

APPROVED AT GENERAL COMMITTEE
October 22, 2009

ITEMS RELATED TO HUMAN SERVICES

Chaired by Councillor P. Mullin

HS-E. COMMUNICATIONS

- HS-E2. **News Release and Funding Fact Sheet:** From Peel Children's Aid, dated October 14, 2009, Reporting that Peel Children's Aid Faces a \$2.1 Million Deficit and Services to Vulnerable Children are at Risk

Referred to the October 29, 2009 Regional Council meeting

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PEEL CHILDREN'S AID

NEWS RELEASE
For immediate release

| LEGISLATIVE SERVICES | |
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PEEL CHILDREN'S AID FACING \$2.1 MILLION DEFICIT SERVICES TO VULNERABLE CHILDREN AT RISK

October 14, 2009: The Ministry of Children and Youth Services recent announcement of CASs 2009/2010 funding leaves Peel Children's Aid \$2.1 million short of the necessary funding to provide services to vulnerable children in Peel Region. This funding allocation is \$1.4 million less than they received last year.

"We are finding that despite our many efforts at managing our costs and operating in an efficient manner this reduction will seriously impact our ability to provide the required services to children and families in Peel," says Peel Children's Aid Board President Dan Labrecque.

The Board approved a \$50,167,956 expenditure plan for 2009/2010, representing a modest increase of 2.2% over last year's costs. "In developing this plan, we wanted to ensure that we could meet our duty to protect children while being fiscally responsible and conservative," says Executive Director Paul Zarnke. "The small increase in our 2009/2010 expenditure plan can be attributed entirely to salaries and benefits which make up 60% of our costs."

"Knowing that Ontario is facing difficult economic times, our agency, prior to submitting this year's budget had conducted a critical review of our costs and reduced expenditures by more than \$1 million," explains Zarnke. Upon receiving news of our 2009/2010 allocation from the Ministry in late June, Peel Children's Aid undertook another critical review of their costs narrowing them by another \$1.1 million -- this includes reducing 7.5 staff positions. This left Peel Children's Aid with a projected deficit of \$2.1 million. "This process was not taken lightly and our decision to cut staff positions will have consequences," adds Zarnke, including increased pressure on staff and higher workloads."

"To reduce our budget by another \$2.1 million we would need to cut 24 more positions, seriously impeding our ability to meet the mandated duties required of Children's Aid Societies outlined in the *Child Family Services Act*," adds Labrecque. Last year, Peel Children's Aid received more than 11,400 calls about children in need of protection, conducted more than 4,500 investigations, worked with more than 5,800 families and provided care for more than 700 children. The

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growing poverty levels in Peel means increasing number of families are under stress. The number of children living in poverty in Peel Region is steadily increasing. Between 1997 and 2005 the number grew by 51% – the highest rate of increase in the GTA.

“At Peel Children’s Aid, we are first hand observers to what joblessness, underemployment, lack of educational opportunities and hopelessness do to a family. This frustration that can lead to despair, alcohol and substance abuse, violence in the home or violence in the community,” explains Zarnke. “Our role is to ensure the safety and well being of the 330,000 children in our community.”

“It is the role of the Ministry to honour its obligation and reasonably fund the true costs of child protection in the Region of Peel, “ continues Zarnke.

“We are a fiscally responsible agency providing quality and cost effective services to children and families in Peel and need adequate funding to keep children safe and promote their well-being as well as keeping families together,” adds Labrecque.

Children’s Aid Societies recognize that re-structuring of the system is needed and welcome the Ministry’s *Commission to Promote Sustainable CASs*, however, urge that cuts not be made in advance of any study by the Commission particularly in the face of a recession that negatively affects vulnerable children and threatens agencies’ ability to provide vital services.

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PEEL CHILDREN'S AID

FUNDING FACT SHEET

Funding disparities for children and youth in Peel Region

- Peel Children's Aid is one of largest Children's Aid Societies in Ontario serving a growing and expanding diverse community in Peel Region.
- Peel Region has the second largest population and child population of any jurisdiction in the province outside of Toronto and it is growing at a rate much faster than most other jurisdictions.
- Between 2001 and 2006, Peel's population grew by 17% to 1,159,405—the second highest population in the Province. Peel's population is estimated to increase by 9% over the next 5 years to 1.3 million.
- In 2001, Peel Region received \$32 per capita child welfare funding compared to the Provincial average of \$72, representing approximately 44% of the Provincial average.
- In 2006, Peel received \$38 per capita child welfare funding compared to the Provincial average of \$103, representing approximately 37% of the Provincial average.

Impact of chronic underfunding of services

- Social services in Peel Region have historically had much lower levels of resources than their counter parts in other jurisdictions.
- Under funding of social services in the Region of Peel has meant there are fewer resources available in the community to service children and families than exist in other parts of the province. By way of example:
 - We recently waited for 14 months to get a child into a psychiatric facility in London, There are very limited psychiatric resources available in Peel.
 - Currently 86% of the children in the care of Peel Children's Aid who require a group home placement are placed outside the Region of Peel because there are few local resources capable of providing this care. This number rises to 100% for children under the age of 13.

Unique challenges put additional stress on Peel CAS finances

- Over the next few years, Peel will surpass Toronto as the most culturally diverse region in the world.

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- 47% of Peel's population has a mother tongue other than English or French, compared to 27% across Ontario as a whole.
- To effectively serve such a racially and culturally diverse population Peel Children's Aid requires a significant investment of time and money in staff training to assist staff to be culturally competent in their practice.
- In addition, Peel Children's Aid experiences significant cost related to the provision of translation services as well as our multilingual staff being called on frequently by colleagues to provide translation in urgent situations.
- Unaccompanied minors who arrive at Toronto International Airport often fall under the jurisdiction of Peel CAS. These situations require the agency to absorb the unusual costs of our staff working through complex immigration issues which can be very labour intensive and time-consuming.
- Staff are engaged in work with community partners to develop new services to meet the needs of our growing diverse community. These activities often include finding resources to fund services, service planning, service monitoring, evaluation and reporting. The cost of these types of activities, which are critical to developing community supports to help us get service for our families in the community, are not recognized in the Ministry's funding framework.

Meeting the needs of children and youth in PeelCAS

We strongly urge the Minister to review the current funding model so that it is more equitable and more reflective of the true costs of providing child welfare services.

We need a funding model that:

- Recognizes that volume alone is not an accurate indicator of workload or a good measure of responsiveness to child protection concerns.
- Recognizes the work required with community agencies to build capacity to meet service gaps for children and families.
- Acknowledges that the real costs of keeping children out of care and with their families. The current funding model only financially rewards bringing children into the system, not keeping them out.
- Provides an investment in the health and well being for the more than 700 children and youth (during a 12 month period) Peel Children's Aid is the legal guardian for.