



Ontario Association of  
Children's Aid Societies



*Annual Report  
2005/2006*



*The voice of child welfare in Ontario*

## **LOOKING BACK ON 2005/2006**

**M**any of this year's activities were focused on Child Welfare Secretariat Transformation Agenda initiatives and preparing for implementation across the field, while working hard on OACAS strategic directions, projects, and programs. The vision for system reform as articulated by the Ministry's Child Welfare Secretariat is that child welfare will be outcome-focused, balanced in its service approach, evidence-based, accountable and integrated, and sustainable and flexible. The seven areas of focus are the Single Information System, permanency, differential response, accountability, the Multi-Year Results-Based Plan (a new funding model), research, and court processes.

OACAS worked closely with the Child Welfare Secretariat and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) and kept members informed of new developments. The Secretariat consulted the field and asked for OACAS responses on a number of proposals. While it is always challenging to implement significant systemic changes, we know that these will translate into improved service to children and families. We look forward to continuing progress in the coming year.

*Jeanette Lewis,  
Executive Director*

*Joe Aitchison,  
President*

## 2005/2006 HIGHLIGHTS

### Consultations:

- Three successful consultations were held in April, June, and November 2005 featuring updates from the Ministry on the Transformation Agenda.

### Publications/Papers:

- Bill 183, Adoption Information Disclosure Act - Submission to the Standing Committee on Social Policy - May 19, 2005
- OACAS Communications & Information Services Audit Report - June 2005
- Agency Transformation Implementation Handbook: Partners in Change - November 2005
- OACAS Response to the MCYS 2005 Accountability Paper "Achieving a Better Balance" - November 2005
- OACAS Bill 210 Submission to the Standing Committee on Social Policy - December 2005
- OACAS Response to the New Funding Model - October 2005
- OACAS Pre-Budget Consultation Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs - January 2006
- Internal Child Death Review Guidelines for Children's Aid Societies - January 2006
- Youth Leaving Care: An OACAS Survey of Youth and CAS Staff - March 2006
- Four OACAS Extra reports
- Five Board to Board Newsletters
- Two NOTICE newsletters
- Three *Looking Ahead* newsletters from the OnLAC Council
- Two SIS newsletters
- Four issues of the *Journal*

### Activities:

- Provided ongoing advice through membership in Secretariat Advisory Committee and its various reference groups. Secretariat staff members made extensive presentations to members at all Consultations.
- Provided updates and newsletters to members through the members' website and transformation portal on child welfare issues.
- Created an Education Subcommittee of the Advocacy & Social Policy Committee.
- Developed a new Youth Program strategy based on consultation with the field regarding program/activity content and funding. Members agreed to raise annual sponsorship to \$1000 per agency to support enhanced youth programming.
- Participated in MCYS Residential Services Advisory Committee.

- Monitored implementation of PHIPA by CASs through communications with members and appropriate regulatory bodies and preparation of written updates for CASs. A Privacy Issues project was developed for 2006/07.
- Conducted 2 Accreditation Site reviews.
- Reviewed accreditation standards and incorporated quality assurance standards into the accreditation review.
- Resources and a plan were put into place for the development of a single information system for child welfare.
- 2006 Conference planning included developing a program plan, budget, selecting and booking speakers, presenters, and exhibitors, and managing logistics/ AV requirements.
- Delivered Communications/IT Audit recommendations and implementation plan.
- New servers and video conferencing equipment were installed at OACAS.

**Training:**

- Negotiated deliverables with MCYS in the 2005/06 Service Plan for the OCPTP regarding training trainers and the curricula which they will use to implement PRIDE and LAC.
- OACAS obtained a license for SAFE (Structured Analysis Family Evaluation).
- Delivered SAFE training to member agencies and private adoption practitioners.
- Fulfilled requirements of OCPTP transfer payment contract.
- Transformation Implementation and Training projects were developed for 2006/07.

## **THE CHILD WELFARE TRANSFORMATION AGENDA**

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A summary of activities surrounding the Transformation Agenda follows.

### **Single Information System**

The OACAS and our member agencies have long advocated for a comprehensive, province-wide child welfare information system that will better support the business of the CASs, promote consistency of approach and information, and provide for necessary customization for individual agency circumstances. OACAS has signed a contract with the Ministry of Finance to design and pilot test a new Single Information System. This project is overseen by a Project Steering Committee with representation from the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, and OACAS. With their assistance and guidance, the project continues to move forward. The SIS Council is responsible for overall management of the project from day-to-day. The Council is made up of 13 members: Six Executive Directors, each appointed by one of the six zones of OACAS; an Executive Director of an Aboriginal Children's Aid Society; an Executive Director nominated by the Local Directors' Section of OACAS; the Executive Director of OACAS; a member of the OACAS Board of Directors; and three senior staff members of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

The development of the Single Information System is a large, complex, and costly undertaking that requires leadership and

participation from the 53 CASs, the OACAS, and the Government of Ontario in order to ensure its success. The challenge will be to facilitate the contributions and requirements of the various stakeholders while at the same time ensuring timely decision-making and keeping expectations within realistic limits.

With the support of the Ministry, this is becoming a reality. After competitive bidding, IBM was chosen as the systems integrator. Cúram was chosen to provide a human services software package that will be configured to meet the specifications of child welfare. The IBM business analysts and the SIS Design and Implementation Committee and their respective working groups have worked hard through the redesign process and Phase One, the Business Process Redesign phase, is almost complete. The SIS Design and Implementation Committee serves as the focal point for detailed planning and recommendations regarding the development of each of the functionalities of the SIS.

We will strive to maintain the momentum throughout the life of this project. Its completion will be a tremendous accomplishment and we look forward to seeing the improvements it will bring to the service delivery of the Children's Aid Societies in Ontario.

### **Permanency Options**

The Child Welfare Secretariat identifies the pillars of permanency as: the birth family, the Kinship Model, customary care, foster care, and legal custody. The transformation agenda aims to remove barriers to permanency and

Bill 210 is an important component in doing so.

Bill 210 enables increased openness in adoption and greater involvement of family. More openness is emphasized in adoption and a standardized adoption home study for public, private, and international adoption was chosen. Training was provided for the SAFE home study model (Structured Analysis Family Evaluation) to all adoption practitioners in both the public and private sectors.

Members of the Secretariat staff worked closely with the Adoption Reference Group and the Kinship Care Reference Group to develop the policies and regulations to support the broad range of reforms designed to achieve permanency for children in care.

The Secretariat continues to fund Looking After Children (LAC) and in 2005, provided funding to conduct a pilot test of a data-capture methodology using the Digital Pen technology to complete the Action and Assessment Records. To support the permanency initiatives, curriculum revisions to the child protection training materials will be required so that PRIDE, LAC, SAFE and other permanency related changes coming from transformation are properly incorporated.

### **Differential Response**

Differential Response is a mechanism to better match service response to need while never losing sight of child safety. It allows a response to each family based on their

individual needs in cases of low or moderate risk. Staff of the Child Welfare Secretariat worked with a Reference Group with membership from child welfare and other children's services this year to develop a model for differential response in Ontario. Several new tools, including actuarial risk assessment tools and tools for strength based family assessments, are under consideration.

The changes proposed are far-reaching and will require extensive consultation with the field. A series of 3-day meetings were held during October and November 2005 in the various Regions of the Province to examine the options and to consult with supervisors and managers who are knowledgeable about child welfare assessments and investigations.

### **Accountability**

In the fall of 2005, the Child Welfare Secretariat prepared a consultation paper describing a proposed accountability/service system management framework. It included streamlined reporting and review mechanisms proposed for use by the Ministry and agencies, including processes for Crown ward reviews, child death reporting and reviews, serious occurrence reporting, quality assurance, and outcomes monitoring. A service system management process will form part of the accountability framework. This framework will be linked to other initiatives including the multi-year results based plans (MYRBPs) and the National Outcomes Matrix. The paper formed the basis for discussions at the two-day Regional meetings with the field that were held in October and November. On November 30, 2005 OACAS submitted a

response to the Secretariat's Accountability Framework discussion paper providing feedback on the various components of the levels of accountability.

OACAS made additional comments on accountability in response to the Ontario Ombudsman's request for oversight over Children's Aid Societies. The Ombudsman wants to have the authority to investigate complaints about Children's Aid Societies. He has suggested that CASs are self monitoring and not subject to external scrutiny or review. OACAS issued a press release to clarify that CASs are accountable to the Ministry through numerous reviews. They are accountable to the Courts, the Boards that oversee them, and the public they serve through their complaints procedure. It was also noted that the Coroner's office has the responsibility of reviewing child deaths.

### **Multi-Year Funding**

The Ministry introduced Multi-Year results Based Plans (MYRBP) in 2005/06 as part of the Transformation Agenda. Agencies were asked to submit their first plans to Ministry Regional Offices on September 6, 2005. This first iteration provided baseline data on community capacity and agency capacity, while work continued on developing the format for Year 2 submissions. The Multi-Year Results Based Plans (MYRBPs) for Child Welfare that were submitted in 2005 have been analyzed and a summary report was distributed to all agencies. The summary report provides interesting data on service delivery patterns, as well as community

supports that are available to CASs across the province.

The OACAS Funding Framework Committee worked closely with MCYS in an advisory capacity during the developmental phase of the new Funding Model. The committee submitted a response to this funding model in October 2005 to provide further advice and feedback to the Ministry. OACAS noted that that the problems and issues outlined its submission, if left unattended, will have an impact on the viability of agencies and their capability to deliver mandated services.

MCYS announced its spending plans for the \$14.5M of Block 2 (Transformation) funding, to be managed corporately. It was noted that \$1.4M for transformation training by OACAS was to come from this amount, as well as the funding for child welfare research and evaluation. Each Regional Office was to receive an allocation to increase regional office and community capacity and to support regional approaches to adoption and to quality assurance. As well, each CAS was allocated funding depending on agency budget size to support internal transformation activities such as building Quality Assurance capacity.

OACAS continued to advocate for funding stability and sufficiency for members. A submission was made to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs during their annual pre-budget consultations to provide them with the facts and the context we judged to be important when considering

the budget for child welfare for 2006/2007, and beyond.

### **MCYS Research Committee**

The MCYS Research Advisory Committee is co-chaired by The Executive Director of the Secretariat and the Director of the Research and Outcome Measurement Branch of MCYS. The mandate of the committee is to create a coherent research agenda for the Ministry and to provide advice to the Ministry on child welfare research and evaluation. Membership on this standing committee includes Ministry staff, university researchers, field representatives, and representation from OACAS and the Association of Native Child and Family Service Agencies of Ontario (ANCFSAO). MCYS approved the following amounts of research funding: \$1M in the 2005/06 fiscal year; \$1.7 in 2006/07; and \$2.5 in 2007/08.

In early December, 2005, the MCYS announced that “Grants in Aid” would be given to Children’s Aid Societies and universities in partnership to support development of grant proposals to conduct research related to evidence-based practice. The MCYS Research and Measurement Unit announced 37 Grants-in-Aid, in the amount of \$345.5K, to support the development of child welfare research capacity. These grants are intended to support agencies and universities in the development of strong research/evaluation proposals related to child welfare service delivery that will compete for significant research funding from the Research & Outcome Measurement Branch.

Proposals for funding for the 2006/07 fiscal year were accepted until March 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **Bill 210: An Act to amend the *Child and Family Services Act* and make complimentary amendments to other Acts**

On December 5, 6, 12, and 13, the Standing Committee on Social Policy heard presentations on Bill 210. The OACAS paper, prepared by the Child and Family Services Act/Family Law Rules Committee and presented by two of its members, was one of 69 submissions heard by the Standing Committee during the public hearings.

Following the public hearings, the government made amendments to the Bill based on the presentations to the Standing Committee. Following the public hearings, the Standing Committee on Social Policy met to receive amendments from its members. A total of 35 motions were tabled – 30 from Government and five from the NDP. The Government amendments included methods to strengthen provisions for First Nations communities to continue their cultural practices with respect to customary care, to allow traditional methods of alternative dispute resolution, and for cultural sensitivity in assessments and plans of care.

As expected, the Government introduced changes to the complaints procedures. There is now standard complaints process that will be used by all agencies. If the complaint is not resolved at the agency level, the complainant may apply to the Child and Family Services Review Board (CFSRB) for an external review.

The CFSRB will be given additional powers. The CFSRB appointees will be required to have certain skills to conduct the reviews within defined timelines. The Ombudsman will have authority to review the process used by the CFSRB.

Bill 210 was introduced for 3rd Reading on February 28th and was passed on March 27. This legislation is critical to the success of the Transformation Agenda. The proclamation date has not yet been announced.

**Joint Child Death Reporting and Review Committee**

The Joint Child Death Reporting and Review Committee were established jointly between the Child Welfare Secretariat and the Office of the Chief Coroner. A streamlined child death reporting and review mechanism which will be included in the accountability framework has been developed.

The Child Death Review Task Force of the OACAS developed a paper for the field on Internal Death Review Guidelines for Children’s Aid Societies.

**Training to Support Transformation Implementation**

None of the implementation plans will be achieved without the full understanding and support of agencies. OACAS has been working closely with members of the Secretariat staff to plan training that will assist agencies with project management, change management, and understanding the policies and expectations of the Ministry. The Ministry has approved a training contract for

up to \$1.4M to support transformation. Transformation training highlights include:

- Orientation to Transformation sessions targeted to managers and supervisors were held.
- The transformation leaders identified by each agency continued to meet to prepare change management strategies in each society and to lead agency initiatives related to the transformation.
- Pilot testing occurred on an Alternative Delivery Model for New Worker Training for individuals or very small groups of staff.
- A report was completed on the Trainer Self Assessment Survey, identifying trainer needs as indicated by 127 agency-based trainers from all regions of the province, and providing the basis for trainer development activities for this year and next.
- A consultation paper was developed on a new framework for approving and supporting an increasing number of Agency-based trainers in the New Worker, OnLAC and PRIDE training programs and in the new transformation-related training modules.
- A licence agreement was signed with Consortium for Children in California and SAFE Master Trainers and Trainers’ Guides were developed. SAFE training for all adoption workers in the private and public sectors was rolled out in December 2005.
- Translation of SAFE tools was completed.
- A survey of PRIDE user agencies was completed, indicating positive experiences

from the majority of agencies, as well as some resources implications.

- PRIDE Team training sessions were held for new user agencies.
- OACAS worked with Secretariat staff in preparation for the regional consultations in the fall of 2005.
- Project Management training given to OnLAC Implementation Leaders and OnLAC training sessions were offered to agencies who are beginning to implement.
- OACAS began development of a new Curriculum on Clinical Supervision.
- A strategy was put in place for developing curricula for transformation training in both French and English.
- A Symposium on Kinship Care was presented on April 4th and 5th 2005 and planning for two additional symposia on Alternate Dispute Resolution and Family Group Conferencing is underway.

There will be extensive training required on differential response, on the new risk assessment tools, and on the strength-based tools. As well, workers will need to be trained to use modified recording packages once these are developed. A Train the Trainer Model will be used, so that training can proceed in each agency when needed.

The training requirements for transformation will affect the work in all societies as they must prepare workers for the required changes and must also continue to provide services under existing models during the transition. The Director of Education Services is working with MCYS to develop a template

of required training in all of the areas of transformation.

## MEETING OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

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In addition to the work underway on the Transformation initiatives, OACAS continued to work towards accomplishing the strategic goals outlined in our Service Plan.

### **Strategic Direction #1: Children – Promote the well-being of children in care and children receiving services from children’s aid societies**

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#### *Education Reform Issues for Children in Care*

A new Education Sub-committee of the OACAS Board was formed, identifying initiatives such as a review of the *Safe Schools Act* and the development of position papers for submission to the Ministry of Education. Activities included:

- Reviewed and analyzed outcomes of the Looking After Children project for children in care as they relate to education
- Reviewed and analyzed results reported in Early School Leavers Report commissioned by Hospital for Sick Children
- Identified effective educational practices being used in agencies
- Continued to monitor outcomes of the Safe Schools Regional Consultation and liaise with the Ministry of Education Safe Schools reference group

- Identified tracking needs regarding educational outcomes (e.g., high school completion, age appropriate grade level achievement) and advocate for these to be included in the case records and in Single Information System
- Planned an Education Forum to be scheduled as part of OACAS December Consultation 2006.

### ***Youth Advocacy***

Last summer, OACAS reviewed options for the youth program. A detailed proposal with several options and budgets was prepared for review by the Member Services Committee. The proposal was taken to the Local Directors' Section, which approved the report as well as an increased membership fee from agencies to support the youth programs. A new Youth Program Project Lead was hired in the fall.

The Child Welfare Secretariat asked OACAS to lead a project on Youth Leaving Care. This project collected information from youth, workers, and supervisors about what constitutes best practice with regard to youth when they prepare to leave the care of a Children's Aid Society. The outcome was a paper documenting best practices for use within child welfare and government. The Secretariat plans to use the recommendations as part of its work on permanency options.

### ***Implementation of Looking After Children***

*Looking After Children* (LAC) is an approach to assessing the development of children being cared for by child welfare agencies and enhancing their progress towards important developmental goals. The children's progress

is assessed on a yearly basis, using seven developmental dimensions: health, education, family and social relationships, social presentation, identity, emotional and behavioral development and self-care skills. Looking After Children is an important outcome monitoring and service improvement system. OACAS has been strongly advocating for the full implementation of LAC across Ontario for the past five years.

In 2004, the OnLAC Council was formed at the request of the Local Directors to guide and support preparation for and implementation of LAC in all CASs. Over the past year, a communication plan and implementation guide were developed, and OnLAC and Project Management Training commenced. OnLAC was added to the OACAS training contract so these sessions were funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS).

In November 2005, the MCYS announced its policy to implement Looking After Children in all Children's Aid Societies by April 2007 as part of the permanency initiative of the Child Welfare Secretariat's Transformation Agenda. Full implementation means that any child placed in care for over 12 months will be assessed using the Assessment and Action Record—Second Canadian adaptation, commonly known as the AAR-C2.

MCYS funds OACAS to provide implementation support to agencies and funds the University of Ottawa to aggregate, analyze, and report on the data collected from

the CASs in Ontario. This is very important data as it is the only system of outcome measurement for children in care.

### *Aboriginal Services*

The Executive Directors of OACAS and the Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario (ANCFSAO), and the Chair of ANCFSAO Training Committee met throughout the year. The draft paper that OACAS developed on Customary Care was one of the items of discussion. ANCFSAO remains interested in working with OACAS to develop training capacity for Aboriginal agencies through their association. We provided a detailed overview of our plans for transformation training. The two Associations have a good track record of working together on training materials related to modifications to the new worker curriculum and is one of the areas where common ground exists between the two Associations.

The Executive Committee members of OACAS and ANCFSAO met on May 11 2005 to discuss our mutual areas of concern regarding child welfare services for aboriginal children.

### **Strategic Direction #2: Public Commitment – Influence Public commitment to addressing social policy affecting children and families**

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#### *Bill 183: Adoption Disclosure Legislation*

On March 29, 2005 the Ministry of Community and Social Services, introduced Bill 183 – an Act respecting the disclosure of

information and records to adopted persons and birth parents. This legislation allows adoptees over the age of 18 to have access to copies of original birth records, allows birth parents to have access to birth records and adoption orders, allows retroactive disclosure for adoptions previously finalized, and allows an adoptee the right to apply a non-disclosure order to prevent identifying information from being released. The legislation will respect the right of an individual not to be contacted, giving all parties the right to put a no-contact notice on their file. The individual receiving identifying information would commit in writing not to contact the birth relative who requested a no-contact notice. The legislation provides for a fine of up to \$50,000 for violation of a no-contact notice. OACAS has supported very similar legislation in the past.

In May, OACAS made a submission to the Standing Committee on Social Policy which proposed a number of improvements to Bill 183. OACAS supported the increased openness the Bill would bring to the adoption disclosure process, as well as the fundamental human rights of all adoptees to know the personal circumstances of birth and ethnicity as guaranteed to all children in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Bill 183 was passed on October 31, 2005 following third reading. The Ministry of Community and Social Services stated that there would be an 18 month period before the Act would be proclaimed and its provisions came into effect. During these 18 months, the Ministry would be working to amend regulations to address issues that are not

clearly covered by the new Act. It is expected that regulations will be developed to secure some of the services that CASs currently provide. Until proclamation, there is no change in practice expected from Children's Aid Societies. Further direction will be issued by the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services requested feedback on a Proposed Adoption Disclosure Act Information Sheet, which is to be provided to all consenting birth parents prior to an adoption. The information sheet informs the birth parent of the impacts on information sharing that will result from the impending proclamation of the Adoption Information Disclosure Act, 2005. The OACAS responded based on the input received from the OACAS Adoption Task Force and from a number of member societies.

### ***Duty to Report/Use Your Voice Campaign***

OACAS held a press conference on September 27th to release the results of a survey conducted by the Communications Networking Group. The survey found that 54% of Ontarians would not report suspected signs of child abuse. The press conference announced the launch of "Use Your Voice", a public awareness campaign funded by the Trillium Foundation to inform citizens of their obligation to report both suspected and known signs of child abuse and neglect. This campaign coincided with the Purple Ribbon campaign to raise awareness regarding child abuse and neglect. The campaign featured newspaper, magazine, outdoor and radio ads, and a new website: [www.useyourvoice.ca](http://www.useyourvoice.ca).

The press conference was well-attended and received good media coverage in Toronto and throughout the Province. RONA was a sponsor throughout the campaign and raised \$18,000 by selling wristbands in their stores. The money was given to the Children's Aid Foundation for scholarships for youth in care.

### **Strategic Direction #3: Best Practices – Identify, promote and implement service and organizational best practices**

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#### ***Joint Conference 2006***

This year's conference is being co-hosted with Children's Mental Health Ontario and we are working with Meeting Management Services to help manage the many details involved in this event. The planning committee met to review workshop submissions, select keynote speakers, poster presentations, and develop the program. As in 2004, a concurrent youth conference will take place, with recommendations being presented by the youth to all attendees on the final day of the conference. In this year's conference over 100 speakers in more than 65 sessions and 6 plenary sessions will present innovative programs, new research and outcome studies that will help those working with families and children. The conference will take place from June 5-7 at the Doubletree International Hotel in Toronto. A two-day Preconference workshop on Treatment Foster Care will take place on the Saturday and Sunday before the conference.

### *Ontario Child Protection Training Contract (OCPTC)*

OACAS finalized a transfer payment contract for \$2.2M to cover provision of regular training activities. An additional \$1.4M was provided by the Ministry for training related to the transformation agenda and an additional \$237,000 was provided for the LAC Coordinator and LAC training.

### *Accreditation Review*

The Accreditation Program policy states that the Board of Directors must review the Program every four years to determine strengths, weaknesses, and what changes are needed. The last review was in 2001. The current program review began in August 2005 and is nearing completion. It is a comprehensive review focusing on issues such as the credibility of the program, its value to agencies, the relevance of the process and a consideration of future directions.

Surveys and focus groups were used to gather feedback for the review. There were 119 responses to the online survey from 35 agencies. At the time the review started there were nine accredited agencies that were surveyed separately. Focus groups were offered to Executive Directors, Directors of Service, Finance Directors, Human Resource Directors, Volunteer Administrators, and Resource Managers. A report will be presented on June 4, 2006 to the OACAS Board of Directors.

### **Strategic Direction #4: Member Agency Capacity – Strengthen the capacity of member agencies to fulfill their mandate**

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#### *Issues Faced by Remote Agencies*

In response to a request by Tikinagan and Payukotayno, the two Aboriginal child welfare agencies in the far north (north of the 50<sup>th</sup> parallel), the Funding Framework Committee established a subcommittee to address the specific issues related to northern remoteness.

These issues include the funding challenges and additional expenses faced when operating agencies that faced unique challenges of remoteness, extreme poverty, cost of living for staff, cost of office and facility operations, lack of services, and extremely vulnerable populations. These factors have not been addressed in funding models.

Further support to these agencies and to the other Aboriginal societies that are struggling with similar issues must also be considered. This work will have to be done in conjunction with the Association of Native Child and Family Service Agencies of Ontario (ANCFSAO) in order to be successful.

#### *Transition of Existing IT Systems to Accommodate Transformation Changes*

The Director of Information Services has met with Ministry staff regarding the transition of the current IT systems in member agencies to accommodate to transformation changes. A contract has been negotiated and OACAS will provide leadership for this project, which will

work with the existing software providers to make adjustments to recording packages that will allow workers to comply with required changes as a result of transformation. OACAS has contracted with Chartwell to provide project management services for this project.

### ***French Language Services***

The Funding Framework Advisory Committee agreed to develop a subcommittee to review the costs for agencies that must provide bilingual services to children and families. This subcommittee, similar to the subcommittee on Northern Remoteness, will provide advice to MCYS as the Block 4 Funding policies are developed.

### ***Strengthening the Residential System - Shared Services/Supply Chain Management***

In June 2005, the Local Directors' Section approved the business plan that was developed to support a shared services/supply chain management feasibility study. Letters of support were received from 34 member agencies. Upon the recommendation of the Secretariat, the Ministry of Finance agreed to fund OACAS to implement this project.

The first phase of data collection for the feasibility study was completed and all 14 agencies that were invited to participate in the data collection agreed to share data on utilization of Outside Paid Resource beds. Bearing Point consultants worked with the advisory committee to understand the implications and to propose potential models. Stakeholder interviews were completed.

The Implementation Analysis of this project was also funded by the Ministry of Finance through the OntarioBuys program. A project steering committee was formed and a project manager hired. Funding for this project is based on achieving deliverables at three decision points. The final report will be presented in September 2006, followed by a request to individual societies for their decision regarding participation in this project.

## **OACAS Internal Operations**

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### ***Communications/ Information Services Audit***

The OACAS Communications and Information Services Audit was completed this year and the Member Services Committee and OACAS reviewed the findings. The Communications and Information Services Audit Team submitted their report, which involved 586 survey responses from 46 agencies, 239 people in 11 Focus Groups, a detailed assessment of OACAS' "readiness" to communicate electronically effectively, and a complete review of current OACAS products and services. The team developed broad strategic recommendations as well as more specific areas needing attention. One of the benefits of conducting the audit was that survey itself served to educate participants about OACAS and its services. It made the process valuable from the beginning and confirmed the work that is needed to improve information services to our members.

In order to implement the recommendations included in the Communications and Information Services Audit Report, OACAS developed a Strategic Plan using a marketing and communications firm. The consultants conducted further interviews with stakeholders, met with OACAS management and staff, Zone Chairs and the Local Directors Executive. They made recommendations in the areas of integrated marketing, website re-development, print and personal communications, government relations, issues management, and public and media relations. The strategic plan was presented to the Board in November 2005. In a parallel process, OACAS Communication and Information Services staff have met on a regular basis to implement the more operational improvements. Policies were developed on items such as the use of the members' website and French translation.

### ***Technology - Hardware and Software***

OACAS has had new servers installed, upgraded Docushare, the document management system, and switched to a Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) phone system. These changes were made to improve electronic efficiency throughout the organization and improve service to members.

### ***Video-Conferencing Equipment***

OACAS researched various suppliers for the purchase of video-conferencing equipment and invited member agencies to participate in a "shared services" approach to purchasing this equipment. A vendor was agreed upon and OACAS and several members purchased and installed the equipment. This will allow

greater opportunities for OACAS Board members and our member agencies' staff to participate in meetings by video-conference if they are unable to travel to Toronto. Video-conferencing will be internet-based, which eliminates many additional long distance telephone charges.

### ***Changes in OACAS Management***

Virginia Rowden was appointed as the Director of Social Policy at OACAS, effective January 23, 2006. Virginia comes to OACAS with over 20 years of experience in project management, public policy, human and financial management, and direct service delivery.

Peter Whiteley, OACAS Director of Finance and Human Resources, announced his retirement, effective April 30, 2006. Peter has made a substantial contribution to OACAS and is well regarded by all of us. We wish him well in his retirement.

**ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES****Balance Sheet - March 31, 2006**

	2006	2005
	Operating Fund	Special Bursary Fund
<b>ASSETS</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>CURRENT</b>		
Cash and short-term investments	\$ 2,766,608	\$ 2,766,608
Accounts receivable	240,793	240,793
Prepaid expenses	57,096	57,096
Inventory	4,064	4,064
	<b>3,068,561</b>	<b>3,068,561</b>
<b>DEFERRED COSTS</b>	<b>4,406,627</b>	<b>4,406,627</b>
<b>INVESTMENTS</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>80,368</b>
<b>CAPITAL ASSETS</b>	<b>1,335,006</b>	<b>1,335,006</b>
	<b>\$ 8,810,194</b>	<b>\$ 8,890,562</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES</b>		
<b>CURRENT</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 548,974	\$ 548,974
Deferred revenue	1,898,368	1,898,368
	<b>2,447,342</b>	<b>2,447,342</b>
<b>DEFERRED CAPITAL CONTRIBUTIONS</b>	<b>4,675,946</b>	<b>4,675,946</b>
	<b>7,123,288</b>	<b>7,123,288</b>
<b>FUND BALANCES</b>		
INVESTED IN CAPITAL ASSETS	1,335,006	1,335,006
EXTERNALLY RESTRICTED	-	80,368
UNRESTRICTED	351,900	351,900
	<b>1,686,906</b>	<b>1,767,274</b>
	<b>\$ 8,810,194</b>	<b>\$ 8,890,562</b>

The above balance sheet has been extracted from the audited financial statements of the OACAS for the year ended March 31, 2006. Copies of the complete audited statements are available on request.

*OACAS, in support of its members, is...*

*the voice of child welfare in Ontario, dedicated to providing leadership for the achievement of excellence in the protection of children and in the promotion of their well-being within their families and communities.*



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