

**Ministry of Children
and Youth Services**

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November 26, 2009

Children's Aid Society Board Chairs and Executive Directors

Dear Board Chair/Executive Director:

In June of this year, my ministry announced the creation of a *Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare* to work towards the achievement of a stable financial future for child welfare in Ontario.

Children's aid societies and the ministry understand that there are opportunities for improvement to the current child welfare system and that the current rate of expenditure growth is unsustainable. Together, we are facing the same challenge; working within our means to protect children and youth and improve their outcomes.

My predecessor engaged you in this challenge and introduced the Commission as an instrument of system change for both CASs and the ministry. The Commission will work with CASs and the ministry to identify how we can find better ways to do business, while protecting and supporting children and youth who require services. The Commission provides us with a unique window of opportunity to work together differently to develop creative solutions to improve the services children and youth are receiving in Ontario within the available resources.

I am pleased to announce that the Commission has now been formally established and Ms. Ene Underwood, Mr. Barry Lewis and Dr. Wendy Thomson have been appointed to undertake this challenging work. Individually and collectively, these three Commissioners bring to their task a tremendous passion for child welfare and a rich set of skills and experiences. I am very pleased that people of this calibre, expertise and objectivity will be working with CASs and the ministry to meet the Commission's mandate. You will find their biographies attached to this letter.

As part of the Commission's work of making recommendations and implementing change towards a more sustainable child welfare system, the Commissioners will be engaging and consulting CASs, the ministry, subject matter experts and other parts of the child and youth service system to create opportunities for input into

and regular communication regarding their work. The Commission will have the necessary objectivity, expertise and authority to do this job.

In creating this Commission, our driving force is better outcomes for children and youth served within the child welfare system. To meet this shared goal, the Commission will have the capacity to explore a variety of strategies, including the establishment of performance measures and targets, changes to ministry and CAS business processes, effective accountability structures between the ministry and CASs, policy changes, supporting consolidation planning, and issues with impact on other parts of the children's system.

The Commissioners have informed me that they will be communicating with you shortly to introduce themselves and share information on the Commission's next steps.

Once again, I look forward to the opportunity to work with you, your agency and the Commissioners towards our shared goals of strengthening service delivery, promoting sustainability, and improving outcomes for children, youth and families receiving child welfare services.

Sincerely,

Laurel Broten
Minister

Attachment

Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare

Commissioner Biographies

Ms. Ene Underwood

An adoptive parent, Ms. Underwood is a former member of the Board of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto. An MBA whose career began as a strategy consultant to large private sector companies, Ene has spent the last sixteen years as a senior executive in the health care sector. Most recently, she led the development of health system strategy for the Toronto Central Local Health Integration network where she was instrumental in the launch of a system-wide initiative to increase value and affordability of health care services. Ene's health system strategy experience began in the mid-1990s with leadership of a major project to make recommendations for restructuring Toronto's hospitals in the mid-1990s. In the intervening years, Ene held a number of senior management positions at University Health Network and Bridgepoint Health with responsibilities including: the integration of services across multiple hospital sites; delivery of rehabilitation services to home care clients; provision of medical laboratory services to nine Toronto hospitals; and other responsibilities relating to both strategy and operations.

Mr. Barry Lewis

Prior to becoming an independent consultant in 2005, Mr. Lewis was a Managing Director with BearingPoint LP, a partner with KPMG Consulting and a partner at ARA Consulting Group. His commitment to child welfare is both personal and professional. He is the father of four adopted children and has over 35 years of experience working with social service agencies, particularly in the Ontario child welfare sector. As a direct service professional he served as a residential Youth Worker, worked at Catholic Children's Aid Society as an intake worker, managed a Family Services team, headed the Receiving and Sibling Homes department, and directed Legal and Centralized Services. He was subsequently a Program Supervisor at the Ministry. As a consultant, he has conducted scores of projects and special reviews for CASs and for the Ministry. Barry's experience working with Aboriginal services includes evaluation/review of Native-run group homes and services, training of Aboriginal social service workers and board members, and evaluation of an agreement amongst 10 First Nations, New Brunswick and the Federal Government. He has also worked on projects for the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies and for other agencies serving children and youth. His experience with other jurisdictions includes engagements for the federal government, other provinces, and municipalities.

Dr. Wendy Thomson, CBE*

Dr. Thomson joined McGill University as Professor of Social Policy and Director of the School of Social Work in 2005. Prior to joining McGill, she had a distinguished career in the UK where she served as former Prime Minister Tony Blair's Chief Adviser on Public Service Reform, having held senior positions at

the Audit Commission and in London local government. She continues to advise governments in Canada and internationally. Her research includes studies on evidence-based management in child welfare, community capability in Nunavik, and Aboriginal social work education. She is affiliated with the McGill Centre for Research on Children and Families, and co-chairs McGill's international Think Tank on Health Inequality. She serves on several Boards of Directors, including L'Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de Montréal, and the McGill University Health Centre. As an adoptee and an adoptive parent, Wendy's commitment to child welfare is personal as well as professional.

*(Commander of the British Empire)