



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New report finds MCFD's child welfare workforce "undeniably in a state of crisis"

Victoria – A report issued today by the Representative for Children and Youth finds that MCFD's child welfare workforce is undeniably in a state of crisis and that a number of immediate and sustained steps must be taken so that B.C.'s most vulnerable children receive the services and supports they desperately need.

"When we are dealing with very vulnerable young people, you would like to think we have a workforce that is well supported by reasonable caseloads, is well trained, and is working in a supportive, healthy work environment," said Representative Jennifer Charlesworth. "What we have instead are very committed staff who are trying very hard to do their jobs but are consistently faced with inadequate staffing, unmanageable workloads and a lack of access to the necessary supports that allow them to do their very difficult jobs well."

Charlesworth's report *No Time to Wait – Part Two* is a companion report to her earlier review [No Time to Wait – Part One](#) which was an initial review of the Ministry of Children and Family Development's child welfare workforce released this past summer. That interim report came in the wake of RCY's report [Don't Look Away](#), which detailed findings from an investigation into the tragic torture and death of a child while in government care and illuminated the systemic conditions that are contributing to young people not receiving the care and support that they need. The report highlighted a number of instances of lack of compliance with child protection policies and practice and noted that social worker understaffing, a lack of backfill for extended medical leave, unstable local leadership and confusion about roles and responsibilities in relation to the local First Nation may have been contributing factors to the boy's death.

Today's report highlights further analysis of a large amount of workforce data collected by RCY including, a review of relevant literature and previous reports, analysis of ministry documentation and data, an RCY survey of more than 700 MCFD child welfare social workers and their supervisors and an internal government-wide survey that included MCFD child welfare workers, focus groups and community consultations. The RCY survey includes findings that 80 per cent of social workers say they are unable to properly do their jobs because their caseloads are too high, 77 per cent say that they do not have timely access to the range of family and community supports necessary to effectively meet the needs of their clients, and

73 per cent say they are not provided with sufficient training to understand new policies and standards. The 2024 internal government survey of staff revealed that MCFD staff as a whole had the lowest score of twenty-nine government ministries and agencies on workforce engagement measures and that when child welfare social workers were selected out, they had even lower scores on 71 out of 73 measures on a range of matters such as workload, health and wellness, training, leadership and organizational satisfaction.

Despite the extremely challenging working conditions, RCY also learned that child welfare social workers derive the greatest degree of job satisfaction from working with young people and their families, and value and feel supported by their immediate colleagues.

Today's report reinforces and builds on the *No Time to Wait Part One* recommendations which called on the Ministry of Children and Family Development to take action on a number of areas including to:

- develop and implement a social worker workload measurement tool to determine required staffing levels and provide funding to staff at the levels the workload measurement tool indicates are required
- implement more robust compensation measures to enhance recruitment and retention of social workers
- develop and implement a robust plan to better support the health and wellness of child welfare staff and mitigate the effects of stress, vicarious trauma and burnout by implementing a comprehensive and proactive system of debriefing, peer-to-peer, counselling and mental health supports.

Today's report also makes a number of additional recommendations to the Ministry of Children and Family Development including to:

- improve training and professional development on a variety of fronts
- conduct a review of expanded educational credentials for new social worker hires and of the onboarding training program for new social work hires
- enhance independent oversight and, in keeping with longstanding recommendations that trace back to the 1995 report by Judge Thomas Gove, develop and implement a plan to require all ministry child welfare workers to be registered with an independent professional regulatory body.

“This is a workforce that wants to deliver high quality care and support to young people, their families and communities. To ensure that our young people are safe, supported and thriving throughout the province, we need to better support those who are working on their behalf. These are practical actions that I expect the ministry to take now to ensure young people are

well cared for, while also having the capacity to achieve the transformational systems-level changes addressed in *Don't Look Away*" Charlesworth said.

To View the Report: <https://rcybc.ca/reports-and-publications/reports/no-time-to-wait-pt-2/>

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