



The Foster Care Council of Canada

(Mail Only) 503-1218 Meadowlands Drive East, Ottawa, ON, K2E 6K1
613-228-2178

afterfostercare@ncf.ca
www.afterfostercare.tk

Attn: Howard Hampton, Shelly Martel, Andrea Horwath, Ontario Ombudsman – Andre Marin, Minister of Children and Youth Services – Dr. Marie Bountrogianni

Tuesday, May 31, 2005

An open letter to the NDP, Ontario Ombudsman, and Minister of Children and Youth Services

I am writing in response to repeated statements which have been made by the Minister of Children and Youth Services, Dr. Marie Bountrogianni in the Legislative Assembly and various media interviews regarding the Ministry's reinstatement of parental rights to parents of severely disabled children who are involved with Children's Aid Societies (CAS) "*where there are no protection issues*".

When I hear the phrase "*where there are no protection issues*" it always sounds off alarm bells for me as both an advocate for clients of CAS's and a former Crown Ward of sixteen years who knows the system quite well from the inside.

The reason this phrase sounds off alarm bells for me is because in my experience with various CAS's I have dealt with, they have shown me that sometimes the *initial* reason a client becomes involved with a CAS becomes secondary to the relationship that is subsequently formed between the client and the worker.

As you can imagine, a parent facing the decision of having to give up legal, and physical custody of their own child can be quite stressful and seriously emotional and frustrating, which often causes great friction between staff and clients.

This friction often becomes the primary focus of workers who then add the heightened emotional responses of parents to their records and begin labeling the clients as "uncooperative" or "difficult to work with". Terms such as these fuel the fire, causing the workers to believe that they have "protection issues" where originally there were none.

I would simply like to make those who read this letter, including the Minister of Children and Youth Services aware of this fact, and would request that the Minister and the Ombudsman, as well as the Child Welfare Critics if at all possible, get involved in ensuring that the actual reason a family has "Protection Issues" are legitimate and not created after the initial involvement as a result of client/worker conflict.

Sincerely

John Dunn

cc: Mark Blackburn (CBC), Sean Mckibbon (Ottawa Sun)