, including those from communities referred to in paragraph 1 of subsection (3).
2. Experts in education, child development and mental health.

(3) The Action Plan shall include the following:

1. Ongoing data collection related to the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children, youth and young adults, including the disproportionate effects on,
 - i. Black youth, Indigenous youth and other racialized youth,
 - ii. low-income youth,
 - iii. LGBTQ2S+ youth,
 - iv. youth with disabilities,
 - v. newcomer and refugee youth, and
 - vi. youth in care.
2. The establishment of clear goals for mitigating the negative effects of the pandemic, addressing structural inequalities, expanding opportunities and supporting youth in achieving economic security and mental and physical well-being.
3. A plan to coordinate programs and services across the Ontario government's ministries related specifically to addressing the disproportionate effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people and the related effect on society, the environment, the economy, and education and health in Ontario.

(4) The Premier shall review the Action Plan every two years and consult with the standing committee referred to in section 3, the COVID-19 Recovery Youth Secretariat, youth leaders and, subject to subsection (3), make any amendments to the plan the Premier considers necessary.

COVID-19 Recovery Youth Secretariat

2 (1) The COVID-19 Recovery Youth Secretariat is established.

Functions

(2) The Secretariat shall perform the following functions:

1. The Secretariat shall assist the Premier with the development, revision and implementation of the Post-Pandemic Child & Youth Action Plan.
2. The Secretariat shall review every piece of legislation introduced into the Legislature and every new regulation made by government to determine the potential effect of each piece of legislation and each regulation on the well-being of children, youth and young adults in the Province.
3. The Secretariat shall report to the standing committee referred to in section 3 bi-annually and at other times as requested by the standing committee.

Standing committee

3 (1) A standing committee of the Legislative Assembly shall be appointed to perform the functions set out in subsection (3).

Composition

(2) The composition of the standing committee shall proportionately represent the party identity of members of the Legislature.

Functions

(3) The functions of the standing committee are as follows:

1. The standing committee shall review the development, revision and implementation of the Post-Pandemic Child and Youth Action Plan every two years.
2. The standing committee shall review data and research conducted by the COVID-19 Recovery Youth Secretariat.
3. The standing committee shall report to the Legislative Assembly every two years regarding the standing committee's work.

Commencement

4 This Act comes into force on the day it receives Royal Assent.

Short title

5 The short title of this Act is the *Centering Youth in Pandemic Recovery Act, 2021*.