



**Ministry of Human Services' Response to the
MC Fatality Inquiry Report**

July 2015

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Background

The Ministry of Human Services has carefully reviewed the fatality inquiry report into the April 25, 2009 death of 17-year-old MC, released on May 30, 2014.

The inquiry found that the cause of death was a stab wound to the abdomen and the manner of death was homicide. MC was in provincial government care at the time of his death.

The ministry takes fatality inquiry reports very seriously, as they provide an important third party external review of tragic incidents involving individuals receiving child intervention services or in care. The information in this report has been reviewed and considered, and learnings have been shared with staff who support children and youth in care.

Response to the Recommendations

The report included two recommendations for the ministry. The ministry accepts both recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Funding Disparity

“...the per capita funding which Kasohkowew receives from the Government of Canada is twenty-two percent less than that given to a CFSA by the Government of Alberta. I will echo His Honour Judge Rosborough’s Recommendation (#6) from the Fatality Inquiry Report (dated June 21, 2013): “There must be no disparity of funding in the funding of aboriginal children versus non-aboriginal children.” Judge Rosborough stated that the reasons for eliminating such a disparity are obvious. In this case they are particularly so. The care of a youth like M would be a challenge for any organization, let alone one that is inadequately funded.”

“I recommend that the Government of Alberta investigate whether or not such a funding disparity exists and if so, to enter into discussions with the Government of Canada to eliminate such a disparity.”

Ministry Response: A Federal Human Rights Tribunal is examining funding across Canada for services available on- versus off-reserve to determine the existence and extent of suggested disparities in funding. The tribunal concluded in October 2014, the decision is pending. This information will be used to inform the ongoing funding needs for Delegated First Nation Agencies (DFNAs) in Alberta.

Background:

DFNAs are independent, federally funded agencies that are governed by independent boards. They are important partners in Alberta’s child intervention system and deliver child protection and family enhancement services to children living on-reserve.

The federal government is responsible for funding child intervention services on-reserve. In 2002, the Alberta Response Model¹ was implemented, and the DFNAs, in partnership with the Ministry of Human Services, approached Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) to provide the DFNAs with sufficient funding to enable them to provide services under the new model. As a result, in 2007, AANDC approved additional funding for DFNAs in Alberta which would support an early intervention and prevention approach on-reserve. The first agreements to provide the new funding to individual DFNAs were signed early in 2008, with all remaining DFNAs entering into similar agreements in 2009.

Seventeen DFNAs deliver child intervention services on the reserves of 39 of the 48 First Nations in Alberta via agreements with the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada. These agreements outline AANDC's responsibility to fund comparable levels of service and the expectation that the DFNA will follow Alberta's child intervention legislation and policy.

The ministry has engaged with AANDC to provide updates on child intervention practice initiatives such as Outcomes-Based Service Delivery, the Child Intervention Practice Framework and Signs of Safety² resulting in information sharing regarding the potential impacts on DFNA caseloads and funding. Additionally, ministry staff continues to update AANDC on various changes within child intervention that could potentially impact funding, such as increased provincial rates for service providers or changes in policy that could impact annual projected business plans.

Building strong relationships with the DFNAs and AANDC is imperative to supporting on-reserve child intervention service delivery. Ministry staff supports the DFNAs to bring forward business cases to AANDC and supports conversations between the DFNAs and the provincial and federal governments. Government of Alberta is committed to meeting regularly with Aboriginal leaders in Alberta to discuss and address barriers to education, health, family wellbeing, jobs, skills, and training.

Recommendation 2: Regional Policy Guidelines

"The Enhancement Policy Manual is available to both CFSA's and DFNA's. However, it is unclear whether or not there is any formal mechanism for sharing the Regional Policy Manuals with DFNA's or with the group homes operating within a specific region. In this case, it appears that the AWOL policies of Spirit of Our Youth, Kasohkowew and the Regions are more or less in concert. However, it would make sense that a formal mechanism be put in place to share policy and to ensure the consistency of best practices."

"I recommend that the Government of Alberta investigate whether or not there is a formal mechanism for sharing Regional Policy Guidelines with group homes or DFNA's operating within a Region, and if not, to institute such a procedure."

¹ For more information, visit <https://intranet.humanservices.alberta.ca/home/homepages/CFS/CFSP/Documents/CIPF-Overview.pdf>

² For more information on these initiatives visit <http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/abuse-bullying/17242.html>

Ministry Response: Regional service delivery areas, including DFNAs, have access to an intranet site where information, such as regional policy manuals and practice directives, is available.

The ministry will highlight to Child and Family Services regions and DFNAs the importance of sharing policy and practice documents with contracted service providers so there is consistency in approach and understanding. This information will be further disseminated through a reminder to service delivery directors.

Conclusion

The sudden loss of this young person's life continues to be felt by those close to him. Our thoughts are with this youth's family and friends and community. The Ministry of Human Services is committed to the safety and well-being of children and to creating strong families. We strive for continuous improvement of the child intervention system for all Albertans across the province.

Providing vulnerable Albertans with the resources and supports they need to achieve good outcomes is a ministry priority. By working with government and community partners in addressing the needs of all families in the province, regardless of where they live, the ministry is taking action to provide children and youth with the best opportunities in life and working to build a better Alberta.