

## **MPP Fact Sheet**

# ***Ontario's vulnerable children need more than a band-aid solution.***

Ontario's vulnerable children and families depend on the Children's Aid Society (CAS), even more so today as the current recession has hit families hard. Yet Children's Aid Society agencies have reached a crisis in their ability to carry out the critical protection and community development services which keep children safe and families together.

## ***Government has asked much more of Children's Aid Society agencies***

In 1997 and 2006, the government amended laws and expanded the CAS scope of work to achieve improved safety and better outcomes for children.

- More Ontario children are now protected from chronic neglect, emotional abuse and risk of physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect.
- More time is spent working with families to keep children safe with biological and kin families.

The hard work of CAS agencies is beginning to meet anticipated outcomes of these reforms. Admissions of children into CAS care has decreased by 18%; the number of children in CAS care has decreased by 5%; and adoptions has increased by 29%.

## ***Yet chronic underfunding has put CAS agencies into crisis***

A faulty funding formula has for years plunged CAS agencies into deeper debt as these agencies have delivered the McGuinty government's child welfare reforms.

In 2009, CAS agencies faced historic shortfalls after years of chronic underfunding. Forty-nine of 53 agencies faced a total shortfall of \$67 million. The government's response has been to fund agencies on a piecemeal emergency basis which has perpetuated the crisis. The reality is that:

- The government never provided sufficient funding to pay for its reforms, even though it anticipated more staff and hours would be needed to achieve its goals. In 2009, CASs received \$23 million less than the prior year to deliver the same level of mandated services.
- The complex funding model used to fund CASs does not work equally across the province, especially in the north among Aboriginal communities such as Payukotayno where it can cost up to \$400 a minute to charter a plane in an emergency (according to the Toronto Star). The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies has said that Northern agencies are underfunded [at least] \$24.6 million.
- The funding model does not reflect the actual hours it takes staff to manage caseloads and meet statutory requirements. In some cases, it doesn't reflect the real cost of treatment for high needs children.

Now the government has set up a 3-person Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare with a 3 year mandate. With talk of concentrating on 'core services' and changes to CAS business processes', it appears the government is looking to cut back on costs and services.

### ***Vulnerable children are not expendable***

Is the Ontario government willing to hold services for Ontario's vulnerable children for ransom because of the recession? By law, the CASs must protect children. They cannot 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 chronic deficits are leaving less and less money for support and prevention measures.

### ***We're asking MPPS to speak up***

MPPs from all political parties need to stand up for Ontario's children. Press the Premier, Finance Minister and Minister of Children and Youth Services to:

1. Fund all current CAS agency deficits incurred while meeting the Ministry's goals of keeping children safe.
2. Restore funding to CASs in the 2010 budget at a level that will ensure they do not have to operate with deficits to meet the services they are mandated to provide.
3. Reform the provincial CAS funding formula so that it reflects and supports the full implementation of CAS 2006 reforms that the government introduced to protect children and support families.

***Ontario mandated CAS agencies to keep children safe.  
How do you do that that given a decade of serious underfunding?***

***Children's Aid  
needs more than  
a band-aid***

