



**For Immediate Release  
August 13, 2019**

## **LAURENTIAN TO OFFER FREE TUITION FOR FORMER FOSTER KIDS OF ANY AGE IN ONTARIO**

**Toronto, Ontario** – Today, the Child Welfare Political Action Committee Canada (Child Welfare PAC) is proud to announce that Laurentian University in Sudbury, starting for the 2019-2020 school year, will waive tuition at any age for those raised in the Ontario foster care system as Crown Wards.

**"This is amazing news for current and former Crown Wards across Ontario and paves the way for even more post-secondary schools to follow suit," said Jane Kovarikova, Founder of the Child Welfare PAC, a former youth in care, and Laurentian alumna. "Thank you to Laurentian and MPP Jamie West for believing in this collaborative effort from the start."**

**"These students, many of whom are Indigenous, face unique challenges in accessing post-secondary education," said Dr. Serge Demers, Laurentian's interim Vice President, Academic and Provost. "It is important that we remove barriers and enable them to achieve their academic goals." See Laurentian press release here: <https://laurentian.ca/news>**

Typically, tuition waivers are only offered to those who were raised in care within a few years of high school completion. This can be restrictive because many foster kids struggle to finish high school or are not ready because they must look after themselves by age 18.

**"The expectation that foster youth adult at age 18 and achieve milestones at the same time as their peers with very limited resources, after a life of instability in foster care, preceded by traumatic or neglectful circumstances with the original family is wildly miscalculated," said Kovarikova.**

To address these barriers, Vancouver Island University (VIU) in British Columbia has successfully implemented a nonrestrictive tuition waiver model since 2013. See video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cVsIMkLA3w>. This fall, 93 VIU students, who are former youth in care, and their families will have their lives changed forever. To date, 12 additional B.C. universities participate in the program.

**"Education is the one certain evidence-based pathway to success after foster care," concluded Kovarikova.**

## CONTACTS:

Child Welfare PAC | Jane Kovarikova | [info@childwelfarepac.com](mailto:info@childwelfarepac.com)  
Laurentian University | Shaun Malley | [smalley@laurentian.ca](mailto:smalley@laurentian.ca) | 705-675-1151 ext. 3445

### Ontario Foster Care Quick Facts:

- There are 12,000 children in state care in Ontario.
- Each year, about 1,000 exit the system or rather “age-out” at 18 years old.
- An estimated 100,000-plus former Crown wards are in Ontario.
- Restrictive government tuition waivers are unlikely to be effective.
- Tuition waivers apply to all whose family income is under \$50,000/year, but only within four-years of high school. These have recently been converted mostly to OSAP loans.
- About 60% of foster youth drop-out of high school.
- If studies bear out, only 80 of 400 qualified foster youth pursue higher education each year.
- From age 18 to 21, youth receive an allowance of approximately \$875/month.
- At age 21, foster youth are expected to be fully independent, credentialed, and career-ready for life as contributing members of society - this does not bear out.

### What is the Child Welfare PAC:

The Child Welfare PAC is a federal not-for-profit that represents the interests of children raised by the government. The advisory board consists of professionals from academia, law, business, advocacy & public service who have lived experience in child protection systems. The complete advocacy agenda may be reviewed here: [www.childwelfarepac.com](http://www.childwelfarepac.com)

Child Welfare Political Action Committee | 8 Rich Ave, Cambridge, ON N1R 2A5 Canada

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