



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

Commision Disclosure 2118

July 11, 2005

The Honourable Christine Melnick,
Minister of Family Services and Housing

Further to our letter of February 21, 2005 we appreciate the time you have found, in your busy schedule, to meet with us and engage in an informal conversation around issues related to the devolution of Winnipeg Child & Family Services and the implementation of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, Child Welfare Initiative (AJI – CWI).

We wish to reiterate our support of this initiative and again point out that after enduring years of an inconsistent and unstable workforce, we have worked diligently towards government goals in a co-operative and patient manner. In our letter of February 21, 2005 we raised concerns with regard to the time frame/deadlines announced at the end of December, as we did on a number of occasions with Mr. Sid Rogers and our CEO Mr. Jay Rodgers. The original time frame was set as April 25, 2005. Our requests were denied and subsequently the time frame was moved to May 2 and May 16, 2005 with further transfers occurring on June 2, 2005, the end of June and sometime in September of 2005.

We know time is limited so have taken the liberty to address some of our concerns in point form as follows:

LACK OF ORGANIZATION

Communication Strategies:

- Internal and external organizational charts were not distributed;
- Staff were not informed of re-directed phone calls (Monday a.m. May 16, the Provencher office received over 500 phone calls);
- Information was distributed at the last moment, past the date promised or not at all (i.e. letters to clients and collaterals, etc.).

Lack of staff participation on the implementation committee:

- Lack of fine detail planning (i.e. sign to send or receive a file);
- No check lists were developed to determine readiness (this was requested numerous times);
- Lack of identification of training needs to ensure smoother transition (i.e. moving from a specialization model to a generic one).

Lack of planning in preparation for implementation:

- Computers, photocopiers, office equipment, etc. were not prepared for the additional workload;

- File tracking system was not in place (numerous hours were spent trying to locate files);
- In the middle of implementation of AJI – CWI, a new intake module was introduced requiring training and implementation;
- Lack of co-ordination regarding location identification and renovations of office space;
- No process identified to deal with excessive workload issues as a result of resources being transferred without the workload (i.e. place of safety program – in excess of 200 cases per worker, transportation department, family support program, etc.);
- Establishment of the AJI – CWI Workforce Adjustment Joint Committee has only recently occurred.

IMPACT ON SERVICE

- Clients are confused, upset and angry not knowing who their new worker is and where that worker may be located;
- Disruption of visits between children in care and their families;
- Inability to reach workers before implementation (due to prioritization of case transfers)
- If their worker remained the same, clients still struggled to contact them due to change in phone number and office location;
- Many clients had numerous workers during process;
- Lack of French language services, particularly at the entry level (French language legislation?)
- Increased staff turnover;
- Additional work placed on court system and staff employed there causing more delays and confusion for clients;
- Foster parent receptiveness is declining
- Loss of volunteers;
- Collaterals (schools, early educators, probation officers, ELA workers, service providers) were not formally informed of process and re-assignment of new authorities, agencies and workers;
- Area council advisory group left to determine how they fit into the new picture, they are lacking direction.

IMPACT ON STAFF

- Staff feeling stressed, have lost sleep worrying about the safety of clients;
- Staff feeling horrible at their inability to give clients information regarding who their new workers might be, where they might be located and guarantee that visits between children and families will not be disrupted;
- Staff feeling frustrated at their inability to respond to their client's everyday needs when enmeshed in case transfer deadlines;

- Staff feeling horrible at their inability to co-ordinate and participate in advocacy on behalf of clients with collaterals, service providers and community resources while working under case transfer deadlines (i.e. school conferences, meetings, etc.);
- Increased workload due to computers crashing, losing work already done and covering for staff instructed to use up vacation time;
- Lack of information regarding job assignment and location;
- Staff requested to make decisions without complete information;
- Term positions not extended until last minute;
- Lack of participation in determining their future.

We believe that any impact on staff ultimately results in impacting the clients we serve.

As a result of the aforementioned we expect you have probably heard from clients, collaterals and service providers regarding their concerns around the implementation of this initiative. We have received many calls from upset clients, collaterals and service providers and have tried our best to address their issues and reassure them that their concerns will be worked out. We understand there remains in excess of 200 files pending, still waiting to be transferred.

We are respectfully requesting:

1. That an independent body evaluate the immediate and ongoing process to determine, and aid in remedying, any immediate and continuing problems associated with the initiative;
2. That a reassessment of the initial distribution of resources take place. Has the work followed the resources that have been transferred?
3. That a process be developed to evaluate and determine the readiness of the Integrated Service Delivery System before introducing and implementing this initiative to Child & Family Services;
4. That the department review and implement a workload standard that better reflects the service demands placed on the system;
5. That any branch or seconded positions be filled a.s.a.p.

We feel it is important to inform you that there continues to be much confusion, increased workload, staff turnover and deteriorating morale within Child & Family Services. Under such a stressed work environment we are extremely concerned about our ability to ensure the safety of the clients we serve.

Respectfully submitted,

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