

***Children's Aid
Society Sector
MPP Lobby Guide***

REVISED
February 2010



Revised speaking notes – as of February 25, 2010 CUPE CAS Local's MPP Lobby

Meeting preparation

- Plan to take 3-4 people to the meeting with your MPP. It would make a huge difference to have a foster parent attend. Invite your employer if appropriate.
- Make sure you get people to sign the Declaration of Concern for Vulnerable Children and Youth. Have clergy, city councillors, police chiefs, school principals and other community leaders lend their signature.
- Copies of the factsheet are in this package. Take several with you to give to your MPP.
- Decide who is going to be the lead speaker, who will ask/answer questions. Assign someone to make notes and fill out the MPP Report Back sheet in this package.

Speaking Notes: Set the stage

What is most powerful is to speak from your own experience. If you don't know the answer to something, say you'll get back to them quickly. Be a good listener. Avoid arguments and don't lecture. Your goal is to convince your MPP that this is an important issue for which to take action. Insert any local data or examples you may have to support your speaking points.

- Thank you for agreeing to see us today. With me are **[Introduce everyone]**.
- Child welfare affects many of your constituents and is particularly important given the effect that the recession is having on many families.
- We're here to talk to you because Children's Aid Societies across the province have reached a crisis in our ability to carry out our legislated mandate which is to protect children from harm, promote the integrity of the family and assure the best interests of children. That's true of agencies right across Ontario and there are mounting issues for [insert your agency name --- where CUPE represents the front line workers].
- It's not enough to just keep throwing emergency, short term funding to agencies at the last minute. There has been a prolonged funding crisis. Here's why.
- In 1997, as well as in 2006, the government asked much more of us. It amended laws and expanded our scope of work to improve safety and better outcomes for kids.
- As a result, we're protecting more children in this community from chronic neglect, emotional abuse and risk of physical, emotional and sexual abuse. We're also spending much more time working with families to keep children safe with biological and kin families.
- We're working harder to deliver a wider range of supports so we're successfully meeting what the government has required of us. We're admitting less children to CAS care because they're staying with their families safely. The number of children in care has dropped and adoptions have increased. That's good for children, good for families and good for our community.
- Here's the problem. We've struggled with a faulty funding formula for years. It's plunged us deeper into debt every year even though our work has increased.

- In 2009, 49 of the province's 53 CAS agencies faced record shortfalls. The total shortfall province-wide was \$67 million. The reality is that :
- The government never provided sufficient funding to pay for its reforms. And in 2009, CAS's received \$23 million less than the year before.
- The complex funding model that funds us does not work equally across the province, especially in the North among First Nations communities. You may have seen that the Payukotanyo agency almost shut down late last year before the government finally agreed to step in to cover their deficit.
- The funding model does not reflect the actual hours it takes us to manage caseloads. [add your own details – time for differential response/kinship, increased administrative time etc].
- On February 15, the province announced it was providing \$26.9 million in one-time funding to 26 CASs with the most immediate financial challenges. That's far short of the \$67 million shortfall, and short considering that 37 agencies applied for deficit relief. This funding provides only a stop-gap and leaves agencies considering programs closures in order to address ongoing and compounding funding shortfalls. The government must fund its progressive policy and legislation. [Describe the current situation with your agency re deficit]
- Agencies are being asked for deficit reduction plans so are considering program and staffing cuts. Some agencies have announced cuts such as Children's Aid Algoma who are cutting their Family Preservation Program and the Diversion from Care Program - the very programs that keep kids out of care and support families. In our agency, we are concerned that [insert programs] will be on the chopping block.
- Now the government has set up a 3 person Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare with a 3 year mandate. Our concern is;
 - o 3 years is too long to wait to address the funding crisis.
 - o The government got it right with their Child and Family legislation but have not got it right in implementation. Due to the complex and sensitive nature of our work it is vital that a continuum of child welfare services stay under one roof so we can provide an integrated service.

Make the ask

- We are asking you and every MPP in the province to press the Premier, the Minister of Finance and the Minister for Children and Youth services to do 3 things.
 1. Fund all current CAS agency deficits which we incurred to keep children safe
 2. Restore funding to CASs in the 2010 budget at a level where we won't have to operate with deficits to provide the services that the province requires of us.
 3. Reform the provincial CAS funding formula so that it reflects and supports the full implementation of 2006 reforms that the government introduced to protect children and support families.
- Are you willing to make that commitment? Is there anything that we can do to help you in that regard?
- Thank you so much for your time.

Q&A- here are some anticipated questions you may be asked with some suggested speaking points for your response.

Q: The province is running a large deficit. How can we afford more money at this time?

- This type of investment saves the province money. It's estimated that child abuse costs Canadians over \$15.5 billion a year. In Ontario we're keeping children safe with a budget that represents only 1.2% of Ontario's 2008-09 program spending.
- We can't waitlist or ration services when the government does not fulfill its obligations.
- The current path will force families into crisis before they can get help, because we don't have the money for support and prevention measures. That costs society more in the long run.

Q: Wouldn't it be better to wait for the commission's report?

- That will take 3 years. We need immediate measures to address the chronic deficit situation so that we can continue providing the services that children and families need.

Q. I understand the Ministry is concerned that child welfare agencies have drifted into areas beyond the core mandate of protection. Is the issue that agencies are in deficits because they are delivering non-mandated service?

- Let's look at the legislation – In 2(1) the purpose and paramount purpose is clearly set out ... to protect children from harm, promote the integrity of the family and assure the best interests of children. The paramount consideration is the best interest of the child.
- When you go on and read the legislated functions of the agency there is a listing of functions. The one that seem to be on the hit list are related to;
 - (c) provide guidance, counselling and other services to families for the prevention of circumstances that might require intervention by an agency;
 - (e) develop and provide services to families to promote the integrity of families, before and after intervention pursuant to this Act;
 - (g) provide care for children in its care or care and custody pursuant to this Act;
- The programs not being funded under the current funding formula seem to be the ones that as set out above are within the legislated mandate. Further the costs of children in care are not being covered at the actual costs of that care.

YOUR MPP REPORT BACK CARD ON CAS FUNDING

Please send a copy of this report to:

Maureen Giuliani, Campaign Co-ordinator

CUPE Ontario Suite 801, 305 Milner Avenue, Scarborough, Ontario M1B 3V4

Fax: 416-299-9739 Email: mgiuliani@cupe.on.ca

Local: _____ Employer: _____

Lobby Team Members: _____

MPP: _____

Riding: _____

Cabinet Post (if relevant): _____

Will the MPP:

1. Support getting rid of all current CAS deficits?

◇ Yes Comments: _____

◇ No _____

2. Support funding CAS at a level in the 2010 budget that avoids deficits

◇ Yes Comments: _____

◇ No _____

3. Support fixing the CAS funding formula to reflect and support the government's 2006 reforms

◇ Yes Comments: _____

◇ No _____

Further follow-up required: _____

Your Name: _____

Work Phone: _____ Home Phone: _____

Fax: _____ Email: _____