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Canadian Tire Corporation
2180 Yonge St.
Toronto, Ontario
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Attn: The President and the Board of Directors

Dear Members of the Board of Directors

RE: The Canadian Tire "Foundation for Families" being misused to hurt children and families in the community

My name is Dr. Dolores Sicheri and I am a medical oncologist practicing in Windsor, Ontario.

I have recently learned of the story of a 13-year-old girl who has written to Canadian Tire asking for your company to help her in her efforts to bring accountability and transparency to children's aid agencies in Ontario. She has reported that the CAS is persecuting her and her family maliciously. I have read her letter to Canadian Tire and I have seen the web page in which the CAS advertises that Canadian Tire is one of its major public sector financial sponsors.

Because I am a medical professional and well known for my work in the community, I am in contact with many families in regards to their dealings with the CAS. Through my dealings with many families, I have come to see a very ugly and little-known side of the CAS that is causing much harm to children and families. As a professional who believes in the interests of communities, I have become committed to bring change to the way in which the CAS conducts business for the sake of all parents and children in Ontario and for the betterment of all communities in this province.

For the past four years, I have spoken to hundreds of women and men from across the provinces who have had dealings with CAS agencies in one way or another. Some of those whom I have spoken to are agency employees and former agency employees. They have told me of many stories which all seem to follow the same theme – the abuse of power and authority, mismanagement and cover-up. I have become involved with some of these cases and am appalled at what I have seen done by CAS agencies in the name of "protecting" children. CAS agencies carry out many dirty tricks, many clearly criminal in nature in an effort to take children away from their parents and to interfere with, and in many cases, destroy, family relationships. Children are ripped from their parents, often without proper warrant or just cause. The children and parents suffer long term from this traumatic event in their lives. Children and families are being adversely affected.

Some of the parents involved are writing the Prime Minister, their MPP, their MP, the Judges, the Pope, the Queen, the UN representative on Human Rights, the Solicitor General of Canada, the Solicitor General of Ontario, the Ombudsman, the Office of the Child's Advocate, the Office of the Child's Lawyer, the Minister of Community and Social Services, the Minister of Child and Youth Services, the Governor General, and the Chief Justice of the Ontario Superior Court. I have many such letters in my possession. I have, however, come to the sad realization that these letters are simply filed to the "circular file."

It has become clear to me and to many other citizens of Ontario that agencies funded by the Ontario Government who are responsible to deal with such problems are failing to carry out their responsibilities to protect the public from the abuse of power by CAS agencies and their workers. One of the reasons why this is happening is because many members of public are not aware of what the CAS is doing out of sight of the public and behind the closed doors of sealed courtrooms. When companies such as Canadian Tire give money to these CAS agencies without questioning how they operate and allow the name of Canadian Tire to be used in a manner which would appear to endorse the credibility of the CAS, then this makes it even more difficult for people in the community to expose what CAS is doing and to bring about change.

Some examples of human rights violations and unethical practices committed by CAS workers and agencies include:

1. Removal of babies at birth from women for reasons, which are often not valid such as a diaper rash, having been a rebellious teen, previous social service involvement, wanting diapers, asking for services, changing one's mind about adoption, and history of being a crown ward. Unless the grandparents take charge, single teens giving birth lose their children at delivery. Delivery room apprehensions are commonplace in Windsor.
2. Grandparents losing all contact with their grandchildren. The CAS turns them down when they request custody. They are not offered guardianship but asked sometimes to be only foster parents with no legal standing with their own grandchildren.
3. CAS routinely calls parents at the workplace. If parents have no union protection, these parents sometimes lose their jobs because employers do not want CAS calling their employees at work nor do the employers want employees who have to take time off work to deal with CAS related problems.
4. CAS will take away children for parents failing to keep a routine appointment such as a vaccination.
5. Parents are deemed to be at fault for accidents that involve children. In one case, the CAS apprehended a couple's child because it was discovered that the couple's 7-year-old daughter had unbuckled herself in the car. When these people finally got their children back, they fled Canada in fear of further prosecution.
6. Children are often apprehended because of the inability of a family to provide food and clothing because of lack of social service funding. Families are putting empty cans and cereal containers on their shelves to hide their poverty when CAS workers visit their homes. While CAS will apprehend children from families and receive substantial amount of taxpayer's money from the Ontario government, the CAS will not even give a small

- portion of this amount to the family so that they would not have to apprehend the children in the first place.
7. The inability to find affordable housing is a crime that results in the apprehension of one's child. If you are poor and can't find housing that meets the standards of CAS workers, CAS will take away your children.
 8. Suffering postpartum blues is a crime. Any psychiatric illness for which the client is medicated in spite of specialist objection leads to the removal of the child at birth. Any addiction for which the client is on methadone maintenance as treatment in spite of physician objections again will usually result in removal of one's child.
 9. Any time the child gets hurt in the care of a parental delegate, the parent is held directly responsible by CAS workers because the parent should have anticipated it.
 10. Parents are being told to keep their older children and surrender their infants to the CAS. Several children may be returned, but the infant is separated from his/her siblings and placed for adoption. The poor, single parent is often the target. Lawyers who work closely with the CAS coincidentally seem to be in the adoption business.
 11. Parents have to relinquish their special needs child to the CAS but are allowed to keep their normal children. Parents of special needs children are forced to turn their children over to the CAS and make them crown wards of the Province in order to access services which the CAS and the Ontario government will not make available to these children unless they have been taken away from parents.
 12. Parents undergoing surgery requiring residential care for their special needs children later being charged with child protection for access to services. Parents are often accused of causing their children's special needs to justify the apprehension.
 13. Couples having marital issues are being forced to divorce for the mother to keep the children. She is then too poor to care for the children and she is accused of neglect and then has the children taken from her. CAS will advise mothers to go into women's shelters even when there is no real abuse.
 14. Couples involved in custody cases are often victimized by CAS. Often the CAS takes sides against one parent instead of allowing resolution in divorce court.
 15. The extended family (siblings, cousins grandparents) wanting custody of a child are often denied the opportunity to care for their family member while CAS will favour foster care/adoption at great expense to taxpayers. The birth parent signs termination papers giving up their rights to their child with the verbal promise that the child will go to the extended family. Once the papers are signed, the CAS reneges and sends the child off to one of its own facilities.
 16. Rebellious teens are removed from parents and kept in foster or group homes at a tremendous cost to taxpayers of instead of being offered counseling and assistance that will help the family resolve its problems. Some poor parents have reported that when their children are taken away, that the CAS will buy their children new clothes and give children \$500 a seat sport tickets. As a result of such lavish treatment, some children turn against their own parents because CAS is giving them luxuries and freedoms that even upper middle income families cannot afford to give their children.

17. Refugee claimants are being targeted because of poverty and cultural ignorance. The CAS will try to keep the couple's children even when the refugee claim is denied and the parents are facing deportation. This is a violation of international law.
18. The CAS is used by the educational system to force parents of special needs children to sign individual educational plans that the parents are not comfortable with.
19. Children in care of CAS are often denied access to parents by visit or telephone. Advocates for the disabled are denied access to special needs children. Children are deliberately placed at great distance to sever the parental/child bond.
20. Many crown wards not completing high school. They end up on the street homeless at 16. There the pimps and pedophiles prey them upon. The CAS organizations are at risk of infiltration by this criminal element.
21. Loss of contact with extended family, grandparents, aunts/ uncles, sibs, cousins and friends. It does not serve the child to have no extended family. It increases the child's vulnerability to criminal elements.
22. Children have reported being sexually and physically assaulted while in the care of CAS agencies. Children have died while under supervision of unqualified CAS workers.
23. CAS agencies in most cases refuse to give parents access to their files and keep workers notes secret. Many parents, unable to cope with the expense and legal costs are often unable to fight the massive CAS machine they are put up against.

I could continue with my list but I am sure the above will give the Board of Directors enough to get the picture of some of the things that CAS agencies in Ontario are doing to many families. What is troubling in many instances is that many of the CAS workers who are committing many of these injustices are not even licensed to work as social workers in the Province of Ontario. The power to tear children from their homes and to force the family into a huge legal quagmire is often given to CAS workers who have no children of their own and not much more education than a mere college diploma. There is no civil or criminal accountability in the legislation.

After reading the teenager's letter to your company, I too, would urge the Board of Directors for Canadian Tire to show its support to this girl and to the community by immediately stopping all funding to the CAS. As long as the CAS continues to obtain funds from companies such as Canadian Tire and as long as the image of the CAS is bolstered by appearing to have the support of companies such as Canadian Tire, then the more difficult it will be for good people in the community to obtain justice for their children and to put an end to the injustices being perpetrated by many CAS agencies and workers.

Canadian Tire has a corporate responsibility to families in the community, not to the CAS. If Canadian Tire is to fulfill its role as a respectable corporate citizen in the community, the Board of Directors for Canadian Tire should fully investigate the issues of accountability and transparency of the CAS before releasing any more funds to the CAS.

Should the Board of Directors wish to know more about the issues I have raised in this letter or would like more proof of my claims, then I would be pleased to arrange to have a small group of

concerned citizens meet with your Board of Directors to make a short presentation and to answer questions from your Board. The Board of Directors must have listened to a presentation from the CAS in regards to giving funding. It is now time for the Board of Directors to give the citizens of the community who are ultimately the customers of Canadian Tire, the chance to put their position forward and to solicit the support of Canadian Tire as well.

I look forward to your response.

Yours truly

Dolores A. Sicher MD FRCPC

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cc: The Archbishop Dorian A. Baxter, Chairman, Canada Court Watch
Citizen's Commission on Human Rights Toronto