



#202(B) – 6715-76 Ave / Edmonton, Alberta / T6B 0A9 / 902-899-7917

The Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations is a national body established to offer a mechanism for the coordination and networking of provincial and territorial Child and Youth Care professional associations. It is also part of the Council's mandate is to advocate for children and youth, and to act as an agent for the promotion of professional child and youth care [CYC].

Our thoughts are with the youth, their families, the CYC workers, and their families who were impacted by the Kawartha Lakes Foster Home fire. CYC practitioners know that there are elements of danger in our job, in part because we work with individuals who have been hurt, and who struggle to engage in effective relationships with individuals, communities, and systems. We often experience strong emotional responses from the young people we work, and often this response is when they are confronted with caring and structure. We know that this atypical response to caring and structure may be aggressive, flight or fight behaviour, however that cannot ever make us complacent about being confronted with the reality of this response or lacking in a compassionate response.

The Ontario Association of Child and Youth Care [OACYC] has been engaged for many years in advocating for quality CYC practice in order that the young people in Ontario are well supported in their growing up. Specifically, in response to the Kawartha Lake foster home fire, the OACYC has made specific requests to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, that follow closely on the advocacy work they have done over the past years.

Most provincial governments invest well in early childhood education; or at the very least recognize the importance of this intervention in the growth of the citizens. Most provincial governments recognize that education of young people in public school must be funded and in-serviced. Both areas of working with children and youth are closely regulated and have guidelines and licensing standards – even in-home daycare, and home schooling. Early childhood and public school educators must obtain a minimum level of education, and regulated professional status yet the support and intervention with young people who are struggling in school, in family, and in community is often implemented by individuals without specific and specialized education or training and is under resourced on many levels in most provinces.

What is the message that the provincial and federal governments wish to deliver by positioning in this way?

The provincial advocate for children and youth, Irwin Elman, and the recommendations of the government of Ontario commissioned report, Because Young People Matter support the request of the OACYC. Without a prompt response to the requests that have been put forth by these professionals and professional bodies, I challenge that the Ontario government is delivering a message that the children and youth who are wards of the ministry are not valuable nor worthy of care.

As a country who has fully signed onto the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, provincial and federal governments have a responsibility to recognize that all children (up to age 18) "...need special safeguards and care..." (Preamble UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) and it is the responsibility of the government to ensure the conditions exist for them to receive this. Decision makers in the Ministries involved in funding, legislating, and regulating programs that support children and young people need to recognize, accept, and actualize this responsibility.

The Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations positions to support the Ontario Association of Child and Youth Care in its request that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services offer clear definitions and regulations for staffed group and foster care facilities to ensure that the children and youth who stay there are assured to be safe. That a team of educated and experienced Child and Youth Care practitioner are made available to offer immediate services to any program providing staffed care and where children and young people are living. That funding is immediately made available to provide Child and Youth Care services for Indigenous youth so they can maintain family and cultural connections during their healing process in their natural life space of rural and remote Canada. And that the Government of Ontario invest in residential care to ensure that the needs of young people are met, supported by qualified, educated, well supervised and supported Child and Youth Care practitioners.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly Shaw". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelly Shaw MA CYS CYC-P
President Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations