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CHILDREN AT RISK

Continued funding cuts, staff shortages, massive workloads and reorganization has MCFD in a continuous state of crisis. p.8

**SPECIAL
CONVENTION
ISSUE!**



CHILDREN AT RISK

BCGEU members working with vulnerable British Columbians are facing overwhelming workloads that can sometimes endanger the very clients they are meant to serve.

“The safety and well-being of vulnerable children, youth and fragile families is being compromised because the government is not committing the resources required to protect them,” says BCGEU President Darryl Walker.

BCGEU is building a province-wide campaign supporting the critical role of social workers, administrative staff and frontline community social service workers in the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and frontline child protection and family service workers.

“For years, we have been telling the government that there is a crisis in B.C.’s child protection system, and it’s only getting worse. They are not listening, even though the damning evidence is piling up,” says Walker.

The B.C. Representative for Children and Youth has highlighted a number of tragedies in her reports.

Lost in the Shadows, the report released February 6 last, investigated the suicide death of a 14-year-old girl living in a rural British Columbia First Nations

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community. MCFD staffing shortages and workload pressures were major contributing factors to the “functional collapse” of B.C.’s child welfare system in that region, the report found.

The Representative also points to the

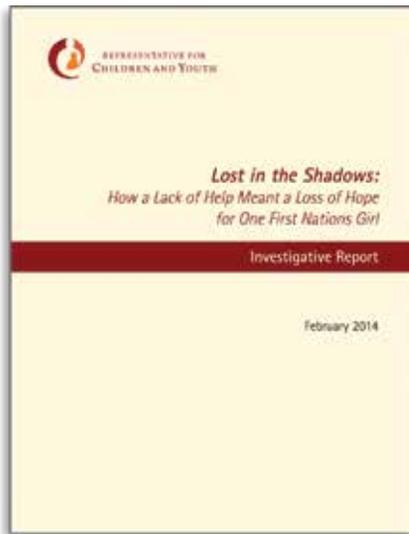
Ministry’s complete failure to ensure the physical safety of frontline social workers who feared for their own lives.

“MCFD is in an almost constant state of crisis. In recent province-wide meetings with BCGEU, social workers have told us loud and clear that child safety is being compromised by staffing issues and workload problems in the Ministry,” says Social Information and Health Component Chair Doug Kinna.

BCGEU research shows that MCFD spending per capita has decreased by 20 per cent over the last decade, with only \$287 of planned spending in 2014/15, down from \$387 in 2004/5. The cost of living in that same decade has increased by 17.3 per cent.

The union plans on gathering more evidence about the state of B.C.’s child welfare and family protection system, including a survey of front-line staff.

“Administrative support staff are at breaking point, facing a significant increase in workload due to staff shortages, system changes, and ever-



increasing demand,” says Administrative Services Component Chair Lori Joaquin.

The BCGEU is committed to supporting an urgent, comprehensive assessment of staffing and safety issues in the Ministry to be conducted jointly by BCGEU and MCFD, as recommended in the last report by the Representative for Children and Youth.

Your union has also sought a meeting with MCFD Minister Stephanie Cadieux to address these issues.

The BCGEU is also organizing a number of regional meetings to hearing from frontline staff about these workload issues.

Members’ feedback will be consolidated and will form the basis of the campaign. The first meeting was held February 27 in Nanaimo, with more meetings to follow.

“We are all here to listen and talk about a campaign. Let’s get down to it,” said Nanaimo meeting participant Susan Allan.

“Making real change and improvements in the child welfare system is going to require the will of the B.C. government and much more strategic action and an investment plan for recruitment, health and safety, and retention of frontline workers,” says president Walker.

Social Work: BY THE NUMBERS

CHILDREN

- **901,200** – Total BC population aged between 0 and 18 years old (2013), or 19.5 percent of the total.
- **155,000** – Number of children and families served by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) in 2013.
- **17** - Percentage of BC children & youth (< 18 years old) served by MCFD in 2012/13.
- **27,000** - Projected increase in BC’s child and youth population over next five years.
- **55** - Percentage of BC children and youth in care that are Aboriginal.
- **37.6** - Percentage of Aboriginal population 18 years old and under .

FUNDING

- **\$103 million** - Extra amount budgeted for MCFD over next three years.
- **\$360** – Spending per capita on child, youth and family services in BC in 2004/05.
- **\$287** - Spending per capita on child, youth and family services in BC in 2014/15.
- **-20.3** - Percentage decrease in MCFD spending per capita between 2004 & 2014.
- **+17.3** - Percentage change in inflation between 2004 and 2014.
- **33** – Number of children currently served for each MCFD employee.

ABORIGINAL YOUTH

- **4167** – Number of Aboriginal children and youth forced to leave their parental home in 2012/13.
- **7** – Number of times more likely that an Aboriginal child or youth comes into care, relative to non-Aboriginal children or youth.
- **50%+** - Percentage of Aboriginal children and youth in care over the last ten years.
- **33%** - Percentage of monthly community youth justice cases that are Aboriginal.
- **42** - Daily average percentage of Aboriginal youth incarcerations in 2012-13.

INJURIES AND DEATHS REPORTED

- **598** – Number of deaths reported to the BC Representative for Children and Youth between 2007 and 2013.
- **222** – Number of cases involving children’s death between 2007 and 2013 selected for review by the BC Representative for Children and Youth.
- **1453** – Number of critical injuries to children and youth reported to the BC Representative for Children and Youth between 2007 and 2013.

POVERTY

- **18.6%** - BC child poverty rate. Average Canadian child poverty rate: 13.3% (2013)
- **49.8%** - BC child poverty rate for children living in single mother families (2013)
- **14%** - BC child poverty rate for children living in two-parent families (2013)
- **77,000** – Number of children in Metro Vancouver living in poverty.
- **12.6** – Ratio of average incomes of the richest 10 percent compared to the poorest 10 percent in BC, the worst in Canada.
- **6282** – Number of single parent families in BC receiving income assistance in 2013.
- **37,577** – Number of BC children in families on welfare in 2011.
- **94,002** – Number of BCers helped by food banks in 2013.
- **4 out of 5** – Number of British Columbians who agree that the widening income gap is a serious problem.

ADOPTION

- **14.4%** - Adoption rate for non-Aboriginal children.
- **8%** - Adoption rate for Aboriginal children.

INTEGRATED CASE MANAGEMENT

- **\$182 million** – Amount spent on Integrated Case Management by Jan. 2013.
- **\$12 million** – extra funding earmarked to further fix the Integrated Case Management software in 2013-14.
- **20,000** – Number of Integrated Case Management childcare cases being reviewed following faulty implementation.