



News Release

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MISSED OPPORTUNITIES IN PROGRESS ON HUGHES RECOMMENDATIONS A SYMPTOM OF BIGGER MINISTRY PROBLEMS

VICTORIA – The ministry responsible for serving the children of B.C. has passed up the opportunity to improve the system by achieving the intent and vision of the Hughes Review, the Representative for Children and Youth said today.

In releasing the third and final *Progress Report on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the BC Children and Youth Review*, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond expressed deep disappointment that the Ministry of Children and Family Development has implemented less than half of the 62 Hughes Review recommendations, more than 4 ½ years after they were made.

Since first assessing progress on the Hughes recommendations in 2007, the Representative has expressed concern about shifting priorities and timelines at MCFD. This concern has not diminished in subsequent years, she said, and it becomes even more disturbing when one considers the immense impact that ministry projects and initiatives have on the daily lives of B.C.'s most vulnerable children and youth.

“When the Hon. Ted Hughes presented his recommendations to government, his review was enthusiastically received throughout the province, supported by both government and the opposition, and a significant infusion of new money was earmarked for the implementation of Hughes. The road ahead seemed clear.

“Fast-forward to 4½ years later and unfortunately, there is a much different and unacceptable situation,” said Turpel-Lafond. “The ministry’s lack of overall success in realizing the Hughes Review vision represents a bigger-picture problem within MCFD.”

Instead of actively engaging in implementing the essential systemic changes put forward in the Hughes Review, the ministry’s overall response has been a lack of sustained action on the Hughes agenda, the creation of alternative plans, vague promises that make high-level reference to the Hughes Review yet offer no detailed information, and at other times outright government dismissal, she said.

Mr. Hughes described his recommendations for the child-serving system as a blueprint for full repair of a system that had ‘been battered on stormy seas.’

“The review -- in a logical, easy-to-understand, and achievable package -- was a plan for legislative, policy and practice changes that would have improved B.C.’s child-serving system. Unfortunately, because the Hughes Review has been largely overlooked by the ministry, B.C.’s child-serving system remains on stormy seas,” she said.

“Much has been promised and little delivered along the path of implementing the Hughes recommendations,” she said. “The ministry has significant responsibilities to British Columbians and yet remains in a period of long and drawn-out change – what it calls ‘transformation’ -- that is incredibly ambitious and most certainly experimental.”

Failing to provide frustrated front-line ministry staff, youth, their families and the oversight body with an understandable picture about the details of their transformation initiative and evidence that progress is being made on it is also unacceptable, said Turpel-Lafond.

“The failure of the ministry to provide such information is a failure in its duty to the children and youth of B.C. and to their own staff, and I urge others to join me in calling for change,” she said. “Political leaders from both sides of the Legislature must demand a level of public accountability and regular reporting that permits rigorous scrutiny.”

Turpel-Lafond said this third Hughes progress report will be the last dedicated to examining progress on specific recommendations from the Hughes Review. She emphasized that the decision to make this the final Hughes progress update is not because its recommendations have been adequately addressed.

She noted that major themes such as quality assurance, organizational learning, public accountability and decentralization also continue to be inadequately addressed, or are said to be restructured with a lack of clarity about what will eventually be measured or improved. Public reporting must be more consistent and detailed, she said, particularly in the area of critical injuries and deaths.

Monitoring and evaluating these major themes and others will form the foundation of the Representative’s monitoring and reporting work on a go-forward basis.

A regular ‘report card’ measuring progress in these areas will be issued by the Representative to provide the public and child-serving stakeholders with an independent assessment of whether B.C.’s children and youth are better served today and tomorrow, than when Mr. Hughes tabled his review. The Representative’s Office will also continue to publicly report out on progress in areas such as consistency, outcomes and equity.

Turpel-Lafond said that although she will move to different methods of assessing improvements to the child-serving system, the wisdom of the Hon. Ted Hughes and the Hughes Review will remain at the core of her ongoing work.

Note: The *2010 Progress Report on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the BC Children and Youth Review* is at www.rcybc.ca

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