



News Release

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INCREASED COLLABORATION, ACCOUNTABILITY ESSENTIAL IN TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES

VICTORIA – The need for intensified government commitment to completing all of the Hughes recommendations is even more essential in challenging economic times, B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth said today.

"We know that the blueprint provided by the Hughes Review recommendations will improve the lives of our most vulnerable children," said Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond. "In the tough economic times we are entering, the challenges facing struggling families will increase and their fortunes can abruptly change. The bottom line for all of our concerted efforts must be protecting children."

Turpel-Lafond called for more collaboration between government, child-serving agencies and the business community to increase the focus on strengthening supports for children, to ensure that if the economy worsens children will not suffer even more. Her office will also put an enhanced priority on seeking out collaboration, she said.

Continued commitment to completion of the Hughes recommendations is one of the many ways government can improve the social safety net for vulnerable families in uncertain times, she said in releasing her 2008 Progress Report on Implementation of the Hughes Review Recommendations.

This report evaluated 15 recommendations which were assessed in the 2007 Progress Report as not completed.

These 15 recommendations were chosen for evaluation in the 2008 report because the Representative believes them to be at the very core of the essential government work still required to be done. Completion of these specific recommendations would significantly improve and enhance the effectiveness of the Ministry of Children and Family Development in serving B.C.'s vulnerable children and youth.

Of the recommendations examined in the Representative's 2008 report, none are assessed as complete or fully operational, although one is substantially completed. There is no progress on two of the recommendations, while the others are all in the planning or implementation stage.

"It is concerning to me that the two recommendations that have little or no progress are among the most important in the Hughes Review," Turpel-Lafond said. They are essential for ensuring basic accountability and ultimately, value-for-money.

Turpel-Lafond's report also highlights positive progress made in 2008 by the B.C. government on a number of child-focused initiatives. These included endorsement of Jordan's Principle to ensure a child-first approach in resolving jurisdictional disputes, and new legislation to create a College of Social Workers to enhance professionalism in the field.

Building on these positives with a new level of collaboration is essential because of a heightened level of need the economic downturn will bring.

"We need everyone involved in the child-serving system to set a higher priority on examining performance measures," Turpel-Lafond said. "The system's capacity to serve vulnerable children in a time of economic uncertainty will be severely tested. Ensuring that every initiative and every dollar is making a genuine difference in the lives of B.C. children is at the heart of Mr. Hughes' recommendations. We need to know what is working, and what isn't."

The Representative for Children and Youth is an independent Officer of the Legislature, who champions the fundamental rights of vulnerable children and youth, and promotes improvements in the delivery of services to children, youth and their families. The Representative has offices in Victoria, Burnaby, and Prince George.

Full report available at www.rcybc.ca

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