



The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies asking for Coroner's Inquest into the recent deaths of youth in residential care

TORONTO — The recent deaths of youth living in group homes in Ontario have deeply shaken the child welfare sector. We recognize our responsibility to take whatever action we can to prevent similar tragedies in the future. We must move past discussion and recommendations and into action.

We support the recent calls from First Nations, and the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, for a Coroner's Inquest into the deaths of youth in the residential care system in Ontario. Because of the multiple systems involved in these tragedies and the need for a full understanding of prevention strategies that need to be implemented, the OACAS supports the recent calls for an Inquest. We will not wait for the conclusion of an Inquest to make changes.

Children's Aid Societies and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies are on record with our concerns about the residential care system with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, most recently through our submission to the Residential Services Review Panel, which issued its report over a year ago. We are asking the government to expedite the implementation of the recommendations of the Review Panel, and we will not wait to begin to make the required changes. The situation for children and youth is too urgent.

We are committing to use the new Child Welfare Shared Services Program to build a means to share objectively, at a provincial level, our experiences with residential care providers who provide services to Children's Aid Societies.

These recent deaths have again highlighted the challenges faced by Indigenous children and youth in Ontario, particularly those from Northern communities. Those who are brought south because the mental health and other treatment resources they need are not available in their communities are not well-served by the current residential care system. While this is a long-term and complex problem, we are committed to working with Indigenous agencies, First Nation communities, and the Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario to ensure that a much more consistent and holistic service is provided. At the same time, we are committed to advocating for the services that these children and youth require to be made available closer to their home communities.

We were pleased to note the recent comments made by the Minister of Children and Youth Services, Michael Coteau, at the Nishnawbe Aski Nation Chiefs Spring Assembly, in which he acknowledged the need for government to work together with Indigenous communities to make sure children can stay in their communities with their families.

Media contact: Sean McGrady, Media Relations and External Communications Specialist, at 416.644.2497 or smcgrady@oacas.org.

About the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies: Since 1912, OACAS has represented Ontario's Children's Aid Societies in Ontario and provided service in the areas of government relations, communications, information management, education and training to advocate for the protection and well-being of children.

www.oacas.org