

MESSAGE FROM THE REGISTRAR AND CEO: CHANGES TO ONTARIO'S CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

[August 17, 2020](#)

The Ontario government recently released a plan to modernize the province's child welfare system. Focused on prevention, early intervention and more permanent homes for children and youth in care, the strategy is built around five pillars:

- supporting child, youth, family and community well-being;
- improving quality of care;
- strengthening youth supports;
- improving stability and permanency; and
- increasing system accountability and sustainability.

The system redesign was developed with input from a diverse array of stakeholders. The strategy was released alongside two new resources to improve experiences and outcomes for youth: [Ontario's Quality Standards Framework](#) and the [Children and Young Persons' Rights Resource](#). An overview of the strategy can be found at:

<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/documents/childrensaid/MCCSS-ChildWelfare-Redesign-Overview.pdf>

The Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (the College) supports the Government's initiative to modernize the child welfare system. Stronger prevention, earlier intervention and greater stability and continuity of supports will benefit vulnerable youth and children in Ontario. The College also commends the new approach's focus on quality improvement in residential care and child and youth supports, as well as the emphasis placed on accountability.

However, the College also wants to express its disappointment that the modernization strategy does not contemplate any requirement for Children's Aid Society (CAS) workers to be registered with the College. Such a requirement would be well-aligned

with the Government's objectives for this initiative, as registration is central to driving quality improvement and ensuring accountability.

REGISTRATION OF CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY WORKERS

The College has long worked with its stakeholders and with Government to address its concerns about registration requirements under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*. As a result of past efforts, regulations were updated in 2018 to require Local Directors of CASs to be registered with the College. We also received a commitment from Government at that time to work with the College and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies toward a goal of requiring registration of CAS supervisors. We are disappointed that this objective remains unaddressed.

Registration of all those who are eligible is included as part of the College's [2020-2023 Strategic Plan](#) as fundamental to achieving our mandate to:

- serve and protect the public interest;
- regulate our members; and
- ensure that we are accountable and accessible to the communities we serve.

We have committed in the Strategic Plan to continuing to engage with government on this important issue.

We have also identified increasing diversity, equity and inclusion as one of the College's four priorities within the Strategic Plan. We believe that the registration of CAS workers is an important way to increase equity. All Ontarians – especially vulnerable children and youth and Black, Indigenous and people of colour communities deserve the protection provided by College oversight, and this is especially true for the CAS workers providing them with such vital services and supports.

KEY CONCERNS

The College has the following concerns related to the absence of a requirement for CAS workers to be registered with the College:

- ignores the public protection mandate of the *Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998*;
- avoids the fact that social workers and social service workers are regulated professions in Ontario and ignores the College's important role in protecting the Ontario public from harm caused by incompetent, unqualified or unfit practitioners;
- allows CAS staff to operate outside the system of public protection and oversight that the Government has established through professional regulation;
- exacerbates existing inequities by denying vulnerable Ontarians the protection offered by the College; and
- fails to provide the assurance to all Ontarians that they are receiving services from CAS staff who are registered with, and accountable to, the College.

The College will continue to work with the Government and stakeholders to emphasize its important role and relevance in the child welfare sector. We remain committed to seeking changes to the regulations which would address the risks to the public associated with the fact that so many CAS workers in Ontario are unregulated by a professional regulatory body.

Sincerely,

Lise Betteridge, MSW, RSW
Registrar and CEO

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