

Speaking Notes

Criminal Checks Agreement with Calgary Police Service Announcement

Calgary Police Service Headquarters

**April 11, 2014
9:30 – 10:30**

**Honourable Manmeet S. Bhullar
Human Services**

- Good morning everyone.
- Thank you for being here today to hear about this important initiative.
- As Minister of Alberta Human Services, my priority is improving the services that help keep children healthy and safe.
- For those who know me, I have not sat still. We have taken action on a number of fronts:
 - released my five-point plan for improving the child intervention system,
 - announced four more Parent Link Centres as well as two satellite centres that offer services and supports to help strengthen families;
 - Provided home visitation practitioners with more training to help them better screen for family violence to help families build healthy homes,
 - Invested \$5 million in more mental health supports for vulnerable children and families, and ensure

- children in care have better access to mental health specialists;
- Issuing a call to action for Albertans to setup as mentors; and
 - Working towards more robust data sharing to support better results for kids.
- In addition, the Throne Speech outlined this government's promise to work to extend the age of kids in care receiving services from 22 to 24 years of age.
 - I am unwavering in my commitment to openness and transparency and we will be lifting the publication ban and strengthening child death review process.
 - Some of our changes will come in recommendations from the six-member Implementation Oversight Committee which was appointed to accelerate activity on my five point plan.
 - And finally we held the two day roundtable with 13 experts, 91 in-room participants, and more than 475 online participants sharing their viewpoints and ideas about improvements.

- The draft roundtable report is posted online for public comment – and today is the last day for comments.
- My pledge to Albertans is to have open discussion and effective change when and where it's needed to improve supports for vulnerable Albertans.
- It's often said, the measure of a society is how we treat our most vulnerable.
- And that measure starts with what we do for and to our children.
- I truly believe that we share a vision for our province where every child grows up in a nurturing home and vibrant community.
- And where every individual has the opportunity to participate fully in Alberta's economy, communities and cultural life.
- As you know, for too many children – and their families – that is not the case.

- Too many children are victims of poverty, addictions, sexual abuse and family violence.
- This leads to many situations where caseworkers need to step in and find temporary loving homes for children.
- My priority is to support caseworkers in looking first for family members or close family friends when a child needs a temporary home.
- This is called kinship care.
- Arranging this placement for a child can often be delayed while staff work through the process of ensuring the home will be safe.
- Today we are signing an historic agreement that will ensure criminal record checks for these types of placements are not delayed.
- And this is the first of its kind in Alberta – but not the last I hope.
- We will work closely with Calgary Police Service to fast-track criminal record checks.

- The intent is to allow children to be placed with family members or people they know and are comfortable with sooner.
- This will ultimately help reduce the trauma these children experience.
- Currently 1,700 children in care are in kinship placements.
- This equates to 23 per cent of the children in care.
- When possible we need to place more children with their families.
- This agreement will help us work efficiently to place a child in a kinship care arrangement.
- Staff of Human Services will also benefit from this agreement.
- Every day, caseworkers may be required to attend dangerous or unknown risky situations.
- With this agreement in place, caseworkers will be able to get immediate information about the people in homes

they are visiting who may contribute to a potentially volatile situation.

- This agreement highlights how effective partnerships are needed to keep children healthy and safe, and with people who are close to them.
- I'm pleased we could work with Chief Hanson and the Calgary Police Service to take this important action in Calgary to help children who are coming into the system.
- I'm passionate about this work.
- I know there are many things we can do as a society to improve our province's system of supports for children and families.
- Albertans need to know that we're taking concrete action, making continuous improvement, and creating real change to protect and nurture Alberta's most vulnerable children and youth.
- My hope is one day we will be able to eliminate the need for intervention.

- Until that day, we will continue to work with all of our stakeholders and partners to make the system more effective and efficient.
- Thank you.