

John Dunn
Executive Director
Foster Care Council of Canada
12-1160 Meadowlands Drive East
Ottawa, ON, K2E 6J2
1-613-220-1039
johndunn@afterfostercare.ca
http://www.afterfostercare.ca

Speakers:

John Dunn, Executive Director, Former Foster Child
Michele Farrugia (pronounced Mick-ay-lay farroogia), Director, Volunteer, Former Foster Child
David Witzel, Director, Former Foster Child

**RE: MANDATORY 5-YEAR REVIEW OF ONTARIO'S CHILD PROTECTION
LEGISLATION**

Media Advisory / Press Release
For Immediate Release
January 29, 2010

NOTE: This media advisory is followed by the press release:

TORONTO (Queens Park Media Studio) - The Foster Care Council of Canada, an organization made up of former foster children and their supporters will be announcing their submission and recommendations to the Minister of Children and Youth Services in relation to the mandatory five-year review of the Child and Family Services Act which governs Children's Aid Societies in Ontario.

The Council will also make two announcements regarding the formation of a permanent, citizen based, five-year review committee, and their "Ride for Accountability of Children's Aid Societies" (RACAS) which is an awareness bicycle ride from Ottawa to Windsor.

Date: Friday, January 29, 2010

Time: 1 p.m.

Location: Queens Park (Legislative Assembly of Ontario) in the media studio, University and Wellesley Aves., Toronto, Ontario

PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

Queens Park, Toronto, January 29, 2010 1PM: The Foster Care Council of Canada, an organization made up of former foster children and their supporters will hold a press conference at the media studio of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to announce their submission and recommendations to the Minister of Children and Youth Services in connection with the mandatory five-year review of the Child and Family Services Act.

The Council will also make two announcements regarding the formation of a permanent, citizen based, five-year review committee, and their "Ride for Accountability of Children's Aid Societies" (RACAS) which is an awareness bicycle ride from Ottawa to Windsor.

Speakers will include former foster child John Dunn, the founder and volunteer executive director of the Foster Care Council of Canada, and board members Michele Farrugia and David Witzel who are also former foster children.

Background

In May, 1999, legislation was introduced by Janet Ecker -- the Minister responsible for child protection services at the time -- which makes it mandatory for the Minister to conduct a review of the Child and Family Services Act every five years for the purpose of ensuring the legislation is always -- as Ecker said -- responding sensitively and effectively to changing needs.

John Dunn, the volunteer executive director of the Foster Care Council of Canada and a former foster child who spent sixteen years of his childhood under the authority of the Catholic Children's Aid Society in Toronto said "after the first review of the Act in 2005, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, at the request of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS), attempted to weaken the complaint procedures available to foster children by proposing to remove existing external oversight mechanisms such as the ability for children to escalate their complaints to the Society's more independent board of directors, to have the board's decision reviewed by a Ministry appointed Director, and to make it impossible for vulnerable children to have an advocate representing them to initiate a complaint on their behalf, which children have the right to do under paragraph 103(1)(b)(ii) of the Act".

After the Ministry introduced the first version of Bill 210 during its first reading, the Foster Care Council of Canada and other community groups such as Canada Court Watch (canadacourtwatch.com), Dufferin Voices of Children Alliance (fixcas.com), Fighting4Families (fighting4families.webs.com), and Rally4Accountability (rally4accountability.webs.com) rallied support from citizens in Ontario who were partially successful in getting MPP's to prevent the Ministry from further weakening the complaints procedure as they had first proposed. However, despite the pressure, Ministry still managed to push through legislation which prevents children in care from having representatives file complaints on their behalf, even when they fear retaliation for doing so as was reported in a previous report from the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate titled "Voices from Within".

The Foster Care Council of Canada will also invite the public to join a 5-year review committee to prepare for the next review of the Act in 2015.