



Office of the Chief Coroner
Bureau du coronier en chef

Verdict of Coroner's Jury Verdict du jury du coroner

The Coroners Act - Province of Ontario
Loi sur les coroners - Province de l'Ontario

We the undersigned / Nous soussignés,

_____ of / de St. Catharines, Ontario
 _____ of / de St. Catharines, Ontario
 _____ of / de St. Catharines, Ontario
 _____ of / de St. Catharines, Ontario
 _____ of / de Grimsby, Ontario

the jury serving on the inquest into the death(s) of / membres dûment assermentés du jury à l'enquête sur le décès de :

Surname / Nom de famille Reid | Given Names / Prénoms Matthew David

aged 3 years held at Quality Hotel, St. Catharines, Ontario
 à l'âge de _____ tenue à _____

from the 1st day of February to the 2nd day of March 20 10
 du _____ au _____

By Dr. / D^r James Edwards Coroner for Ontario
 Par _____ coroner pour l'Ontario

having been duly sworn/affirmed, have inquired into and determined the following:
 avons fait enquête dans l'affaire et avons conclu ce qui suit :

Name of Deceased / Nom du défunt
Matthew David Reid

Date and Time of Death / Date et heure du décès
December 15th 2005 @ 8:42am

Place of Death / Lieu du décès
Welland County General Hospital, Welland Ontario

Cause of Death / Cause du décès
Smothering by a pillow

By what means / Circonstances du décès
Homicide

Original signed by jurors / Original signé par les jurés

The verdict was received on the
Ce verdict a été reçu le

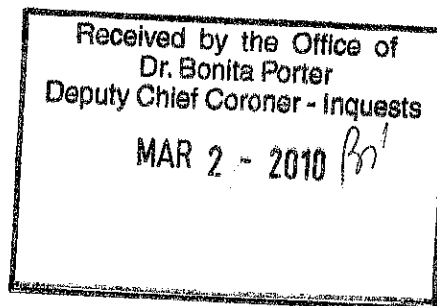
2 day of March 20 10
 (Day / Jour) (Month / Mois)

Coroner's Name (Please print) / Nom du coroner (en lettres moulées)
Dr. James Edwards, MD

Date Signed (yyyy/mm/dd) / Date de la signature (aaaa/mm/dd)
2010/03/02

Coroner's Signature / Signature du coroner

We, the jury, wish to make the following recommendations: (see page 2)
 Nous, membres du jury, formulons les recommandations suivantes : (voir page 2)





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Verdict of Coroner's Jury
Verdict du jury du coroner

The Coroners Act – Province of Ontario
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Inquest into the death of:
Enquête sur le décès de :

Matthew David Reid

JURY RECOMMENDATIONS
RECOMMANDATIONS DU JURY

INQUEST TOUCHING THE DEATH OF MATTHEW REID

JURY RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES (MCYS) OF ONTARIO:

- 1) It is recommended that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services strike a Task Force and/or Implementation Working Group to specifically consider and address the findings and recommendations of the jury in this inquest and, more generally, determine how best to avoid future similar deaths of children in care. The memory of Matthew Reid deserves no less. It is recommended that this Working Group include representatives from key stakeholder groups, which may include: the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies; the Chief Coroner's Paediatric Death Review Committee; Family and Children's services of Niagara; the Children's Aid Society of Haldimand-Norfolk; the organizations that represent children's aid society workers; and the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.
- 2) It is recommended that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services continue, and if feasible, accelerate, the development of a single information system for Child Welfare in the Province of Ontario which shall remain within the care and control of the Province of Ontario. Such a system should, among other features, provide child welfare workers quick access to key and relevant information that would inform critical decision making in the care and placement of children and service to families, and would allow for the timely sharing of information between agencies. This system would also help facilitate, among other things the current Ministry goals of creation of a single information system, strengthening youth voice, and building resilience. The system should include a capacity to perform keyword searches, be user friendly and contain a cumulative record of behavioural issues and concerns respecting the child.
- 3) It is recommended that irrespective of the development and implementation of a single information system, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services support a project to electronically image all historical paper and micro film of current and new cases of all Children Aid Societies in the province of Ontario.
- 4) It is recommended that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services provide discreet funding to children's aid societies for the purpose of securing the expertise of educational professionals to assist children or youth in care who have special educational needs or may be at risk for educational placement breakdown and ensuring the ease of transitions of children and youth from one educational environment to another.
- 5) It is recommended that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services conduct an audit of resources available to support children and families in the care of children's aid societies in Ontario. The audit should identify current service levels and gaps in services provided with a goal of ensuring the children of Ontario have an accessible and readily available integrated system of services. The audit should be performed in conjunction with stakeholders in the child welfare system, including youth, children's aid societies, children's mental health providers, school boards, developmental services and any other related child service providers. The government of Ontario should release for review and consideration any historical reports related to service levels which they have not released to date, including the "2005 Review of Residential Services" and "Mapping Children's Mental Health".
- 6) It is recommended that all Children Aid Societies should report annually on services being utilized to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.
- 7) It is recommended that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, in consultation with the child welfare sector, develop and implement a prescribed structured decision making eligibility framework for residential services.

This would be used by children's aid societies for the purposes of the identification and assessment of a child's needs for residential service, the level of care required, and the particular resource to be utilized.

8) It is recommended the Ministry of Children and Youth Services should conduct a review of the child welfare funding formula to ensure children's aid societies are adequately funded and have flexibility to better reflect the regional residential placement needs required by children in care.

9) It is recommended that sections 110 to 121 of Regulation 70 under the Child and Family Services Act be amended to include a requirement that an assessment of the child's behaviour which may present a risk of harm to any person, be conducted prior to the placement of that child in a foster home.

10) It is recommended that the Ministry of Child and Youth Services develop a mandatory "passport" for each child in the care of the Children's Aid Society. This "passport" shall accompany the child on all placements. The "passport" document shall include all information vital to the child's health, history and safety.

TO THE MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES (MCYS) OF ONTARIO, TO THE ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES (OACAS), TO FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OF NIAGARA (FACS) AND TO THOSE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES WHO CONSTITUTE THE FRONTLINE SYSTEM GROUP OF USERS:

11) It is recommended that any future system development in Child Welfare by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies or the Frontline users group include the capacity to perform a keyword search of all client records.

TO THE MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES (MCYS) OF ONTARIO AND TO THE ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES (OACAS) :

12) It is recommended that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies work collaboratively with the Ontario Foster Parent Association and with Children's Aid Societies, at the appropriate level, to develop and fund outreach initiatives aimed at the recruitment and retention of appropriately qualified foster parents.

13) It is recommended that subsection 61 (7) of the Child and Family Services Act be reviewed, in consultation with the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies and other relevant stakeholders, to determine whether the two-year period of continuous residence should be reduced in recognition of the stability and connection experienced by children who have lived within the same home for a period of time sufficient to develop that stability and connection.

14) It is recommended that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies consult with youth and with Family and Children's Services Niagara (FACS) for the purpose of reviewing the content of the FACS memorandum dated January 25, 2008 regarding the addition of a ninth "Dimension" to a child's Plan of Care, entitled "Safety Considerations." The purpose of such a review would be to ensure that the children's aid societies across the province of Ontario undertake ongoing assessment and planning regarding safety issues related to children in care. MCYS and the OACAS should consider, as part of such review, whether MCYS should direct, whether by amending the "Ontario Looking After Children" (OnLAC) assessment and documentation system or otherwise, that all children's aid societies incorporate a "Dimension" into the Plan of Care similar to the internal policy developed by FACS.

15) It is recommended that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services' placement considerations be guided by the principle of ensuring that children have safe temporary placement options until such time as a full placement review has been conducted. In particular, emphasis should be put on exploring the feasibility of greater RAC availability (FACS Niagara's Regional Adolescent Centre, or similar facility) and an analysis of the merits of having a child remain in the current placement until a full placement review is conducted.

16) It is recommended that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies conduct a review of policies and procedures to develop standardized forms for commonly used documents. Looking forward to the requirements of a single information system, this would include, but not be limited to, intake forms, plans of care, child profiles, case notes, and placement forms.

17) It is recommended the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and Children's Aid Societies, in consultation with youth, develop best practice guidelines with regard to transitions from placement to placement respecting the importance of connection and relationship, the needs of the child, and the voice of the child. Guidelines should include that when a child is being placed in a new home, a Children's Service Worker, has made every attempt to involve the child and foster parent in salvaging the current placement and to minimize disruption. Once the move is decided, consideration must be given to the concerns and safety of any child affected by the proposed placement. The child's belongings and other transitional items (to make the child as comfortable as possible) should be assembled. Before

leaving a new placement, the care worker should speak to the child alone and create a safety plan should the child experience crisis. The worker should also inspect the child's room for suitability.

18) It is recommended that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies conduct, in consultation with youth, a review of the policies and procedures of children's aid societies concerning the placement of children into foster homes with a view to the creation of a model or "best practices" document that addresses the relevant factors that are to inform the selection of the most appropriate placement of a child from the available resources.

19) It is recommended the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, in consultation with youth with lived experience in the child welfare system, work with Children's Aid Societies to develop best practice guidelines that will enhance the voice of the child in all aspects of service delivery.

20) It is recommended Children's Aid Societies should ensure that discussions with young people regarding their wishes and views are clearly documented within the plan of care such that they are ascertainable and identifiable as being the child's wishes.

21) It is recommended Children's Aid Societies should develop, with the assistance of young people, "buddy systems" such that when a child enters the care system, the child should be paired with a youth, more experienced in the care system. The older youth can provide a support to the youth who is coming into care – somebody for them to talk to about their concerns, confusion, etc.

22) It is recommended that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services as well as the OACAS ensure that Outside Paid Resource (OPR) placements can occur on an emergency basis when necessary.

23) It is recommended that the CAS should review with its workers and supervisors the need for a thorough review of the case history when a case is transferred to a new worker and/or supervisor.

24) It is recommended that in the case of all paper files, (up to but not limited to family files, child in care files, adoption files etc.), a summary index page should be created and maintained as documents are added. When a file is closed, a copy should be added to any subsequent continuing client file.

TO THE ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES (OACAS):

25) It is recommended that the OACAS develop, in consultation with the Ontario Foster Parent Association a checklist of questions for prospective foster parents to ask when considering whether to accept a particular child or youth. This checklist should be included within the foster parenting manual provided by the local children's aid society.

26) It is recommended that unless it is impracticable to do so, given the emergent nature of the need for a foster home immediately, the prospective foster parent(s) be given a copy of the completed Placement Form before a child or youth is placed in the home.

27) It is Recommended that a placement team (appropriate decision maker(s) including case worker, supervisor, resource worker, foster parents, child in care) meeting occurs whenever there is an issue or concern expressed about residential placements.

28) It is recommended that the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies facilitate any revisions to the "Provincial Interagency Protocol between Children's Aid Societies" to incorporate the jury's recommendations as appropriate.

29) It is recommended that all shared resource policy and procedures should be revised such that only planned placements occur when sharing resources with another agency.

30) It is recommended that the OACAS develop a process of auditing the files of children in care including case notes of which all notes should be legible and preferably electronic.

31) It is recommended that a feasibility study be done regarding the placement of security systems in foster homes.

32) It is recommended that in foster homes caring for young children, the use of an electronic baby monitor in a child's bedroom be considered.

33) It is recommended that training and resources be provided by the agency for the foster parent regarding the parental controls on home computers.

TO FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OF NIAGARA (FACS):

34) It is recommended that the Society engage in a consultation with the Children's Aid Society of Haldimand-Norfolk for the purpose of discussing the matters learned from the evidence at this inquest and in order to discuss ways of collaborating effectively in the future, in the best interests of the children for whom both societies provide care.

TO THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF HALDIMAND-NORFOLK:

35) It is recommended that Children's Aid Society of Haldimand-Norfolk continue to review the moratorium on placements from other children's aid societies, dated December 16, 2005, in light of subsequent developments, including the evidence heard at this inquest.

36) It is recommended that the Society engage in a consultation with Family and Children's Services of Niagara for the purpose of discussing the matters learned from the evidence at this inquest and in order to discuss ways of collaborating effectively in the future, in the best interests of the children for whom both societies provide care.

TO THE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF NIAGARA (DSBN):

37) It is recommended that the District School Board of Niagara continue to utilize the services of a Special Education Team ("wraparound team" as referred to in the evidence) in order to deal with the educational needs of difficult-to-serve students, including those who are in care of a children's aid society and/or present with special needs/developmental disabilities or where the appropriateness of the student's placement in the school is in question. Such a team should include someone knowledgeable about the workings of the Children's Aid Societies or a liaison person from FACS Niagara.

38) It is recommended that the District School Board of Niagara ensure that there is a comprehensive review of a student's needs, including measures previously adopted, in order to meet those needs, whenever preparations are being made to move a student into a regular school from a Section 23 (Education Act) class.

TO THE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF NIAGARA (DSBN), FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES NIAGARA (FACS) AND NIAGARA CHILD AND YOUTH SERVICES (NCYS):

39) It is recommended that the District School Board of Niagara, Family and Children's Services of Niagara and Niagara Children and Youth Services continue to develop protocols for the sharing of information/reports in relation to the educational needs of children.

TO THE MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES, MINISTRY OF HEALTH, ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES, FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATIONS:

40) It is recommended that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, in conjunction with other Ministries, including the Ministry of Health, supports training and addresses issues raised in the context of this inquest. The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, and where applicable, Foster Parent Associations and the unions that represent front-line workers, need to strengthen the current mandatory and supplemental training to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge to provide quality care to the children entrusted to them, including but not limited to children that have special needs such as:

1. Running
2. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD), Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)
3. Developmental disabilities and delays
4. Dual Diagnosis children
5. Behavior Management Strategies
6. Children in crisis and transition
7. Interaction between children and the education system
8. Developing the child's plan of care
9. Developing the child's social history
10. Developing the child's life book

41) It is recommended that plans of care should include individualized behavior management intervention strategies that are consistent among all care providers (e.g., school, foster home, residential, treatment) for that child/youth. All deviation from the plan of care should be documented. This will assist with consistency in care for the child/youth and quality assurance.

42) It is recommended the Ministry of Children and Youth Services should conduct a comprehensive workload measurement study. The study would assess the impact of current legislative requirements and best practice implementation on workload with a goal of identifying reasonable workload/caseload bench marks to support the delivery of quality service to children and families.

TO THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH

43) It is recommended that the Ministry of Health launch a public information program to educate people about the consequences of alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

TO THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

44) It is recommended that boards of education review practices related to suspensions. Considering children's rights develop a protocol for the management of children who are under suspension. In consideration of children's rights, boards of education should develop a protocol for the management of children who are under suspension.

45) It is recommended that the Ministry of Education undertake a review of the management of the child's "Ontario School Record" and "Central File" to ensure that the child's educational progress is informed by all relevant information and is easily accessible to the appropriate persons, particularly at key transitional points.

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