



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Representative to investigate circumstances leading to horrific abuse and death of a child

VICTORIA – Representative for Children and Youth Jennifer Charlesworth announced today that her Office (RCY) will conduct a full investigation into the circumstances that led to the horrific abuse inflicted on two First Nations children in care in Lake Errock and ultimately resulted in the death of one of the children.

“This is an unbelievably tragic story, and one that has frankly brought me to my knees as I try to imagine what this child – and their siblings – experienced,” Charlesworth said. “In 46 years of practice in helping children and youth, this is one of the most egregious situations I have ever seen. I will do everything in my power as Representative to ensure that we learn what happened and – most significantly – what needs to be done to ensure that the system is transformed so that this does not happen to any child, anywhere in this province, again.”

The *Representative for Children and Youth Act*, enables RCY to investigate and report on critical injuries and deaths experienced by children and youth receiving reviewable services. By law, the Representative must wait until criminal proceedings are completed before beginning a formal investigation. Last week, two foster parents were sentenced to 10 years in prison for manslaughter and six years for aggravated assault regarding the incidents that took place in Lake Errock between 2020 and 2021.

“We have been monitoring this situation since the day after the child was taken to hospital and have initiated two stages of review to date,” Charlesworth said. “Now that the criminal proceedings are substantially completed, we can publicly commit to an investigation.”

RCY investigations are conducted with the intent of learning from the circumstances that led to the critical injuries and/or deaths of children and youth. The resulting public reports make recommendations to government to help prevent similar situations from occurring going forward.

Charlesworth is pleased that the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) has spoken in support of an RCY investigation into this case and intends to consult the FNLC and others about how to proceed with the investigation, particularly considering the well-being and privacy of the surviving children who have been affected.

"My deepest condolences go out to the family of these children, who are experiencing unimaginable grief, and to their community," Charlesworth said. "My Office is also advocating for the other children who have been impacted by this violence and monitoring the care that they are receiving. They will need highly specialized care and counselling over time."

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