

Ontario's Bill 33: Key changes to education, child welfare and postsecondary oversight

June 27, 2025

On May 29, 2025, the Ontario government introduced Bill 33, *Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025* (Bill 33), a wide-ranging legislative proposal that seeks to amend key statutes related to child, youth and family services, as well as Ontario's education system. If passed, Bill 33 would make significant changes to the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017*, the *Education Act*, the *Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act*, and the *Ombudsman Act*.

Although positioned as a measure to improve oversight, transparency and overall system effectiveness, and while many of the proposed measures are framed around improved accountability and public interest protections, concerns remain about the balance between oversight and institutional autonomy, especially in areas such as student representation, equity in education, and operational funding.

The proposed reforms are summarized below:

Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017

Schedule 1 of Bill 33 introduces new administrative and fiscal oversight measures for children's aid societies, including requirements to:

- provide information about the Ombudsman to children and youth in formats that are accessible and suitable to their understanding;
- regularly review by-laws and make them publicly available, with detailed criteria to be established by ministerial regulations;
- obtain ministerial approval for financial decisions that may impact approved budgets; and
- expand the definition of "institution" to include maternity homes.

Education Act

Schedule 2 as set out in Bill 33 expands ministerial oversight and introduces new cooperation requirements for Ontario school boards, including requirements to:

- submit to increased ministerial authority, with the Minister of Education empowered to investigate school boards, issue binding directives in the public interest, and establish guidelines on board expenses;
- obtain ministerial approval for the name of a new school or to change the name of an existing school;
- collaborate with police services on school programming; and
- implement internal audits conducted by the ministry to enhance financial accountability.

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act

Schedule 3 of Bill 33 introduces new requirements for colleges of applied arts and technology and publicly-assisted universities, addressing admissions practices, research security, and fee regulation, including requirements to:

- implement publicly accessible, merit-based admissions standards, with details to be defined through regulation;
- develop and implement research security plans to safeguard and mitigate the risk of harm to or interference with research activities; and
- comply with government regulation regarding ancillary student fees, which may restrict fee structures and affect funding for student services.

The Ministry of Colleges and Universities was recently renamed the Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security. This change, along with the new requirement for colleges and universities to develop and implement research security plans, reflects a heightened governmental focus on research security.

Ombudsman Act

Schedule 4 of Bill 33 expands the Ombudsman’s mandate with respect to services provided under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017*. The Ombudsman is responsible for investigating and addressing complaints about the provision of services by children’s aid societies and licensed residential service providers. This amendment broadens that mandate to include oversight of services provided to “persons entitled to continued care and support,” which refers to youth who have aged out of care but have entered into a formal agreement for ongoing support under section 124 of the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017*.

What’s next?

Bill 33 was passed on May 29, 2025, and ordered for second reading. The second reading debate commenced on June 5, 2025, and was adjourned. We will continue to monitor Bill 33’s progress through the legislative process for any updates or amendments.

Contact us

If you have questions about Bill 33 and how it could affect your organization, please reach out to any of the authors or key contacts listed below.

By

[Victoria Prince](#), [Ryma Nasrallah](#), [Katherine Carre](#), [Samantha Krol](#)

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BLG Offices

Calgary

Centennial Place, East Tower
520 3rd Avenue S.W.
Calgary, AB, Canada
T2P 0R3

T 403.232.9500
F 403.266.1395

Ottawa

World Exchange Plaza
100 Queen Street
Ottawa, ON, Canada
K1P 1J9

T 613.237.5160
F 613.230.8842

Vancouver

1200 Waterfront Centre
200 Burrard Street
Vancouver, BC, Canada
V7X 1T2

T 604.687.5744
F 604.687.1415

Montréal

1000 De La Gauchetière Street West
Suite 900
Montréal, QC, Canada
H3B 5H4

T 514.954.2555
F 514.879.9015

Toronto

Bay Adelaide Centre, East Tower
22 Adelaide Street West
Toronto, ON, Canada
M5H 4E3

T 416.367.6000
F 416.367.6749

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