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Dec. 14, 2015

**By Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond**  
**B.C. Representative for Children and Youth**

Today the provincial government released a document, Part 1 of “Decision Time, a Review of Child Policy, Practice and Legislation”, written by Bob Plecas.

I was pleased to see that Mr. Plecas’s document endorses recommendations that my Office has made continually in recent years – including those calling for more funding and adequate staffing for MCFD.

However, I also have a number of concerns about the report. Chief among those is Mr. Plecas’s assertion that independent oversight of B.C.’s child welfare system may, in a very short period of time, no longer be required. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Independent oversight of B.C.’s child welfare system – provided for the past nine years by my Office – remains a necessity. In the absence of such public accountability, *Paige’s Story* and the stories of other vulnerable children would never be told, leaving significant problems in the child protection system unaddressed.

I also take issue with Mr. Plecas’s conclusion that: *“Our society long ago agreed that we must work to prevent child abuse, but often we have extended this idea to a view that it is possible to prevent all children from either suffering abuse or dying as a result of abuse and neglect. I think we must recognize that, in spite of best intentions, this is a myth.”* In cases where the ministry has the information necessary to protect children at risk, British Columbians can, and must, expect it to do so.

Mr. Plecas’s interim report comments on a range of matters related to MCFD but also goes on to express views concerning the work of the courts, the role of the Representative, and the functions of the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth. While I respect the right of government to consult all manner of advisers on issues, I am concerned that this report makes

recommendations about the curtailing of independent oversight by my Office without having spoken to me or my staff and without, to my knowledge, formally consulting the Select Standing Committee.

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