



Commission to Promote
Sustainable Child Welfare

Commission de promotion de la viabilité
des services de bien-être de l'enfance

October, 2010

About the Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare

The Minister of Children and Youth Services appointed the Commission on November 20, 2009 with a three-year mandate to develop and implement solutions to promote the sustainability of child welfare in Ontario.

The Commission reports directly to the Honorable Laurel Broten, Minister of Children and Youth Services. The Commission has the authority under the *Child and Family Services Act* to issue directives to Children's Aid Societies to take specific actions that will promote sustainable child welfare. In parallel, the Commission has the authority to make recommendations to the Minister on matters relating to how the government manages and sets policy for child welfare.

Note

To receive our newsletters directly by e-mail, please visit this webpage: <http://www.sustainingchildwelfare.ca/news-and-events/newsletters/> or send an e-mail to: sustainingchildwelfare@ontario.ca with the subject line: "Add me to your mailing list".

Personal information you provide, such as your name and email address, will not be disclosed by the Commission without consent unless required by law. Any personal information collected will only be used to send you news about the Commission. If you have any questions regarding privacy and your personal information, please email sustainingchildwelfare@ontario.ca

Staying Connected

An update from the Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare

New on our Website

Please visit us online at www.sustainingchildwelfare.ca to stay up to date on the activities of the Commission. Since our last newsletter, the Commission has posted our *First Report: Towards Sustainable Child Welfare* in Ontario, together with a number of working papers.

Over the course of the summer, the Commission received extensive feedback on the *First Report* from a broad range of citizens, foster parents, CAS leaders and staff, association leaders, and former youth-in-care. Overall feedback has been very positive and has included constructive suggestions for changes the Commission should pursue to realize the vision for sustainable child welfare.

Other upcoming postings include *A Description of the Child Welfare System Landscape in Ontario*. This document was developed by the Bay Consulting Group to provide the Commission with a description of the child welfare landscape in Ontario, including its current state, recent trends, and variability and similarities among children's aid societies, in order to inform its work going forward. A separate document describing the Aboriginal Child Welfare System Landscape and recognizing its distinct nature is also being prepared.

Introducing the Commission's Core Staff

After several busy months of recruitment our new staff is now on board. Following is a snapshot of who they are and what they do at the Commission.



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From left to right: Ross Tanner, Loretta Alleluia, Denise Cole, Trish Malone, Moira Sicat, and Joan Conrad.

Denise Cole – Executive Lead

Denise brings to the Commission over 25 years experience working in management, public policy and government service delivery, including having served as Chief of Staff to the Ontario Minister of Community and Social Services in the mid-90's. Most recently, Denise was a Partner with a major public affairs firm. In her role at the Commission, Denise provides executive oversight, strategic direction, planning and accountability for the operations of the Commission. She is also a vital link to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

Trish Malone – Manager

Trish manages the day-to-day operations of the Commission and has several years experience in developing municipal and regional policies for children's services. Trish's background is in law and economics, and she has also worked in the area of First Nations land claims and treaty negotiations in British Columbia. Trish joins the Commission after 3½ years of policy development experience with the Ontario government in the area of accessibility.

Ross Tanner – Senior Program-Policy Analyst

As the Commission's senior analyst, Ross is engaged in a wide range of research, data analysis and reporting work. Ross obtained his Master of Science in Development Management from the London School of Economics and Political Science in 2009. Prior to this Ross worked in the not-for-profit sector on community development projects in Kenya and Guyana.

Moira Sicat – Executive Assistant

Moira provides administrative and executive support to the Commission. Moira comes to the Commission from the Ministry of Education where she served as Office Administrator. Prior to joining the Ontario Public Service, Moira practised law in the Philippines.

Loretta Alleluia – Administrative Assistant

Loretta handles all of the Commission's general administrative needs including reception. She joins the Commission from the Ministry of Labour where she has held a variety of administrative positions during her almost twenty years with that Ministry. Loretta has been with the Ontario Public Service for 27 years.

Joan Conrad – Senior Advisor-Child Welfare Funding

Joan is seconded to the Commission from the Kawartha-Haliburton Children's Aid Society where she is the Director of Accountability and Management Services. With her thirty years of experience in the child welfare field, Joan brings a wealth of sector knowledge and expertise to the Commission. Joan is providing overall project management support to the project that is developing alternative approaches to child welfare funding.

Commission on the Move

To date, the Commission has visited 48 of Ontario's Children's Aid Societies. We plan to have visited all of the agencies by the end of fall 2010. Below is a photo of Commissioner Ene Underwood's visit to Dilico. The picture shows Ene with Donald Auger, Executive Director; Susan Verrill, Director of Child Welfare Services; Maryanne Ostberg Assistant Director of District Child Welfare Services; and Celeste Pedri, Communications Manager, together with community leaders from the First Nation of Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek (Rocky Bay).



How does Ontario's child welfare system compare?

by Dr. Wendy Thomson, Commissioner

In July 2010 the Commission published *Jurisdictional Comparisons of Child Welfare System Design* to share its thoughts about designing systems for child welfare services, informed by other jurisdictions in Canada, aboriginal communities and the United Kingdom. It sets out the choices facing Ontario in the short and medium term, which informed the Commission's first report *Towards Sustainable Child Welfare in Ontario*.

The following brief article highlights the Commission's review of systems in other jurisdictions. For a more comprehensive view, we encourage all readers to read the full document, posted at: <http://www.sustainingchildwelfare.ca/assets/jurisdictional-vcomparisons-child-welfare-system-design-20100721.pdf>

Why Does Systems Thinking Matter?

Child welfare services are complex; they are all about people facing a wide range of circumstances, with all their different motivations, behaviours, and capabilities. To contribute to improving children's outcomes effectively, services need to connect in a very personal way to the diverse and changing needs of the children they serve. Only by *working together* will services help children and families to make the most of their circumstances, to remove obstacles, and to open up new opportunities. If this system dimension is ignored, unintended consequences and failure result.

Of course, Ontario's child welfare services do interact and are interdependent, but the Commission has been struck by their need to form more of a whole in order to deliver more accessible and personalized services. The current arrangements did not emerge from a conscious province-wide design, so it's not surprising that there is no overall 'system' for child welfare. Similar conclusions have been reached by the recent report on mental health¹. The systems serving vulnerable children need to be very different from what exists today.

Different jurisdictions' arrangements for governance, policy, structures, funding approaches and accountability mechanisms are described in our working paper. Because the system in each jurisdiction is a product of local circumstances, history and policy choices, we don't advocate a 'pick and mix' approach from these other examples. Nevertheless, looking at what is done elsewhere reveals some insights about how we do things in Ontario and what might be done differently in the future.

Ontario stands out from other places in a few important respects. Most of Canada's child protection function is directly governed and staffed by public servants, rather than by independent not-for-profit organizations. Though the Commission asked whether Ontario should go with this trend, it concluded that CAS' roots in the community are a valuable social asset and should be retained. More consistent services and outcomes will be better achieved, it argued, through province-wide system design and more effective accountability. Examples of independently governed but accountable local services are found in the US (where many States devolve responsibility to local counties) and the UK (where local authorities are responsible for a wide range of children's services).

Aboriginal approaches to child welfare also demonstrate very powerfully the importance of the community, and fully delegated First Nation's agencies provide the full range of child protection services in every Canadian province except P.E.I. Recognition of the authority of First Nations over child welfare is emerging in several provinces; for example, the Spallumcheen First Nation in B.C. now has sole jurisdiction over child and family services on reserve. Developments in Canada and elsewhere indicate the value of traditional aboriginal philosophies in devising future services and better outcomes for aboriginal children in Ontario.

Another striking comparison is the number of CASs in Ontario, compared to mandated child protection agencies everywhere else in Canada. Most provinces have reorganized children's services in the last few decades (some places, several times) and now have far fewer authorities than Ontario. For example, there

¹(Final report, navigating the journey to wellness: the comprehensive mental health and addictions action plan for Ontarians, Ontario Legislative Assembly, Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, [electronic resource, posted at: http://www.ontla.on.ca/committee-proceedings/committee-reports/files_pdf/Select%20Report%20ENG.pdf]).

are 18 Centres de Jeunesse in Quebec, including specialist services for English-speaking community and three small centres in the North. Similarly, child welfare services are delivered in Manitoba through four "Authorities", in Alberta through 10, and in Nova Scotia through three.

These fewer agencies play a varied role across Canada, and many only conduct investigations or contract for services provided by other agencies. Quebec's centres are part of an integrated health and social services system supported by a front line network of 95 local Centres de Santé et Services Sociaux, and a full range of more specialized tertiary services. In Nova Scotia, families only obtain services from the child welfare system where there is a risk of abuse and/or neglect, and other family support services are provided through the Family and Youth Services division of the Department. Manitoba's four Child and Family Services Authorities have "concurrent jurisdiction", and do not provide child and family services directly but mandate other agencies to do so. The Authorities jointly appoint a designated intake agency (DIAs), which helps families choose the Authority which will provide services to them.

All child protection systems involve other universal services for children and families, and in most places there is a more systematic approach than what is available outside of CASs in Ontario. Wherever you look across Canada, community-based family support services are a key part of the system, whatever agency provides them. We see opportunities for developing a responsive service continuum across Ontario by making a number of changes in the Ontario system:

- Reconfiguring the system, to create fewer and more sustainable agencies,
- A fairer and more predictable system for allocating resources across the province,
- Setting clear priorities supported by performance measures and regular reporting with good quality data,
- Streamlining the clutter of process based standards, and then devolving responsibility for their delivery to the Boards and management of the CAS.

There are lots of examples from many jurisdictions of information and independent reviews being used to reveal good practice and improve results for children.

Further afield – UK's Every Child Matters, and soon the US and Australia

For some insights into more 'joined up' children's services the paper looks at the UK's "Every Child Matters". The system is organized around delivering five outcomes for children:

- Stay Safe, Be Healthy, Enjoy and Achieve, be Economically aware, make Positive Contributions (SHEEP),

Overseen by a single Secretary of State, all of England's 150 local authorities are required to appoint an elected Lead member and a statutory Director for Children's Services (including education, child welfare, and recreation). Health, police and local authorities are required to set up Children's Trusts, with community organisations and service users; they are tasked with devising strategies for assessing the needs of their local populations, and through service "commissioning", improving the outcomes for children living in their communities. The UK has a data rich system for improving children's services, with arrangements for inspecting services as well as organizational capacity. The paper provides examples of the public reporting about local children's services.

Conclusion

The Commission will be continuing to scan other jurisdictions and will be developing companion papers on the United States and Australia. And, the work we are doing on service configuration, funding, performance measures and service improvement will benefit from insights from the broader experience of other jurisdictions.