

VOICES OF THE BRUISED REEDS

May 11, 2011 Saskatchewan Hansard 7605

Mr. Yates: **We're seeing more children injured and more fatalities in the care of the government over the last three years.**

How will the voices of the vulnerable speak if we do not speak-up for them? - A.L. / C.D.

Tim Korol the past Assistant Deputy Minister was hired to do a review of the Social Services System and identify any concerns and report to the Deputy minister and hence the Minister of Social Services. With this report were to be recommendations to improve this ministry. Tim Korol did what he was mandated to do but he did his job too well.

He found unethical practices within the system were endemic. He found that policies and procedures of 'good practices' for social workers and protection workers fell miserably short and infants and children were being put 'at risk'.

❖ **When he exposed all of this in his report and the recommendations for sweeping changes, he was fired.**

Each spring, in May, the Director of Children's Advocate gives his report to the legislative assembly and each year new promises are made to do better.

Many of the promises are short-sighted and short-cuts and short-lived. It is like putting a band-aide on a leaking inner tube and setting out on it, hoping it will hold. But it doesn't hold because there is no sustainability or accountability for their actions.

It was because of this scenario that I realized that only a lawsuit would get their attention.

Well it got their attention but they knew how it would turn out and did not worry one iota as they continued to put my grandchildren with their mother even when she had a no contact order with her two older children.

They are not just above the law but are the law, as was told to me by Mr. Lane Weigers, Prosecutor who dropped the charges on their mother for sexual abuse.

So Mr. Korol and I and others are speaking-up for the 'bruised reeds' of our nation and we must do this in a clear voice, all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada until they hear us.

The children who have been recipients of such services need to speak-up when they are able to. And for those who have died because of their negligence and malpractices we must demand Coroner's inquests and accountability.

Coroners deciding if there should be an inquest or not are endemic in the system, some being only nurses . If the Coroner deems the death (as was the case with my grandchildren's infant sisters) that their deaths were undetermined or a Sudden Infant Syndrome the public domain will never know what the pathologist or neuropathologist reports said, what the condition of the foster home and foster-care was like and so on. There continue to be no accountability and it must STOP!

Concealing the truth from the public is too easy AND IT HAS BECOME A LUXURY.

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Following is the May 11, 2011: Saskatchewan Government Hansard Exchange between the Minister Social Services, the Hon. Ms. Draude and the opposition NDP MLA Mr. Yates on the state of welfare for babies and children 'at risk'. The report entitled Secret Shame and video reviews by Tim Korol is attached after.

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The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Care of Children

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. All members of this Assembly have a responsibility and obligation to protect the children in our province, Mr. Speaker. Last week we had two reports released, Mr. Speaker. One was the Children's Advocate report, and the other was a report by a former assistant deputy minister in the Department of Social Services. Both reports highlighted the fact that the government is failing to meet the needs of children in its care. Both reports highlight an increase in child fatalities and injuries in care.

To the minister: have you had the time to read both reports, and has the Premier taken the time to read both reports, and what steps is the government taking as a result of these reports to ensure that vulnerable children are protected, nurtured, and cared for in our province?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, yes, I assure you I've taken the time to read both of those reports, and both of those reports are very important because they're talking about the children in our province. And both of them have a number of recommendations that we have looked at and many of them have already been fulfilled, things like the caseload numbers. Both of those reports talk about having more front-line workers and that's what we've done in this budget, have hired 30 more caseload workers so that people are on the front line helping our children. They're talking about things like the emergency foster homes and making sure they have things like criminal record checks and they have first aid training. Yes, that's something that we've done already, Mr. Speaker. We've talked about the PRIDE [parent resources for information, development, and education] training that's important so that foster families, people who are looking after children that are in the responsibility of government, that they actually have more training and understand the responsibilities. That's been undertaken, Mr. Speaker. And more importantly, the caseload numbers are going down. We know that there are always going to be children in our care, and the important thing is that, if we can see a trend downward, it means that the work that's being done is being done well.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, we're seeing a trend. We're seeing more children injured and more fatalities in the care of the government over the last three years. Mr. Speaker, the minister can stand and talk about all the things she's doing but front-line workers don't see the reduction in caseloads, the reduction in work, the reduction in pressure the minister talks about.

Mr. Speaker, children are important in our society, and we all have a responsibility to look after them and an obligation to ensure that they're safe in our communities. Mr. Speaker, Tim Korol, the assistant deputy minister, was hand-picked. He was a friend of the former minister of Social Services, hand-picked as a special adviser to her and then as an assistant

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deputy minister to review the situation. He has brought forward a report, and he finished the job he was hired to do even after being fired, Mr. Speaker, a report called *Saskatchewan Child Welfare: The Secret Shame*, Mr. Speaker, a secret shame.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what assurances can the minister give us that the government is taking the welfare of these children in their care seriously, Mr. Speaker? **All of the indications are to the contrary — more injuries and more deaths, Mr. Speaker.**

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, I know that if the member would read that report, he would know that there isn't more injuries and more deaths. The trend lines really have not changed. **They haven't gone down, which is really scary and I wish, Mr. Speaker, that they would.**

But I want to tell you that the report that was written by the individual the member talked about, it doesn't matter to me who wrote it. What I wanted to look at was the recommendations that he brought forward: recommendations like more checkups for foster homes — that's the type of thing we're doing; ensure that the Aboriginal children that are in our care are looked after securely and that there's a cultural value in their lives — and we make sure that that's being done.

Mr. Speaker, we put more money into the Aboriginal child and family services so they can also hire more front-line workers. That's very important so that the First Nations and Métis children can be put in homes of extended families. That's something they've been asking for a long time, and we've done it this year. Mr. Speaker, we put more money into the Aboriginal child and family institute to make sure that training could take place so that foster families within the Aboriginal families could have more families in the extended unit, Mr. Speaker.

There's more work to be done. And children are our future, and I assure you we're looking after them.

-read this response by Ms. Draude and note the discrepancies in her statements (“**there isn't more injuries and deaths**” to stating “**They haven't gone down, which is really scary...**” to stating “**I assure you we're looking after them.**”

If you didn't read this carefully you might believe the very last statement.

But don't be duped as our province has had the highest infant deaths per capita in the nation for too many years and it must STOP!

The issues within the documents I have posted on our webpage speak volumes as to why babies and children are not protected in this social welfare system.

This system collectively made my life HELL. --- A. Lowery