

McGuinty government failing at-risk kids: Horwath

Queen's Park

With this coming Friday marking National Child Day, NDP Leader Andrea Horwath is calling on the McGuinty government to ensure that no Children's Aid Society is forced to reduce services as a result of provincial funding cutbacks.

"As the agencies that help at-risk children prepare layoff notices and teeter on bankruptcy and outright closure, will the Premier commit that no Children's Aid Society (CAS) will cut services, layoff staff or file for bankruptcy?" she asked on behalf of the children who depend on these vital agencies.

Horwath cited numerous children's aid societies across the province that are facing difficult financial challenges: Payukotayno James and Hudson Bay Family Services has issued layoff notices; York Region CAS is also laying off staff; Chatham-Kent Children's Aid is preparing for bankruptcy; Toronto's Native Child and Family Services faces a \$1.4-million shortfall; and the CAS in Kenora can't meet the cost of protecting high-needs children and will soon be unable to make payroll.

To draw attention to the McGuinty government's funding cuts, all management and unionized staff at Children's Aid Societies and children's mental health agencies across Ontario will wear blue ribbons on Friday.

"By the time the 'blue ribbon alert' is given on Friday, will the McGuinty Liberals ensure there are no layoffs, no service cuts and no closures at Ontario's child welfare and protection agencies?" asked Horwath.

In response, Minister of Children and Youth Services Laurel Broten could only muster musings about the creation of yet another commission to look into the matter.

"The children of this province do not need another commission. They need their children's aid societies to be there for them when they need them. The only pathway this government is preparing is a pathway to bankruptcy and closure of children's aid societies," countered Horwath.

"At-risk children in Ontario deserve much better than this from the Ontario government," she added.

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