



COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE CIRCUMSTANCES
SURROUNDING THE DEATH OF PHOENIX SINCLAIR

Commission Disclosure 1894



WINNIPEG CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
SERVICES À L'ENFANT ET À LA FAMILLE DE WINNIPEG

December 31, 2002

Peter Dubiensi
 Assistant Deputy Minister
 Family Service and Housing
 216 - 114 Garry Street
 Winnipeg, Manitoba
 R3C 4V4

Dear Mr. Dubiensi:

I am writing to provide information in response to your request of December 30, 2002 regarding a letter to the Minister dated December 19, 2002 about "the present crisis in child welfare at Winnipeg Child and Family Services".

WORKLOAD

1. According to the November 2002 financial statements, the number of days care has increased by 10,328 over last year, or by 2%, not by 22,000 - 30,000 as suggested by Ms Henley and Mr. Manteuffel. The agency continues to assess and redirect resources to manage workload as best as possible. We believe that the presence of junior supervisors and workers on the front line exacerbates workload stress. The agency has several initiatives underway to reduce days care. These include a Parent-Teen specialized team, an initiative to address the fact that 50% of intakes involve a parent with an addiction problem, a targeted family reunification initiative, and an initiative to move children out of the short-term care system on a more timely basis.
2. Retention of family services front-line staff is an historical problem in child welfare. The Agency structure implemented in the 1999 reorganization has exacerbated this problem. (See chart in attached vacancy management memo for comparison of years of service by program.) In 2001, Viewpoints Research conducted Focus Groups with current and former family services social workers. The purpose of the focus groups was to obtain comments and perspectives on employees' experiences within the Agency and their general job satisfaction that could inform strategies designed to retain social work staff. On December 9, 2002 Elaine Gelmon, Chief Operating Officer sent a memo to all staff detailing the many recommendations already implemented, those in process and those under consideration.

3. WCB, Sick & Stress Claims :

- ♦ The WCB claim rate for MGEU members remains constant.

♦

	WCFS Av. Sick Days	National Av. Sick Days	Manitoba Av. Sick Days
2001	9.35	8.5	9.3
2002	10.5		

♦

	New LTD Claims	% Stress **
2002	13 *	30%
2001	7	23%
2000	6	23%
1999	13	31%
1998	21	21%
1997	11	27%

* 4 individuals remain on leave.

** It is the opinion of the WCFS Human Resources Dept. that more than 50% of stress leaves are a result of personal crisis (eg. elder care, divorce, death of immediate family member).

4. With respect to the focus group report, management takes great exception to the comment about refusal to release the study. Ms Henley is well aware of the process undertaken with management and her bargaining unit respecting release of the study. Management solicited a response to the study from the program under scrutiny. Management also held several conversations with the bargaining unit about the wisdom of releasing the study in its original format including quotes that would identify and potentially embarrass individual supervisors. Since the bargaining unit remained insistent, the study was released unedited in spite of the unusual format.

VACANCY MANAGEMENT

1. Please see attached briefing note sent to you previously.
2. A vacancy management program is not new to the Agency. Such a program was in force during 2001-2002. In 2001-2002 the vacancy rate was almost 4% solely due to turnover in one program, *Services to Children and Families*. There are two differences between the 2001 - 2002 and 2002 - 2003 vacancy management programs. In this year's program we are actively managing vacancies to reduce the impact on *Services to Children and Families*. Also, we increased the target percentage to 6 % by holding 7 non case-carrying positions vacant from the beginning of the fiscal year.

These include:

- 1.5 Management positions
 - 1 Supervisor position eliminated to streamline the multi-step intake process at the recommendation of the Intake supervisors
 - 2 Clerical Administrative positions - Each rural east unit had two administrative assistants versus the standard of one. The recommendation concerning elimination of these clerical positions was made by the Administrative Support Program Supervisors in view of the upcoming amalgamation of Eastman and rural east.
- 1.5 Community workers by attrition
 - 1 Volunteer Coordinator by attrition.

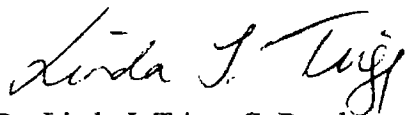
SERVICE CUTS

1. The *Community* program has two temporarily vacant positions in order to bolster "front line" services.
2. The *Permanency Planning* program has three temporarily vacant positions. This is a very small number compared to ongoing vacancies in *Services to Children and Families*.
3. There have been no cuts to *Family Preservation and Reunification*. We have re-established priorities. At the time of the 1999 reorganization, the Agency established priorities for *Family Preservation and Reunification*. A staff committee recently developed new priorities, targeting preservation at intake and reunification to families with children under 12. The goal of preservation at intake is to keep children over 12 out of care. *Family Preservation and Reunification* has always maintained a waiting list. The Chief Steward of the supervisors' bargaining unit has been extensively involved in recent priority setting decisions.
4. Regarding *therapy and assessments*, it is "business as usual" for extensions and new requests.
5. No one would agree that hotels offer good service. No one would agree that purchased services in hotels offer good care. The shelter initiative is developing two six-bed units for younger children that will be able to care for siblings. It is an exaggeration to say that keeping children out of hotels routinely separates siblings. Frequently we place siblings together in shelters or foster homes.
6. The days care initiatives were developed specifically for agency clients to ultimately reduce days care and workload. The days care initiatives are addressing some of the greatest areas of service demand. The Chief Steward of the supervisors' bargaining unit is the leader of one initiative.

LABOUR MANAGEMENT RELATIONS

Neither bargaining unit has spoken to me about a deterioration in labour / management relations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda J. Trigg".

Dr. Linda J. Trigg, C. Psych.
Interim Executive Director

LJT/mw

Encl.

cc. Jay Rodgers, Board President