



The Best Place on Earth

*Final Report of the Transition Steering Committee
on the
Implementation of the Recommendations from the
BC Children and Youth Review*

In April 2006, the Honourable Ted Hughes presented his report to government with 62 recommendations for sweeping change to the province's child welfare system. Government accepted the report and announced its commitment to act on implementing the review's recommendations.

Immediately following the release of the Hughes Review, government established a Transition Team comprising the Deputy Attorney General, the Deputy Minister (Children and Family Development) and the Deputy Minister (Public Safety and Solicitor General) to oversee implementation of the recommendations.

In response to recommendations to create a new, independent officer of the Legislature to monitor government's services for children and youth, the *Representative for Children and Youth Act* (RCYA) was introduced, debated and received Royal Assent on May 18, 2006.

The Legislative Assembly created a Special Committee to Appoint a Representative for Children and Youth and a Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth.

Administrative provisions in the RCYA were brought into force in November 2006, permitting the Legislative Assembly to pass a resolution appointing the first representative and giving the representative the powers necessary to organize and establish her new office.

The new Representative, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, was appointed in December 2006 and began working to establish her office in early February 2007. Effective April 1, 2007, she assumed responsibility for advocating for children receiving services from child welfare agencies and for monitoring services provided by those agencies to children and youth in BC. Regulations are underway to bring into force legislation governing the representative's authority to review critical injuries and deaths.

CURRENT STATUS:

The Transition Team has overseen implementation work and coordinated the implementation of recommendations with cross-ministry or inter-agency impact (15 recommendations).

The Ministry of Children and Family Development is engaged in a comprehensive, multi-year transformation initiative which encompasses the Hughes recommendations that specifically address child welfare and protection services (44 recommendations).

The Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General is working with the Office of the Chief Coroner to address the fiscal and legislative recommendations with respect to the coroners service (3 recommendations).

INTERMINISTERIAL INITIATIVES – TRANSITION TEAM AND MINISTRIES:

Legislation:

Amendments to the RCYA in the Spring of 2007 addressed issues raised during the Transition Team's public consultation on the new Act, specifically with respect to:

- the application of the Act to delegated aboriginal agencies and other service providers outside the provincial public service;
- the representative's functions and jurisdiction particularly with respect to designated and reviewable services;
- the process for carrying out investigations under Part 4 of the Act;
- privacy protections, information sharing and the public release of personal information obtained by the representative during the course of a review or investigation; and
- the effective transfer and safekeeping of records from the former Children's Commission, the Child and Youth Advocate and the Child and Youth Officer.

With the passage of the 2007 amendments and the proclamation of the remaining provisions in the RCYA (target of summer 2007), implementation with respect to the creation and establishment of the Representative's office will be complete and the Representative will have full authority to discharge all of the responsibilities recommended in the Hughes Review.

Other legislative initiatives from the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General and the Ministry of Labour and Consumer Services will complete implementation of the Hughes recommendations for legislative reform.

The *Office for Children and Youth Act* has been repealed and the Representative's legislation is fully proclaimed. The Transition Team completed the wind up of the Office for Children and Youth on March 30, 2007.

Recommendations Addressed: Nos. 1 to 8, 16, 54 to 56, 58 and 62.

Children's Forum:

The recommendation to establish a Children's Forum has been implemented and a first organizational meeting has been held.

Future meetings of the Children's Forum will be arranged by the Representative, in consultation with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), the Ombudsman, the Chief Coroner and the Public Guardian and Trustee.

Recommendation Addressed: No. 47.

CHILD WELFARE INITIATIVES – MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

Aboriginal Governance and Culturally Appropriate Services:

MCFD is actively collaborating with First Nations/Aboriginal people regarding governance and a longer term model for child welfare through the Joint Aboriginal Management Committee, partnership meetings with directors of delegated Aboriginal agencies and the Aboriginal Chairs Caucus.

MCFD is working with other provinces, as well as the Federal government, to resolve funding issues and replace INAC directive 20-1. BC is pursuing more timely solutions to increase federal funding and flexibility. Information technology and office management systems needs for agencies are also included in this discussion.

Since 2001, MCFD has been working with First Nations Aboriginal Leaders and communities to develop models of service delivery lead by Aboriginal people to deliver services to Aboriginal people. 5 Aboriginal planning committees have been in place. Two interim authorities will be in place shortly.

An Aboriginal/First Nations Assistant Deputy Minister, the first in MCFD, was appointed to lead the Ministry's consultation process. This recognizes the importance of Aboriginal people leading the larger process and the timing of the process.

In conjunction with MCFD, UNBC is offering a new child welfare certification program for aboriginal social workers.

MCFD is developing a complaint procedure for Aboriginal children, youth and families that incorporates and respects traditional cultures, values and approaches to conflict resolution.

Recommendations Addressed: Nos. 13 to 15, 17 and 30.

Central Authority, Decentralization Initiatives, Quality Assurance:

MCFD is committed to designing and implementing an integrated service delivery system in which decision making, resources and services are decentralized to regions and communities. The provincial office is being restructured to facilitate this work while maintaining overall responsibility for monitoring quality assurance mechanisms.

Additional practice analysts for case review, audit and recommendation tracking were added to existing quality assurance teams in provincial office and in the regions.

A common integrated review framework for case reviews across program areas has been researched, is now in development and will be in use by summer.

Amendments were made to the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* in 2006 and 2007 to establish legislative authority for case reviews and release of information in review reports. Regulations and policy consistent with the Hughes recommendations regarding case reviews are being developed for June 2007.

MCFD posts child death statistics publicly and in the Fall 2006 began publicly posting annual audit summary reports and individual case practice audit reports.

Recommendations addressed: Nos. 26 to 27, 29 to 41 and 48 to 53.

Co-ordination, Collaboration and Information Sharing:

A restructured MCFD leadership team, which now includes Regional Executive Directors, and provincial office with realigned roles and responsibilities will facilitate enhanced collaboration across program areas and between the provincial office and regions/delegated Aboriginal agencies.

MCFD is implementing a collaborative practice initiative to support initiatives such as mediation and family group conferences. Social workers receive orientation/training specific to their role in mediation and family group conferencing.

MCFD continues to build on the good work noted by Mr. Hughes through agreements with other ministries (Education, Health and Employment and Income Assistance) and other agencies to establish common measures and data sets. This work has been facilitated by establishment of a ministry liaison with the Chief Information Officer.

Statutes have been reviewed to identify impediments to information sharing but just as importantly, identify provisions that enable information sharing when a common purpose exists, the safety and well-being of child requires it, or similar reasons exist.

Recommendations Addressed: Nos. 22, 24, 60 and 61.

Evaluation and Outcomes:

MCFD is pursuing an upgraded data management system with a new system which will facilitate data collection and measurement. Provincial office will be developing a performance accountability framework which includes short and long-term indicators and qualitative and quantitative measures.

MCFD is developing a means of measuring child in care achievement in health, education and other significant developmental areas through work with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance and the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth.

A new Integrated Policy and Legislation Team has been established. This team will produce a program evaluation framework for existing and new programs.

MCFD continues to work with other Ministries (Education, Health, Employment and Income Assistance) and other agencies to establish common measures and data sets.

Recommendations Addressed: Nos. 23 to 25, 28 and 43 to 44.

Resources and Recruitment:

Almost 200 new front-line workers were hired in 2006/07. It is anticipated that over the next couple of years an additional 200 front line workers will be recruited.

MCFD is working closely with the BC Federation of Foster Parents Association and Adoption Families Association to enhance recruitment initiatives for foster and adoptive parents.

MCFD has recently increased payment rates to foster parents.

Recruiting and retaining Aboriginal people in MCFD at all levels of the organization is a top priority. UNBC is now offering a new child welfare certification program for 10 Aboriginal social workers. The Aboriginal Child Protection Recruitment Projects is a partnership between MCFD, the north delegated Aboriginal agencies and UNBC.

Recommendations Addressed: Nos. 17 and 46.

CORONERS SERVICE INITIATIVES – MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND SOLICITOR GENERAL

Coroners Act:

The *Coroners Act* has been reviewed and amendments have been introduced and completed third reading in the Spring 2007 session which will bring the Act into line with the modern day functioning and expectations of the office, and to ensure that it has the legislative tools to fulfill its mandate effectively. These amendments include:

- clarifying use, protection and disclosure of information with public bodies, including the Representative;
- streamlining the appointment process for coroners;
- articulating powers for coroners consistent with government policy on commissions of inquiry;
- clarifying when an inquest is to be held;
- organizing and clarifying the Act to make it more accessible and user-friendly; making other long overdue miscellaneous corrections and updates.

Recommendation Addressed: No. 11.

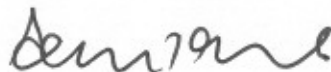
Child Death Review Unit:

The amendments to the Coroners Act will also create the legislative framework for the child death review unit, and a multidisciplinary death review panel. The child death review unit is empowered to determine whether further investigation of a child's death is necessary, and to discover and monitor trends in child deaths, and make recommendations for the prevention of future deaths in similar circumstances. The child death review unit will also play a role in ensuring that the BC Coroners Service establishes and maintains effective cooperative relationships with public agencies responsible for child welfare.

The death review panel will provide expert advice to the chief coroner regarding legal, medical and social welfare issues affecting children, and may make recommendations for the improvement of health and safety and the prevention of child deaths.

Recommendations Addressed: Nos. 9, 10 and 11.

Respectfully submitted,



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