INFORMATION BULLETIN

For Immediate Release
Ministry of Children and Family Development
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Independent advisors guide improvements in child welfare

VICTORIA — A group of independent advisors will work with government to develop a multi-year plan to strengthen B.C.'s child welfare system, starting with more staff, more training and greater transparency and accountability in ministry decision-making and other areas.

The advisory council will provide independent, impartial input and advice and ensure that consultation with stakeholder groups, especially First Nations and Aboriginal community leaders, grounds the plan.

The council was specifically designed to allow representation from business leaders, Aboriginal leaders, non-governmental organizations in the social sector, the BC Government and Service Employees’ Union (BCGEU) and the Office of the Representative of Children and Youth (RCY). The council members are:

- Giselle Commissiong, partner, advisory services, Ernst and Young
- Paulette Flamond, executive director, Northeast Aboriginal Business and Wellness Centre
- David Young, chief executive officer, Sources Community Resource Centres
- Doug Kinna, Vice-President - Social, Information and Health, BCGEU
- Tom Syer, director of government affairs, Teck Resources

The council membership may be increased subsequent to Children and Family Development Minister Stephanie Cadieux’s initial meeting with members.

The multi-year strategic plan will address training, quality assurance mechanisms, streamlined policies and standards, an early warning system and alert code model for high-risk cases, and increased public confidence in the ministry.

The functions of the Representative for Children and Youth’s office are outside the scope of the strategic plan and the advisory council’s work. The representative’s office has been offered full membership to the advisory council and government is hopeful they will accept that offer.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development’s 2016-17 budget provided $72.2 million, of which $65.5 million will address caseload and cost pressures with the remainder tagged as a start on addressing items outlined in Bob Plecas’ December 2015 report, Part One: Decision Time. This includes funding this year for 130 new staff, including 100 frontline social workers.

Moving beyond the current fiscal year needs, the council will help review all of the report’s findings to inform future budget decisions.

The advisory council’s first meeting is set for May 24, 2016. The terms of reference will be reviewed at that meeting and may be subject to revision. A working draft can be found here:
Quick Facts:

- Over and above the council’s input, the ministry is also receiving advice from the Representative for Children and Youth’s office – through that office’s ongoing issuance of reports –, attendees at the Child and Family Gathering in late May, and senior advisor on Aboriginal child welfare Grand Chief Edward John, whose report to the minister is due in July.
- While the number of front-line social workers in B.C. has increased, the number of children in care has decreased by about 3,000 since 2001 to approximately 7,250 today – a 29% decline.
- As of December 2015, 2,429 full-time equivalent front-line staff were working in ministry offices throughout the province, including 1,418 front-line social workers.
- In B.C., the Aboriginal child population makes up 9% of the total child population, yet close to 61% of children living out of their parental home in the province are Aboriginal.
- The total number of Aboriginal children in care has been relatively stable since 2001, but the proportion has increased as the Province has been successful in reducing the number of non-Aboriginal children in care.

Learn More:

Read Plecas Review, Part One: Decision Time: ow.ly/2bwHia

A backgrounder follows

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Advisory council members

Giselle Commissiong

Giselle is a partner in Ernst and Young’s Advisory Strategy/Transformation practice with over 20 years of professional experience in both consulting and industry, focusing on strategy and large-scale transformation. She has worked extensively with health care and life sciences clients, with a focus on strategy design, business and operating models, business case development, performance improvement and system integration.

Giselle holds a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from McGill University and an MBA from Schulich school of business.

Paulette Flamond

Paulette is Métis and grew up in Battleford, Saskatchewan before finding her way to the Peace Region 22 years ago and settling in Charlie Lake.

Paulette is a hands-on local business owner and has been executive director of the Northeast Aboriginal Business Centre for the past 14 years. She serves on the Canada Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO) as the Northern B.C. rep as well on the Aboriginal Business Service Network as a board member. In the past, Paulette has served for the Provincial Government on the Northern Development Initiative Trust and the Native Economic Development Advisory Board. In 2011, Paulette was appointed by Minister Mary Polak to the Minister’s Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women and continues to be a strong voice for women both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

Paulette’s post-secondary training includes a certificate in Native Communications from Grant MacEwan College and an Aboriginal Management Certification from the UBC Sauder school of business. She was awarded an honorary associate arts degree from Northern Lights College in 2013 and is a graduate of two life coaching programs.

David Young

David is chief executive officer of Sources Community Resources Society (SOURCES), a community-based not-for-profit multi-service agency based in White Rock, Surrey, Delta, Langley and Prince George. He is also the executive leader of affiliates Sources Foundation and Cornerstone Care Society.

David is the president of the board of the Federation of Community Social Services of BC (Victoria) and participates on the board of the Community Social Services Employers Association (Vancouver). He has served on the board of the Association of Service Providers for
Employability and Career Training (Victoria) and the board of the ASPECT Social Ventures Corporation (Victoria).

Educated at Trent University (BA) and the University of British Columbia (BSW), David is a social worker by training and executive leader by experience. He has served on the Selection Committee for the Prime Minister’s Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Education, the Minister of Health’s National Drug Prevention Advisory Committee, the Governing Council of the Alberta Association for the Accreditation of Early Learning and Care Services (Edmonton), the National Advisory Board for Invest in Kids (Toronto), as vice-president of the North American Organization of the Family (Montreal), and is the past-chairperson of the National Alliance for Children and Youth (Ottawa).

Stephanie Smith

Stephanie is the first woman elected president of the B.C. Government and Service Employees’ Union (BCGEU), representing 67,000 members at 550 different employers and B.C. government ministries.

Stephanie is from the non-government sector, reflecting the diversity of BCGEUs membership base. Prior to being elected BCGEU president, Stephanie served three years as BCGEU treasurer.

An early childhood educator by training, Stephanie comes from the community social services sector (CSS), which represents community living services, youth-at-risk, child care, women services, Aboriginal services and many other members working with B.C.’s most vulnerable.

Tom Syer

Tom Syer is the director of government affairs at Teck Resources—Canada’s largest diversified resource company, which is based in Vancouver. He has 20 years of experience in leadership roles within the public and private sectors working on policy development with specific focuses on natural resource development, climate change, and First Nations relations.

Prior to joining Teck, Tom served as deputy chief of staff for policy coordination and issues management in the B.C. government (2002-07), director of First Nation and corporate relations for a successful B.C. based renewable energy company (2007-12), and as vice president of policy and communications at the Business Council of British Columbia (2012-15). Tom is active volunteer and is currently on the board of Central City Foundation, which helps the most vulnerable people in Vancouver’s inner city.

Tom holds a master of arts and bachelor of business administration from Simon Fraser University.

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