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**Nov. 14, 2019**  
**For Immediate Release**

I would like to commend the Legislature's all-party Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth on the completion and recent release of its report *Children and Youth with Neuro-Diverse Special Needs*.

The report takes an important step toward creating a fuller understanding of the experiences of children, youth and their families in British Columbia's system of services and, most importantly, toward improving those experiences for children with special needs and their families.

In completing this work, the Committee conducted eight public hearings, heard 87 presentations and received 137 written and video submissions. The SSCCY's thorough process was exemplary in that it created an opportunity for input from many across the province who might not otherwise have had the chance to be heard by decision-makers about the changes that need to be made.

The Committee's stellar work builds on a report released last December by my Office entitled *Alone and Afraid: Lessons learned from the ordeal of a child with special needs and his family*. That report recommended an overhauling of B.C.'s system of services to support children with complex needs. I trust that the SSCCY's report – including its 16 recommendations to improve eligibility and assessment processes – will also inform the Ministry of Children and Family Development which is currently in the process of re-thinking its Children and Youth with Special Needs program.

Our Office will also continue to contribute to this important dialogue through an extensive research project under way on fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD). The project is designed to understand the current system of supports and the gaps, challenges and opportunities to improve that system for children and youth living with FASD and their families. A public report will be released in spring 2020 and will reflect the lived experience of families as well as input from community dialogues, policy analysis, literature and jurisdictional reviews and service provider interviews.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Charlesworth  
Representative for Children and Youth