

## **MCFD Sidesteps Accountability**

### **We Need Action Now!**

Approximately two weeks after Judge Paul Walker issued a blistering judgement citing the Ministry of Children and Family Development's Director of Child Protection and certain Ministry social workers for "*intentional misconduct, bad faith, reckless disregard for their obligation to protect children, breach of the applicable standard of care*" -- and three years after Judge Walker issued an initial judgement in this case -- the MCFD Minister, Stephanie Cadiuex, has decided that an investigation is in order.

Ignoring the fact that the province already employs a fully independent, appropriately mandated investigator: BC's Representative for Children and Youth, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, the Minister has decided to bring back retired bureaucrat Bob Plecas to lead what can only be called a half-hearted attempt to divert attention from their culpability and placate the political firestorm that has arisen from the publication of Judge Walker's July 14<sup>th</sup> 2015 judgement.

### **Revictimizing the Victim**

Vancouver Sun reporter Ian Mulgrew has now made public the fact that the Ministry is continuing to harass the family exonerated by Judge Walker – once again interviewing the children and seeking home visits. No Ministry support has been offered to the family and they have been forced in recent months to rely on food banks.

Once again Ministry staff seem to be blaming the victim. Such actions appear to be malicious and retribution against a mother who courageously fought for her children. The father proven to have sexually abused his children remains at liberty and has not been charged.

The Ministry has not even had the common decency to apologize for the damage done to this family.

### **Ministry Accountability**

As for the Ministry social workers named in the court case, they have never been called to account for the reckless endangerment of the four abused children. Citing standard and prudent human resource practice, the Ministry is assigning staff directly impacted by the review to different duties. They will then undertake a human resource review if "*the outcome of the independent review indicates significant concerns with staff actions.*" Disciplinary actions will only be contemplated – contemplated?? – after completion of the human resource review.

A judge from the BC Supreme Court has cited the Director and certain Ministry social workers for failing in their legal responsibilities, with their actions (including defying a court order) directly responsible for delivering these children into a situation where they were then abused. If ever dismissal for cause was justified, this is such a case.

Why is the Ministry charged with protecting BC's children instead choosing to protect those already legally judged responsible for the abuse of children in their custody?

## **How Can There Be Any Confidence in This Ministry?**

The appalling facts established in Judge Walker's decision -- the tragic facts that led to the death of Paige, an Aboriginal young woman, in the Downtown Eastside -- the distressing facts established by the Representative's office in report after report -- none are in dispute. Recommendations for systemic change have been offered by the Representative time and again, yet the government continues to act on very few. The status quo remains intact.

The Representative's calls for action are echoed and supported by all of our partner organizations, by the Northwest Indigenous Council, by the First Nations Health Authority, by the BC First Nations Summit, by the Assembly of First Nations, and by the City of Vancouver, among many others -- and most importantly by many families throughout the province.

We are angry at the bureaucratic complacency that resists change and sidesteps accountability. We are incredibly saddened by the tragic outcomes that result for too many of our children, youth, and families.

### **It's Time for Action!**

A magnificent lion is killed in Africa and a Twitter campaign leads to immediate systemic change. The person responsible is being charged. A dog is kicked on camera in an elevator and the person responsible is immediately fired from a high-paying job.

Children suffer and die in Ministry care and the government makes excuses. Children are sexually abused due to wilful negligence by Ministry staff. The family is devastated. The staff face no consequences.

The Ministry and designated agencies have one job -- to safeguard our children. It is time that they cared enough to actually do that job -- to stop talking and change their practices.

The time for action is now!!

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