
OPINION-EDITORIAL

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and
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VICTORIA – In celebration of Social Work Week, we want to share our thanks and appreciation for all that social workers do to improve the lives of vulnerable children, youth and families in British Columbia. We are blessed in this province with exceptionally skilled social workers who work with children and families when there is a safety issue, or family breakdown, or sudden serious mental health or physical illness that places them in crisis.

We appreciate the often difficult nature of their work. Child safety depends on the professionalism and skill of social workers to help children and families cope with and overcome challenges. They also play a role in looking at the root causes of those challenges so that systemic improvements can be addressed to protect other children and families.

Social workers are the foundation of our system of care. No government institution – no matter how well-intentioned – can ever replace the essential function of the family in a child's life. This is why foster care is meant to be a temporary situation while a family setting is repaired or recreated for the child experiencing abuse and serious neglect. Social workers choose to work in child welfare and adoptions and other parts of the child-serving system, acting as mediators and facilitators, because they want to be part of a system whose goal is to uphold the rights of children to be safe and supported.

We both recognize that working with Aboriginal children, families and communities will continue to be a central part of our work in the future. Increased diversity in recruitment is an important part of the changing workforce as we strive to support reconciliation-based resolution and strengthen helping relationships at every level. To that end, we hope to recruit more Aboriginal social workers and support all front-line staff to achieve a better understanding of the kinship and reconciliation needs of Aboriginal children, families and communities.

Great social workers demonstrate compassion every day. In the months and years ahead we hope to see their ranks expanded with a new generation of skilled and compassionate recruits who see their professional choice as one of building helping relationships and making sure we have a system that makes positive resolution of family issues a norm. This is a time of optimism and opportunity.

Social work is an art, not a science. Its success depends on the quality and strength of human relationships. Join us in taking time this week to appreciate all that social workers do and the values they bring to this important task of child safety and family support to make this province a safer, happier place for children, youth and their families.