Public Schools Branch

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Dear Child and Youth Advocate,

Re: Reporting of Serious Harm to Children under Section 20 of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*

As a follow up to my email dated August 13, 2024, and in accordance with Section 20 of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, I am writing to formally notify your office of serious incidents involving harm to students in connection with the actions of former substitute teacher Matthew Alan Craswell.

Two separate incidents, which occurred in June 2023 and April 2024 at different elementary schools, involved Mr. Craswell inappropriately touching students during classroom games. At the time, based on the information available, these actions were believed to be non-sexual in nature. However, recent developments in criminal court proceedings have revealed that the conduct was, in fact, sexual.

The situation has evolved significantly since Mr. Craswell's court appearance in April 2025, where he pleaded guilty to charges related to child sex abuse, including sexually touching a student during class time. Court documents disclosed that he had written about his intent and actions in online forums, including admission to touching several young girls while working in our schools. These admissions, and the surrounding details, have deeply concerned our organization and the wider public.

Most importantly, our attention remains focused on the students who were directly affected. In each case, school staff responded to the initial disclosures by listening to the students, reporting the incidents through appropriate channels and engaging their parents. While the legal process has revealed far more disturbing details than were initially known, it was the courage of the young students who spoke up who allowed these actions to come to light. Their voices and bravery is at the heart of this report and our responsibility to act.

At the time of the incidents, they were investigated separately. Due to the absence of a centralized tracking system, critical connections were missing, limiting our ability to fully assess the risk posed. Following these disclosures, the Public Schools Branch has permanently suspended Mr. Craswell from teaching, implemented a new province-wide system to monitor reports of misconduct, and will engage with law enforcement to understand if vulnerable sector checks might be strengthened to include inter-provincial and international information.

In addition, the Public Schools Branch has taken the following proactive steps to strengthen child protection and improve internal processes:

- *Commit to Kids* training was offered to all PSB staff this past winter;
- Human Resources staff completed formal Workplace Investigation Training;
- Child Protective Services training was provided to all school administrators;
- The PSB contacted every school where Mr. Craswell substituted over the past five years to identify any concerns. Only the two incidents referenced above were identified.