



STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Thursday, January 23 2020
Crowne Plaza Hotel
PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS 2020

I am Laura Muirhead, and I am in the process of retiring as Executive Director of the Child Witness Centre, and I would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to David Morneau who joined the Child Witness Centre a week ago and is taking over as Executive Director.

We are here to discuss the need for provincial funding supporting children and youth who experience abuse and crime.

The criminal justice system is complex, and difficult to understand and navigate, overwhelming for adults and even more overwhelming for families when children and youth are victims or witnesses of abuse or crime.

Imagine...

...that you had to go to talk to police or go to court and talk about something very personal done to you by someone that you know.

... your son or daughter learning that what someone they loved was doing to them was wrong.

.... that charges were laid and now you have to wait possibly 1-3 years before the case comes to court.

.... a youth who has suffered abuse and doesn't really have a supportive family to help them

... trying to cope with your own fears and anxieties as a parent and those of your son or daughter.

Now imagine that there is someone there to walk with you and your child or youth through the criminal justice system making sure that you and your son or daughter have the information you need, supporting all of you through the process, helping your son or daughter to have a voice and feel included in the process. This is our work at the Child Witness Centre.

Why is this support so important?

When a child or youth who experiences abuse **is not supported**, they are:

30% less likely to finish high school and 4x as likely to report self-harm and suicidal ideation. (*Report to the Law Commission of Canada, March 2003*).

Did you know that:

- 70% of homeless youth have suffered some form of physical, sexual or emotional abuse (*Report to the Law Commission of Canada, March 2003*).
- Boys who are abused by a family member are 45x more likely to perpetrate dating violence as adolescents (*Lansford et al, 2007; Irish et al, 2009*).

In addition to the significant risk of mental, physical and emotional health issues that happen when children and youth suffer abuse, authors of the *Economic Costs and Consequences of Child Abuse in Canada*, report \$15 billion in economic costs of abuse for Canadian society. These costs incurred by social services, healthcare and justice systems and the significant income loss of children and youth who have been abused in their adult years lead to over \$15 billion in economic costs for Canadian society. (*Bowlus, A., McKenna, K., Day, T., & Wright, D. – 2003*)

Child and Youth Advocacy Centres (CYACs) are innovative, collaborative hubs that support young people who experience abuse in our province and their families through a criminal investigation and help them connect to services that help them begin to heal.

CYACs require annualized funding from the Province of Ontario to ensure that young people receive the support they need through the criminal justice process, helping them to move beyond the abuse or crime that they have experienced seizing the opportunities they have ahead of them.

Almost **three times every day of the year** in Waterloo Region alone a child or youth finds the courage to tell someone about their experience with abuse. These investigations happen through the Waterloo Region Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (CYAC) – a collaborative, best practice hub designed to investigate allegations of abuse in a child and youth friendly place. In the CYAC, our Advocates ensure young people and their families are supported through the investigative process and connected to services in the community that help them begin to heal, regardless of whether charges are laid. This year we anticipate handling more than 550 investigations of abuse involving almost 1000 young people and our Advocates will support more than 500 young people and their families.

There are 8 CYACs open in Ontario and a number of others that are in the development stage. A commitment by the province at this time will significantly enable the development of these best practice models.

Currently, the Department of Justice provides seed funding for CYACs to open. 2 of the 8 have seed funding, but the remaining 6 have been open for at least 3 years and the Department of Justice has indicated that ongoing funding for CYACs is a provincial responsibility. We have been advocating since 2014 with the provincial government annualized funding to ensure the sustainability of these services.

The 6 CYACs require approximately \$3 million beginning in 2020-21 to provide victim centred child and youth friendly support during a criminal investigation and beyond. Without this funding these innovative victim centred hubs providing evidence informed services are at significant risk and children, youth and families will be left unsupported during this very vulnerable and difficult time in their lives.

In addition,**More than 10 children and youth each week** in Waterloo Region and Guelph and Wellington County become a victim of or a witness to a crime and this year we will support more than 900 young people and their families through the criminal court process. When a young person becomes a victim of a crime and charges are laid either through the CYAC or other police units, we ensure that young people and their families are informed, supported and included in the criminal court process, fostering healing hope and wellbeing. The demand for these services has more than tripled in the past 7 years.

Provincial funding for this work in Waterloo Region began in 2006 when the Ministry of the Attorney General committed \$165,000 annually to support young victims and witnesses of crime in our communities, however this funding supports less than 30% of the young people needing this victim centred support in our Region alone and requires a further investment of \$450,000.

Overall government funding will contribute less than 20% towards our approximate \$1.3million dollar budget in 2020-21, which puts our services at risk as we have to fundraise the balance annually.

Why invest in victim centred support services for young people now?

1. It is cost effective and makes economic sense.
 - A recent Social Return on Investment study completed by Deloitte for the BOOST (Toronto) CYAC demonstrated that for every dollar invested through the CYAC, there is a return on investment of \$3. Some of these savings will be in downstream health services, and mental health, addictions and services for the homelessness.
2. It is an innovative and evidence informed approach, recognized internationally in more than 40 countries. There are more than 1000 in the United States and more than 40 open or developing in Canada.
3. It reduces the risk of re-victimization by the system which can exacerbate and/or induce mental health symptoms.
4. It supports and enhances the work of police and child protection. In fact, in June of 2019, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police passed a resolution formally requesting the province to provide funding to CYACs in Ontario. A copy of the resolution has been included in your package.
5. It reduces the risk of mental, emotional and physical health issues now and in the future.
 - More than one third of Canadians have suffered some form of child abuse in their lives. (Afifi, T.O., Boyle, M., Cheung, K., MacMillan, H.L., Sareen, J., & Taillieu, T. 2014. *Child abuse and mental disorders in Canada, Canadian Medical Association Journal.*)
 - While child abuse is associated with an increased risk of mental health disorders there is a statistically significant increased risk of many serious physical health conditions in adulthood including: stroke, cancer and lung disease.
6. It supports initiatives already underway by the provincial government, for example, the new health curriculum in the schools gives young people the language they need to explain what

they are experiencing. We owe it to these young people when they come forward to provide them with a seamless, coordinated approach that supports them as they tell their story and reduces the risk of re-victimization from the start of an investigation.

In this next budget we urge you to remember that **every day in Ontario, there are many, many young people who are being victimized by abuse and crime and dealing with the aftermath and we know that those coming forward are just the tip of the iceberg.** You need to invest in them and their future, showing them that they are valued and deserve the chance to feel safe, heard and supported. Your investment in their future requires:

- **an annual commitment of \$3 million, now to the Child and Youth Advocacy Centres in Ontario and**
- **a further annual investment of approximately \$450,000 providing victim centric support to young victims and witnesses of crime through the criminal court process in Waterloo Region**

For Waterloo Region this would mean an additional investment of approximately \$1.1 million in the 2020-21 budget year.

This is a complex topic that needs more than a 7-minute discussion. I implore and invite you to take the first step and meet with the directors of these innovative Centres as soon as possible to explore how Ontario can lead the way, be innovative, more cost effective and provide better support and outcomes for young victims and witnesses in our communities who experience abuse and crime in the next budget.

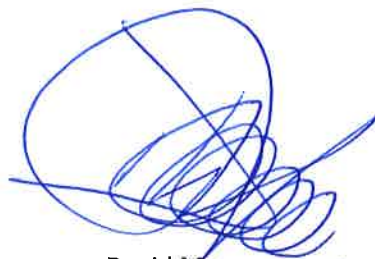
Our most vulnerable need our government to stand up for them **now**, assuring them that if they are assaulted, abused or victimized by crime, that services are there to support them, so that they can grow beyond their experience and become productive members of our province supporting an Ontario that is Open for Business! We look forward to continuing the conversation.

Thank you to each of you for being here and your efforts on behalf of the citizens of Ontario.

Respectfully Submitted,



Laura Muirhead
Retiring Executive Director,
Child Witness Centre
laura.muirhead@childwitness.com



David Morneau
Executive Director
Child Witness Centre
david.morneau@childwitness.com

In addition to the information shared in the Pre-Budget consultation, the following materials have been included in this package:

1. Child Witness Centre Background Information
2. Voices in the Community – Our Impact
3. Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police Resolution
4. Child/Youth Victims of Abuse need Support Now – Briefing Note to Ontario MPPs – August 2018
5. Pediatrics & Child Health 2018 - Child and youth Advocacy Centres: A change in practice that can change a lifetime
6. Letter of Support – Waterloo Regional Police
7. Letter of Support – Family and Children's Services of Waterloo Region



Our vision is a community where children and youth are safe, valued and heard, empowering them towards strong futures.

We provide support, education and advocacy for children and youth who are, or may become, victims or witnesses of abuse or crime in Waterloo Region, Guelph and Wellington County. Our caring and compassionate professionals walk with young people and their families on their journey through the criminal justice process, helping them have a voice and fostering healing, hope and wellbeing.

For those young people who find the courage to disclose abuse, our support begins at the start of an investigation through the Waterloo Region Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (CYAC) where young victims, and their families, are supported and connected to the resources needed, helping them begin to heal. When charges are laid through the investigations in the CYAC or through other police units in both Waterloo Region, Guelph and Wellington County, children, youth and their families are supported through the criminal court process. The opening of the CYAC has completely transformed how allegations of abuse are investigated and how we support children and youth who disclose abuse, and their families. It has allowed us to extend a seamless transition from an investigation of abuse right through to the end of the criminal justice process, providing children, youth and their families with support from start to finish.

We fulfill our mission through our three core programs that include:

1. Waterloo Region Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (CYAC) and Child and Youth Advocate Program: The Waterloo Region Child and Youth Advocacy Centre is a collaborative best practice hub for investigating allegations of child abuse and ensuring that young people are connected to community supports to help them begin to heal, regardless of whether charges are laid. The Child Witness Centre is the lead agency at the CYAC in this collaborative that includes dedicated and specialized investigators from Family and Children's Services of the Waterloo Region (FACS) and Waterloo Regional Police (WRP). Our role is to provide oversight of the CYAC and deliver the Child and Youth Advocate Program. Our Advocates begin their support at the start of an abuse investigation through the CYAC which opened in May 2016. Investigations take place in this child and youth-focused space with Advocates providing trauma-informed, wraparound support for children, youth and their families ensuring they are heard and connected to the resources needed to help them heal, regardless of whether charges are laid.

In 2019-20 we anticipate there will be more than 550 investigations of abuse involving almost 1,000 young people and Advocates from the Child Witness Centre will support more than 500 young people and their families through the CYAC. By March 31, 2020, the CYAC will have handled almost 2,100 investigations involving at least 3,300 young people and the

Advocates will have supported more than 1,500 children, youth and their caregivers since opening in May 2016.

Watch this short video to learn more about the Waterloo Region CYAC:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vlccx4eCjw>

2. Child Witness Program: When criminal charges are laid, all children and youth who are victims or witnesses and their families in Waterloo Region, Guelph and Wellington County are supported through the criminal court process through our Child Witness Program. Our specialized professionals provide education, advocacy and support for these young people and their families, as they journey through the criminal court process. When an investigation happens through the CYAC, then support seamlessly continues through this program. Like the work in the CYAC, support through the Child Witness Program is trauma-informed and uniquely-tailored to the needs of the child or youth and family and can include: helping young people develop coping techniques; assessment and advocacy for testimonial aids; court preparation and accompaniment; and helping parents and caregivers be effective in supporting their child or youth.

In 2019-20, more than 900 children and youth will be supported through the criminal court process.

Watch this short video to learn more about the impact of this work:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4gzZ25E-OM>

3. Youth Symposium Program: This day-long community outreach initiative takes place on three consecutive days, with one day serving students from Guelph and Wellington County and two days serving students from Waterloo Region. It involves over 4,000 Grade 8 students, along with almost 300 teachers. Each year, we develop a program and source inspirational, well-informed speakers who engage the students, challenge them and provide them and their teachers with ideas and strategies to build resilience and to help them embrace life's opportunities and challenges. This creates continued learning on issues relevant at this pivotal time in the lives of these students, as they prepare to enter high school. We handle both the registration and payment for this program and coordinate more than 50 volunteers over the three days who assist in the running of this program. Part of the program includes educating the students on the work of the Child Witness Centre so that they are aware of community supports available to them.

Since inception, more than 39,000 Grade 8s in Waterloo Region, Guelph and Wellington County have had the benefit of participating in the Youth Symposium.

Voices in the Community
Our Impact



This image, drawn by a child we supported, illustrates what we strive to accomplish as we journey with young people and their families.

Voices in the Community

Our Impact

Our impact is felt and ripples throughout the community. Below you will find examples shared by young people and their parents, our Advocates and Caseworkers who provide direct service to these young people and their families and those we work with in the community.

What Young People and their Families say:

"Grade 9 is supposed to be a new and exciting experience for many. It's a time where many changes take place; you have new experiences, make memories, and start a new chapter of your life. My experience was different. During my first semester of high school, the world that I knew shattered in front of me.

I remember being called out of class to the Principals office and having to share experiences I tried to repress, with the police, the school, and my family. Someone close to me slowly became a monster in front of my eyes, as I was forced to replay images I tried to forget and share my story. Having the investigation happen in the school added significantly to my trauma. Gossip escalated and rumors spread, making me feel labelled, isolated and alone.

He was charged with aggravated assault and more victims were identified.

When I was put in contact with the Child Witness Centre, I finally felt like I had a safe place to go. I had a place where people understood what was happening to me. This was also a place where no judgement took place. I remember the first day I was introduced to our caseworker at the centre. I immediately felt welcome, safe, and accepted. My caseworker never asked me details about what happened, or why I got to where I was. She taught me about the court process and helped me feel comfortable with the trial. When I wanted to know things that I did not want to ask the police, or share with others, I felt okay asking my caseworker. It was my safe place in a shattered world.

For years, I tried to repress the traumatic experience I went through. I avoided counsellors, psychologists, and assistance from friends and family. I just wanted the dark memories to go away and was not ready to open up. This went on for years. I managed to make it through high school and was accepted to U of Waterloo in an environmental degree, one I chose as I wanted to be as far away from my trauma as I could. In my second year at the university of Waterloo I experienced an episode of post-traumatic stress, which I was later diagnosed by school psychologists, along with depression and generalized anxiety disorder, which I live with to this day.

I went from being a straight A student to not showing up to classes and not completing course work.

I took time off, and U of Waterloo gave me a break and the support I needed for 8 months. During this time, I reflected back on my experience and I reached out to the Child Witness Centre, wanting to give back to an organization that helped me so much in one of the darkest days of my life. This experience changed me. I was able to see how much of an impact this centre made, still being a safe place for me to go, and I was able to begin giving back to an organization that gave me so much hope during the darkest days of my life.

I went back to school to pursue a degree in sociology and legal studies. I became more involved in the community at the Sexual Assault Support Centre, Child Witness Centre, and got involved on campus within my department – yes, all while working part-time as a server. I graduated with honours, was accepted into multiple graduate studies programs, and am happy to say that I just recently graduated from my master's degree and am now working for the organization that helped me over-come my trauma and reach my full potential!

Many people go through traumatic experiences every day and without organizations like the Child Witness Centre I would not be able to share my story today. Today I share my experience as a story of hope. My story illustrates how supporting our organization can help the ordinary person next door, like myself, to overcome negative experiences and reach their full potential.

If I had any words of wisdom for future witnesses or victims that go through traumatic experiences like I did, I would want them to know that they are not alone and that things will get better. That what happened to them does not define who they are, or who they are capable of being. Negative experiences can be used to help others in a positive way. The Child Witness Centre helped me see this, and now sharing my story with you today, I can see the full circle of community support and generosity.

*Feel free to share my experience, as in my eyes that is the entire purpose of going through something- to help others. “**A Youth***

*“Having never been involved in this process before, it was extremely comforting to have someone explain the process moving forward and prepare us for the possible different outcomes rather than being unprepared or perhaps blind-sided. Aside from the advise and full support given, just being beside our daughter during the testimony provided courage and strength to speak.” **A Parent***

This image was drawn by a 9-yearold girl as she shared with the Judge her journey and the impact of the abuse she experienced – it is a long timeline, with many black clouds. The most telling though is the sunshine happy face at the end.



*"Keeping us up-to-date as the case proceeded through the court system and ensure us that our safety was paramount." **A Parent***

*"Information is power and by keeping us informed, my child felt like they took the power back." **A Parent***

*"I didn't have to see the person who hurt me. My caseworker helped me and made me feel better." **A Child***

*"We had no idea what to expect, there was considerable fear and anxiety, it was so helpful to have someone answer all of our questions." **A Parent***

*"Kept our family up to date on where and when things would be happening so I didn't have to continuously wonder when the next step would be taking place. Gave us lots of information and answered all our questions." **A Parent***

*"Our family came to the Child Witness Centre during a time of monumental crisis. The team as a whole were compassionate, understanding and knowledgeable. They not only assisted and helped us keep apprised on the legal front, but also offered after care with our successful Criminal Injury Compensation Board claims. We have chosen to contribute to them because we know that it is money well invested into the children of our community." **A Parent***

"I am struggling to find the right words to adequately describe how much we were helped by the Child Witness Centre with our recent court experience. My daughter is a victim of sexual abuse and we have had an extremely difficult year. We have done our best to stay positive but at times have found ourselves to be completely overwhelmed. Even though my daughter's abuser plead guilty, the thought of going to court for his sentencing was still very intimidating.

Your caseworker played a fundamental role in preparing us for this experience. We were supported through the whole process. Your caseworker was amazing and acted as an advocate for my daughter, including arranging a meeting with the Crown Attorney. This meeting made all the difference for us in having a subsequent positive court experience!" **A Parent**

"Originally, we had thought we would shield our son from the court process completely, particularly as he was in such a fragile state after the incident. We were encouraged by a friend that the court process could be helpful for him in dealing with what had happened. We could not have imagined a more positive experience for him. The judge spoke in such a kind and empowering manner and having your support in allowing him to see the courtroom ahead of time, developing a relationship with him and being there with us to explain everything made him feel very safe and secure. We saw a change in him immediately and have continued to see him improve. He has come through this much stronger and with deep insights. He really felt comfortable with you and appreciated so much all you did for him. Thanks once again for all of your kindness and support." **A Parent**

"The Child Witness Program made the whole court process less intimidating and helped to reduce the stress related to my 5- year-old son's assault. I am extremely grateful for the program and have nothing but positive things to say (or write) about the staff and volunteers at Child Witness who helped during a very difficult time." **A Parent**

What our Caseworkers and Advocates say:

"When a child decides to tell someone that they are being abused, they are the ones who see their fears about the consequences of telling often come true. They are the ones who have to tell their experience to strangers. While we can't take away the painful process that is the reality of being a child victim, we can walk with them, helping them and their family endure it and heal" **Meagan Copland, Child and Youth Advocate Program Manager**

"I feel like what I do impacts the families on many levels. I've seen the look of relief on parents' faces when they learn there is someone else there to help them support their children when they may be emotionally struggling. When they need to leave their children alone to speak with WRPS and FACS, they are relieved someone is there to assist with their children. One of the biggest impacts I have experienced within the role is the support we can offer to youth who are feeling alone and struggling with what happened to them. A lot of the time they don't need anything concrete from us, they just like that someone is checking in on them — someone who

*knows what they have experienced and isn't going to judge them in any way." **Rebecca Heibin-Kursikowski, Child and Youth Advocate***

*"We have heard caregivers speak of their own childhood trauma and remark on the difference between their experiences and those of their children. Caregivers with their own trauma histories express feeling completely amazed with the amount of supportive empathy, compassion and guidance they receive from the Advocate and the rest of the team at the Child and Youth Advocacy Centre in walking through similar journeys with their children. These comments speak to the positive impact that our role as Advocates has on the children and youth that we serve in our community." **Advocates, Child & Youth Advocate Program***

*"We do not have any authority or involvement in the decisions regarding the outcome of the investigation and can stay involved regardless of the investigative outcome. We have found this to be particularly helpful when it comes to our teen clients. We have the opportunity to build rapport which helps in gaining their trust and creating a supportive relationship. We later become a safe base they can return to when things become challenging as they navigate both the outcomes of the investigation and the impact of the incidents that brought them to the CYAC initially. We can stay involved for as long as they feel is necessary to assist them in cultivating other supportive relationships in their communities. We also find that, months after a file is closed, a teen may reach out seeking support when they are in crisis. We feel this demonstrates an established supportive landing base that teens feel comfortable turning to. We are privileged to walk with our clients during their journey towards wellness, regardless of how long some of those journeys may take." **Advocates, Child & Youth Advocate Program***

"The 8 year old girl who must testify about her grandfather's "special time" with her; the young man who was seduced by his teacher; the 10 year old girl who saw and heard the fighting going on between her parents; the 14 year old whose bike and phone were snatched from him by a group of young bullies. These are the reasons why I do my job.

*I, as a Caseworker have the pleasure of working with these amazing, courageous kids every day. They are scared, nervous and often ashamed. Our system is adversarial and unfriendly. These kids bravely come to court to tell their stories, and I am honoured to have even a little to do with it. I strive every day to do what is right for these young people, and I believe wholeheartedly in the work that we are doing. **Laura Cook, Caseworker***

"Family, friends and other professionals I encounter will often say "how do you do this? It's such a hard job". My answer is simple: I have the easy part in all of this. It is the CHILD who has the hard job. THEY are the ones who have to decide to share personal and often embarrassing information with the police and Family and Children Services. THEY are the ones who see their fears about the consequences of telling often come true. THEY are the ones who have to tell, and sometimes repeatedly keep telling and answering questions about this information to

strangers. So yes, I have the easy part. The kids get to be “my boss”. The kids get to tell me how I can help make a pretty terrible experience maybe a bit better for them. **Meagan Copland, former Caseworker**

“I have admired the work of the Child Witness Centre for a number of years, so when a caseworker position became available in January 2014, I jumped at the chance to join this well-respected, caring and compassionate agency. I am now a very proud member of this team. It is with great pleasure that I am able to assist some of the Criminal Justice system’s most vulnerable victims and witnesses in bravely telling their story. The children we assist are wonderfully unique but share their bravery and courage. They are truly inspiring young people and each one of the children I assist impacts my work and my life in a positive way. I am truly honoured to assist them and support them through the court process and I cannot think of a more important way to spend my day.” **Melissa Hern, former Caseworker**

“The words ‘privilege’ and ‘honour’ best describe what this job means to me. A child who has been the victim of a crime has often been left with a heavy emotional load to carry. Navigating the criminal justice system, is an additional burden which should not have to fall upon children and their families by themselves. I am thankful that our services are available to these children, and I am honoured to help them through all stages of the process.” **Adam Hodgins, former Caseworker**

What our Community is saying:

“An outstanding example of collaboration, the Child and Youth Advocacy Centre provides a safe and comforting environment where children and youth who have been impacted by the trauma of abuse are able to receive exceptional support services under one roof. Specially trained investigators work with community partners to provide invaluable support to young people and their families. We are extremely proud of this partnership, as all agencies work together to support the healing process and promote community wellbeing.” **Chief Bryan Larkin, Waterloo Regional Police**

“Advocates play a valuable role in the CYAC. They have the opportunity to greet children, youth and their caregivers warmly during one of the biggest crisis of their lives and they remain involved once the investigation is complete to ensure that children and youth receive the help they need to begin to heal”. **Karen Spencer, Executive Director, Family & Children’s Services of the Waterloo Region**

“The work of the CYAC and the Child Witness Centre is critical in assisting children navigate the difficult path that is presented to them within the criminal justice system. Advocates within the

CYAC provide the critical benefit of giving children and families a sense that they are supported and that they have 'someone in their corner' throughout the process. The benefit associated with helping these children come to terms with the trauma and difficulties that they have experienced over the long term is immense." **Mark Poland, Former Crown Attorney, Waterloo Region**

"Imagine hearing from a child that he or she has been abused – likely by a trusted adult. It's a heartbreaking reality in our community and we should all be deeply concerned that we have more than one report of child sexual or physical abuse every day. These children and youth face a painful process that is the reality of being a child victim – a process that experts say in many cases re-victimizes the child. I first became acquainted with the Child Witness Centre in the mid 90s when it was known as the Citizens Concerned with Crime Against Children (4Cs) so I know the good work that has quietly been done for many years. When Laura Muirhead talked about the work to open a Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (CYAC) in collaboration with several community partners, I knew it was something vitally important to our community and I wanted to help". **Heidi Balsillie, the Honorary Chair of the Child Witness Centre Safe Hands-Strong Futures Community Campaign**

"If I had been heard, 6-8 sessions of counselling would have probably been good enough. However, I wasn't heard, the abuse continued, I was abused by an uncle and my Mom's husband before I was 8. In my teens I dropped out of school, used drugs, participated in self harm, was in an abusive relationship, had a baby when I was 18, lived on housing assistance, had years of counselling. Now I'm in my 40's, have a family, and am finally starting to seize the opportunities ahead of me as I start a 2 Year program at Conestoga College this fall. Think about the unnecessary costs, the impact on my life and the ripple effect my life had on others in our community. Had I been heard and helped as a child, my path would have been significantly different". **Dianne, an adult survivor of child sexual abuse**

"As a Sexual Assault Support Centre, we provide counselling to survivors of sexual violence who are sixteen years of age and older. Many of our clients are adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse, who never received the support they needed as children. Instead, they are reaching out to us ten, twenty and even thirty years after the abuse; they've tried to cope with its impact for decades. We support the CYAC's efforts to provide early support and intervention to ensure young survivors are given a chance to heal and move forward in their lives." **Sara Casselman, Executive Director, Sexual Assault Support Centre**

"Many of the individuals served by House of Friendship have a history of profound trauma and abuse that wasn't addressed adequately or appropriately during their child/youth years. The long-term impact of this has had devastating results leading to homelessness, addictions, compromised health, and a lack of belonging in our community. As a community, we need to

*invest in more collective impact efforts that focus on lessening the devastating impacts of trauma in children's lives. Efforts like the **CYAC** are an example of how we can begin to change this".* **John Neufeld, Executive Director, House of Friendship**

"Thank you for the important work you do for children. I wish there had been an organization like this for my siblings and me in the 1950s! Always know that you make a huge difference in the child's life and in our society." **Donor**



RESOLUTION 2019-05

Support of Child and Youth Advocacy Centers in Ontario

Preamble:

Child Advocacy Centres in Ontario are seeking provincial funding and are requesting unanimous support from all police leaders and stakeholders in the development and sustainability of Child Advocacy Centres across Ontario in the protection of children and youth, and

WHEREAS child abuse including sexual and physical abuse, sex trafficking and sexual exploitation is a growing threat to the children of Ontario, and

WHEREAS lasting trauma for both child victims of abuse and those investigating child abuse crimes is evidenced, and

WHEREAS the Child Advocacy Centre model is internationally recognized as best practice in child abuse investigation, and

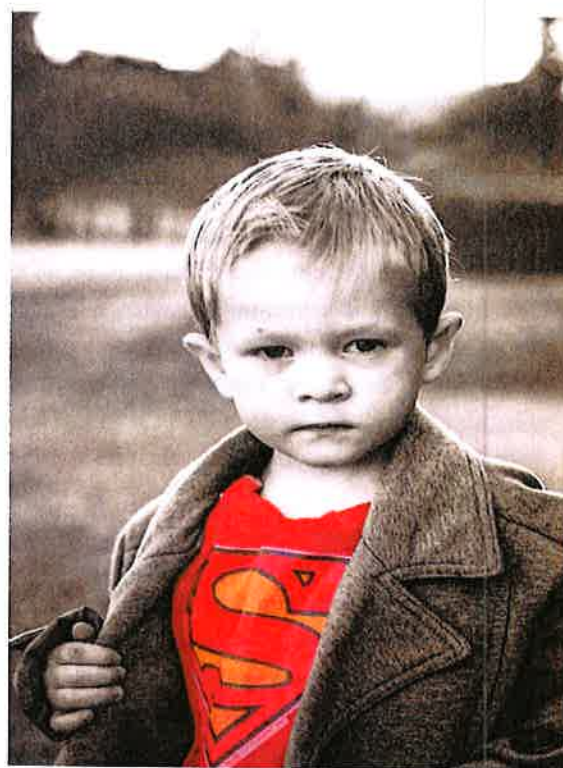
WHEREAS the Child Advocacy Centre model is proven to reduce trauma for both child victims of crime and investigative professionals.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police calls on the Government of Ontario to endorse and support the multidisciplinary approach of Child Advocacy Centres and to assist in providing adequate funding to support the development and sustainability of Child Advocacy Centres across Ontario.

CHILD/YOUTH VICTIMS OF ABUSE NEED SUPPORT NOW

BRIEFING NOTE TO ONTARIO MPPs

AUGUST 2018



SUBMITTED BY:

ONTARIO'S CHILD/YOUTH ADVOCACY CENTRES

BRIEFING NOTE

Date: August 1, 2018

To: Members of Provincial Parliament - Ontario

From: Ontario's Child/Youth Advocacy Centres ([Appendix A](#))

RE: Funding Child/Youth Advocacy Centres

Purpose

Ontario's Child/Youth Advocacy Centres (C/YACs) are seeking \$2.5m/annum base operating funding to support and sustain best practice, forensic investigations of crimes against children/youth and, to provide ongoing victim support within a safe, child/youth focused environment. \$2.5m/annum will be distributed across six C/YACs currently operating in Ontario¹. (Note: "child", "young people" and/or "children" used throughout, represents both children and youth).

Situation

The newly elected Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario has an immediate opportunity to:

- demonstrate commitment to the wellbeing of children;
- save money and;
- help heal #MeToo voices of tomorrow through a model of excellence in investigation and victim support – TODAY.

The #MeToo movement and recent high-profile cases of alleged/prosecuted sex abuse crimes against young people has raised the often-hidden issue of child sexual abuse to the forefront of public discussion. Governments and community leaders are expressing outrage and concern regarding the safety of our children and have committed to addressing allegations and creating safe spaces for young people to come forward. C/YACs offer a proven, best practice, evidence and trauma informed approach to investigating allegations of child abuse. C/YACs ensure children and their families are supported throughout abuse investigations, and connected to services to help them heal.

In Ontario, along with the six C/YACs currently operating, there are eight C/YACs,² in various stages of development. Every child in Ontario, who has experienced abuse, deserves immediate access to a C/YAC model of excellence and yet, no Ontario C/YAC has base operating funding. In the absence of base operating funding, focus is shifted from the C/YAC core mandate of supporting children who have been abused through traumatic and complex situations, onto fundraising - limiting capacity and impeding growth. We strongly urge Ontario's Government to financially support a basic human right of our most vulnerable victims - *a model of excellence in investigation and victim support in the aftermath of child abuse*.

Ontario's PC Party signaled willingness to support Ontario C/YACs; the *People's Guarantee* provincial policy document released in November 2017, commits \$45m toward "expanding the Boost Child & Youth Advocacy Center" and "bringing the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre model to Ontario". Andrea Horwath, Leader - Ontario's New Democratic Party met with Ontario's C/YACs in April 2018 and expressed her support of the C/YAC model in providing effective, cost-efficient care to child victims.

Ontario's C/YACs need financial support from the Ontario Government now, to ensure momentum is not lost in advancing best practice support for children in Ontario who have been abused AND to help mitigate the immediate and long-term adverse financial impact of child abuse in Ontario.

¹Cornwall, Niagara, Simcoe/Muskoka, Toronto, Waterloo, Windsor Essex

²Carleton Place, Durham, Kingston, London, North Bay, Ottawa, Sioux Lookout, Sudbury

Background

Child sexual abuse is a serious problem within our society and occurs more frequently than people realize³. According to Statistics Canada, children under the age of 18 accounted for over half (55%) of all victims of sexual offences reported to police in 2012⁴. Canada's first nation-wide study to examine the incidence of reported child abuse in Canada, *The Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect*, notes that contrary to widespread belief; 93 percent of alleged perpetrators are known to their child victims. Statistics Canada reported a **30 percent increase in sexual violations against children** from 2015 to 2016 from hands-on offences, to adults agreeing or arranging to commit a sexual offence against a child^{5,6}.

Statistics Canada reported a **41 percent increase in child pornography** incidents from 2015, and a **233 percent increase** since 2006⁷. In January 2016 the Canadian Centre for Child Protection released its study, *Child Sexual Abuse Images on the Internet: A Cybertip.ca Analysis*. The report was based on a review of close to 152,000 reports and examined 43,762 unique images. Key findings include:

- 78 percent of children in the images and videos were estimated to be younger than 12 years old;
- 68.7 percent of the images and videos appeared to be taken in a home setting⁸.

When a child finds the courage to report abuse, the abuse investigation process can be scary and intimidating and can create a great deal of stress and anxiety for the child and their family. Further, investigative interviews with children frequently occur in intimidating settings like police stations. C/YACs are child-friendly facilities where multidisciplinary teams (including: law enforcement, child protection, prosecution, mental health, medical and victim advocacy professionals) work together to investigate abuse, help children heal from abuse, and hold offenders accountable. The multidisciplinary team is a cornerstone of all C/YACs. By coordinating the activities of the professionals involved in a child abuse investigation, C/YACs strive to reduce the stress and potential re-traumatization of child victims/witnesses and their families which may occur due to traditional investigative practices.

Economic and Social Cost

Often, children who have been abused and non-offending caregivers, never report what they have experienced, therefore, the true scale and cost of child abuse in Ontario is difficult to quantify. A health report issued by Statistics Canada indicates **32 percent of Canadians** have experienced physical abuse, sexual abuse, and/or exposure to intimate partner violence during childhood. The Ontario Incidence Study on Reported Child Abuse and Neglect found children's aid societies opened 82,858 cases in 2013⁹.

Experiencing child abuse is associated with an **increased risk of mental health disorders**, including; depression; post-traumatic stress disorder; bi-polar disorder and; substance abuse/dependence¹⁰. Childhood abuse is also associated with statistically significant increased risk of many serious physical health conditions in adulthood including; stroke, cancer, and lung disease¹¹. Additionally, childhood abuse increases the risk of both suicide ideation and attempts (4.1 and 6.1 times greater respectively)¹².

³Canadian Centre for Child Protection. (2014). Cybertip, Child sexual abuse: It is your business. Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Retrieved from Cybertip.ca

⁴ Jillian, B. C. (2014). Police reported crime statistics in Canada, 2013. Ottawa, Ontario, Canada: Juristat. Retrieved from <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2014001/article/14040-eng.htm>

⁵Canadian Centre for Child Protection. (2017, July 2017). Statement: New Statistics Canada report reflect alarming reality of sexual abuse of children. Retrieved from News & Media: https://www.protectchildren.ca/app/en/media_release_201707_statcan_report_child_sexual_abuse

⁶Keighley, K. (2017, July 24). Police reported crime statistics in Canada, 2016. Ottawa, Ontario, Canada: Juristat. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2017001/article/54842-eng.pdf>

⁷ Canadian Centre for Child Protection. (2017, July 2017). Statement: New Statistics Canada report reflect alarming reality of sexual abuse of children. Retrieved from News & Media: https://www.protectchildren.ca/app/en/media_release_201707_statcan_report_child_sexual_abuse

⁸Canadian Centre for Child Protection. (2016). Child sexual abuse images on the internet: A Cybertip analysis, summary of key findings. Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada: Canadian Centre for Child Protection. Retrieved from https://cybertip.ca/pdfs/CTIP_CSAResearchReport_Summary_2016_en.pdf

⁹ BOOST (2017, Nov.) Reducing trauma, improving lives: The social value of Boost Child & Youth Advocacy Centre. Final Report.

¹⁰ Afifi, T.O., MacMillan, H., Boyle, M., Taillieu, T., Cheung, K., & Sareen, J. (2014). Child abuse and mental disorders in Canada. Canadian Medical Association Journal, 186, E324-E332. Link <http://www.cmaj.ca/content/early/2014/04/22/cmaj.131792>

¹¹ Afifi, T.O., MacMillan, H., Boyle, M., Taillieu, T., Cheung, K., Turner, S., & Sareen, J. (2016). Child abuse and physical health conditions in Canada. Health Reports, 27, 19-27. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-003-x/2016003/article/14339-eng.htm>

¹² Afifi, T.O., MacMillan, H., Boyle, M., Taillieu, T., Cheung, K., & Sareen, J. (2014). Child abuse and mental disorders in Canada. Canadian Medical Association Journal, 186, E324-E332. Link <http://www.cmaj.ca/content/early/2014/04/22/cmaj.131792>

A 2017 study commissioned by Toronto's *Boost Child & Youth Advocacy Centre* found for every \$1 spent, between \$1.50 and \$2.70 of benefits accrue to society, amounting to a total societal value of \$730,000 to \$4.6 million in 2017 dollars for the 2,225 clients served by *Boost C/YAC* from Oct. 1/13 to Sept. 30/16¹³.

Statistics that reveal the scale of child abuse in Canada have led researchers to quantify the issue in economic terms. Authors of the *Economic Costs and Consequences of Child Abuse in Canada Report* describe child abuse as “a generally hidden act in our society” that all members of society pay for in one way or another. The costs incurred by the social services, healthcare, and justice systems and the significant income loss from adults who have been abused as children, leads to over **\$15 billion in economic costs** for Canadian society¹⁴.

International and National C/YACs

C/YACs are currently operating in twenty countries worldwide¹⁵ with development underway in twenty more¹⁶. Most of the C/YACs developed internationally operate as government-based entities, and are funded in-whole/predominately by government¹⁷. In the United States, the first C/YAC opened in rural Alabama in 1986. Three decades later, the **United States has over 1000 centres**. This expansion has been fueled by a sustainable funding model built on shared contribution from public, private, and individual sources. In the USA, the average funding blend is 68 percent public funding and 32 percent private funding. State government, the largest contributor, accounts for more than one-third of all C/YAC funding.

Across Canada, over 40 C/YACs are open/in-development. These C/YACs were made possible through seed funding from The Department of Justice Canada's Victim's Fund. Alberta's *Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre*, and *Zebra Centre* receive funding from the Government of Alberta, City of Calgary¹⁸, and Alberta Health Services¹⁹. British Columbia's *Sophie's Place*, receives Provincial funding through the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General²⁰.

Conclusion

C/YACs offer a proven, best practice, evidence and trauma informed approach for investigating allegations of child abuse and providing victim support. Globally, efforts to implement the C/YAC model are advancing and other jurisdictions are well ahead of Ontario in funding the C/YAC model. The role of the Ontario Government in advancing and sustaining the C/YAC model is imperative.

In Ontario, we need to do more, now - we must assure children it is safe to speak up, their *voices will be heard* and support is available to help them heal and move forward. Ontario's C/YACs urgently need ongoing financial support from the Ontario Government to maintain and expand the safe spaces we have created to investigate reports of abuse, to encourage urgent reporting of abuse, and to assist children and their families to heal from trauma, and have hope for the future.

¹³ BOOST (2017, Nov.) Reducing trauma, improving lives: The social value of Boost Child & Youth Advocacy Centre. Final Report.

¹⁴ BOOST (2017, Nov.) Reducing trauma, improving lives: The social value of Boost Child & Youth Advocacy Centre. Final Report.

¹⁵ Australia, Belarus, Canada, Croatia, Cuba, Denmark, Estonia, Greenland, Iceland, Israel, Latvia, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Poland, South Africa, Sweden, Turkey, United States.

¹⁶ Brazil, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Lithuania, Malawi, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, Portugal, Russia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Taiwan, Trinidad & Tobago.

¹⁷ Newlin, C., Doggett, C. (2014) Multidisciplinary response to child maltreatment: International implementation of the Children's Advocacy Center model. Child Abuse and Neglect Worldwide, Jon R. Conte, Editor, p. 10.

¹⁸ Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre (2015, December) One critical issue. One integrated response; Report to the community.

¹⁹ Zebra Child Protection Centre (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.zebracentre.ca/about/>

²⁰ Sophie's Place Child & Youth Advocacy Centre (2017). Retrieved from <http://the-centre.org/funders/>

Appendix A

PLEASE CONTACT:

Karyn Kennedy
President and CEO
Boost Child & Youth Advocacy Centre,
Toronto
kennedy@boostforkids.org
416-515-0207

Tracey Carter
Executive Director
Child Advocacy Centre Simcoe/Muskoka
tcarter@cacsimcoemuskoka.ca
705-327-0118

Laura Muirhead
Executive Director
Child Witness Centre, Waterloo Region
laura.muirhead@childwitness.com
519-744-0904 ext.212

Janet Handy
Executive Director
Kristen French Child Advocacy Centre,
Niagara
jhandy@kristenfrenchcacn.org
905-937-5435 ext. 7001

Diane Plourde
Executive Director
Koala Place Child & Youth Advocacy Centre,
Cornwall & Area
dplourde@koalaplace.ca
613-935-5437 ext. 224

Michelle Oake
Executive Director
Windsor Essex Child/Youth Advocacy Centre
michelle.oake@wecyac.ca
519-995-3974

ONTARIO'S CHILD/YOUTH ADVOCACY CENTRES
ONTARIO MPP BRIEFING NOTE
AUGUST 2018

KEY MESSAGES

CHILD/YOUTH ADVOCACY CENTRES:

- Save money.
- Help protect children.
- Support healing.
- Aid in forensic investigations.
- Are safe places for children.
- Serve ALL children.
(up to age 18, some to age 24)
- Educate children.
(healthy boundaries; sexual consent; Internet safety)
- Educate organizations and the public.
(identifying the grooming process of child predators; the signs and symptoms of abuse; duty to report suspected abuse).

NOTE: Additional funding will be needed to support ongoing C/YAC development across Ontario - ensuring access to best practice care for ALL children and youth in Ontario.

Commentary

Child and youth advocacy centres: A change in practice that can change a lifetime

Christina L. Shaffer BSc¹, Tanya D. Smith MN RN(EC)², Amy E. Ornstein MD MSc FRCPC³

¹IWK Health Centre and SeaStar Child and Youth Advocacy Centre, Halifax, Nova Scotia; ²The Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect Program, The Hospital for Sick Children, BOOST Child and Youth Advocacy Centre, Toronto, Ontario;

³Department of Pediatrics, Dalhousie University and IWK Health Centre and SeaStar Child and Youth Advocacy Centre, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Originating Institution: IWK Health Centre, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Correspondence: Amy E. Ornstein, IWK Health Centre and Department of Pediatrics, Dalhousie University 5850 University Avenue, PO Box 9700 Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3K 6R8. Telephone 902-470-8222, fax 902-470-7761, e-mail amy.ornstein@iwk.nshealth.ca

Abstract

While often a silent and invisible issue, childhood trauma is pervasive, and has profound individual, societal and economic impacts. Many forms of childhood trauma exist, including child physical and sexual abuse. Given the prevalence, impact and availability of prevention and intervention approaches, child abuse deserves the same level of awareness, policy priority and investment as is directed to other issues of significant public health importance. The complex issue of child abuse requires a coordinated multi-faceted response, which minimizes system trauma and revictimization for the child and family. The Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (CYAC) model brings together various sectors to create an integrated, multidisciplinary response that is client-centred and trauma-informed. To ensure that all children, youth and their families who have experienced maltreatment have access to the CYAC model of care when needed, sustainable funding investment in CYACs should be a priority for government at all levels.

Keywords: *Child abuse; Child maltreatment; Childhood trauma; Child Advocacy Centre; Child and Youth Advocacy Centre; Multidisciplinary team.*

When you ask a paediatric clinician what they would rank as the single most impactful social determinant of health, the response is likely to be income, education, housing or social support. Childhood trauma rarely makes the list, but mounting evidence suggests that it should. Given the prevalence, scope of impact and availability of prevention and intervention approaches, we advocate that childhood trauma, and more specifically, child abuse, requires the same level of awareness, policy priority and investment as is directed to other issues of significant public health importance. As an effective model to address child abuse, we suggest that Child and Youth Advocacy Centres (CYACs) should form part of this investment.

While often an invisible issue, child abuse is pervasive, and has profound individual, societal and economic impacts. The

substantial effects of childhood trauma, abuse and toxic stress are being unearthed. Diverse fields of research, including molecular genetics, neurobiology and population health are contributing to a growing base of knowledge about the significant and long-term consequences of early childhood adversity.

Perhaps in view of this, in their report to the Law Commission of Canada on the economic burden of child abuse, Bowlus et al. (1) conclude that 'a well-planned and thoughtful investment of significant public funds in early detection, prevention and treatment of all forms of child abuse is not only a moral necessity for Canadian society, it is sound fiscal policy that will directly benefit us all'. We echo this in advocating that public policy attention and investment of resources must match the magnitude of child abuse as a pervasive public and social health issue.

In a 2014 study, Afifi et al. (2) reported the prevalence of child abuse to be 32.1% in a nationally-representative Canadian sample, which included reported childhood experiences of sexual abuse (10.1%), physical abuse (26.1%) and/or exposure to intimate partner violence (7.9%). 2.4% of respondents reported having experienced all three types of abuse.

Child abuse can have readily-apparent effects on a child's physical, emotional and social well-being, but the impacts extend far beyond these immediate consequences. In the largest study of its kind, the 'Adverse Childhood Experiences' (ACEs) study found a dose-response relationship between specific types of childhood adversity (including abuse, neglect, exposure to domestic violence and household dysfunction) and poor long-term health outcomes (3).

In addition to the significant individual consequences, the economic costs of early adversity are substantial, both in health care, and across other impacted sectors (including child welfare, justice, education and employment). The lifetime cost of child abuse has been estimated at \$210,012 USD per victim (2012 dollars) (4). In their 2003 study, Bowlus et al. (1) estimated the overall annual economic cost of child abuse in Canada to be \$15.7 billion (1998 dollars), noting this to be a conservative estimate. Expressed in 2017 dollars, this represents an annual cost of \$22.4 billion. By comparison, this is up to four times greater than the estimated annual direct and indirect costs associated with obesity (5) (estimated \$5.25 to \$8.4 billion in 2017 dollars), and is roughly equivalent to costs associated with tobacco use (6) (estimated \$22.25 billion in 2017 dollars).

Despite the prevalence and impact of child abuse, the level of awareness and investment in this problem is substantially lower than other public health problems of similar scope. For example, in comparison to the discourse about childhood nutrition and obesity or smoking, the conversation about child abuse remains muted, with public dialogue lacking the energized, passionate tone required to effect change. In part, this is likely due to the cognitive dissonance the issue of child maltreatment creates. Acknowledging the problem of child abuse forces us to confront a difficult and uncomfortable reality: that a significant proportion of the children we encounter in our practices, schools and neighbourhoods have been or will be hurt, often by an adult who is close to them. Equally distressing is the concept that when we, as protective, rational and thoughtful adults, remain silent, we play a role in enabling ongoing victimization through a failure in education, failure of investment in public policy or failure to ask the right questions. The discomfort with the topic of child abuse is understandable, but not excusable.

At some point in their practice, paediatric clinicians will encounter a child or family in whom there are concerns of trauma or abuse. Appropriate recognition and action are critical, yet there may be a sense that the responsibility to respond rests mainly with local child welfare and law enforcement

agencies that hold the mandate to investigate, leaving the clinician in an ancillary role. In fact, the response needed may be multifaceted, requiring the intersecting involvement of child welfare, law enforcement, medical care, mental health services and victim support. These agencies all have separate mandates that address specific aspects of an overall case, but often have overlap in the information they require, their level of involvement and their interactions with the family. Working separately, this creates a fragmented system which reinforces an isolated and reductionist approach to service delivery. This can be confusing and inefficient, and places additional strain on the child, family, clinicians and agencies involved in this difficult work.

The Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (CYAC) model addresses this, by bringing these sectors together to create a more coordinated, multidisciplinary approach in a welcoming, trauma-informed and age-appropriate environment. The model seeks to minimize additional system trauma and revictimization by limiting the number of times a child must repeat their story, providing early and seamless access to services and ensuring the family has adequate support and follow-up. In addition to improving client experience, this integrated model strives to provide a more efficient and collaborative approach for the agencies involved, strengthening the collective quality of each sector's work through timely access to information and multidisciplinary perspectives. CYACs may differ in their specific structure and scope of services based on the needs of their communities, but the core elements and goals remain consistent across the model (7).

CYACs have been shown to offer better access to forensic medical exam (48% CYAC versus 21% non-CYAC) (8) and mental health services (72% versus 31%), with more coordinated and collaborative investigations (9), and faster decision making in criminal charges (10). In addition to reduced delays and travel time for families, the CYAC model is estimated to offer better process efficiency and productivity improvements for professionals. A 2015 social return on investment study at the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre in Calgary estimated that the centre's integrated approach resulted in productivity improvements equivalent to \$550,000 annually (11).

The concept of a CYAC is not new—having originated in Alabama in the mid-1980's, there are now over 800 CYACs in the USA, which last year served over 300,000 child victims of abuse (12). The model has grown internationally, and in Canada, the first CYAC (Zebra Child Protection Center) was founded in Edmonton in 2002. Creation of more CYACs progressed slowly through the early 2000's, until a commitment of seed funding in 2010 from Justice Canada's Victims Fund spurred accelerated expansion of the model across the country. Over 35 CYACs now exist in various stages of development across Canada, with a federal investment of \$10.3 million in the

past 7 years. In comparison, the National Children's Alliance will be administering \$8.1 billion in federal funds this year alone for the establishment, improvement, and expansion of CYACs in the USA.

While the increase in CYACs in Canada is changing the landscape in how we respond to child abuse, much more work is still required. Secured, sustainable funding remains an ongoing challenge for many CYACs, and further integration of the model as the community standard of practice is needed. Continued support for CYACs needs to be an ongoing priority of our federal government as an investment in the health and well-being of Canadian children and youth.

CONCLUSION

While often an invisible issue, child abuse is pervasive, and has profound individual, societal and economic impact. Public policy attention and investment of resources must match the magnitude of child abuse as a pervasive public and social health issue.

All Canadian children and youth who have disclosed abuse should have access to the comprehensive, trauma-informed response of a CYAC, regardless of where they live. In addition to improving the direct service experience for children, youth and families, CYACs can transform a community's overall understanding and response to child abuse by becoming a hub for education, outreach, prevention, research and policy development. As a whole, CYACs offer the chance to change the lifetime trajectory for children who have experienced abuse.

The responsibility to address child abuse is not borne by any one sector alone—a concern of maltreatment will ultimately reflect back onto all aspects of society. It is a problem that we all own, and as a result, it is a problem that requires a collective response. Child and Youth Advocacy Centres present an effective, feasible public policy approach, and ongoing, sustainable funding investment should be a priority for government at all levels.

Conflict of Interest

CLS and ABO report grants from Department of Justice Canada during the conduct of the study.

References

1. Bowlus A, McKenna K, Day T, Wright D. The Economic Costs and Consequences of Child Abuse in Canada: Report to the Law Commission of Canada. Ottawa: Law Commission of Canada; 2003 (cited July 17, 2017). Available from: <http://cwrp.ca/sites/default/>

files/publications/en/Report-Economic_Cost_Child_AbuseEN.pdf (Accessed February 2, 2018).

2. Affi TO, MacMillan HL, Boyle M, Taillieu T, Cheung K, Sareen J. Child abuse and mental disorders in Canada. *Cmaj* 2014;186(9):E324–32.
3. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. About the CDC-Kaiser ACE Study [Internet]. 2016 (cited August 15, 2017). Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/ace-study/about.html> (Accessed February 2, 2018).
4. Fang X, Brown DS, Florence CS, Mercy JA. The economic burden of child maltreatment in the United States and implications for prevention. *Child Abuse Negl* 2012;36(2):156–65.
5. Canadian Institute for Health Information, Public Health Agency of Canada. Obesity in Canada: a joint report from the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canadian Institute for Health Information [Internet]. Ottawa: Public Health Agency of Canada; 2011 (cited July 17, 2017). Available from: http://www.healthyeenvironmentforkids.ca/sites/healthyeenvironmentforkids.ca/files/Obesity_in_Canada.pdf (Accessed February 2, 2018).
6. Rehm J, Canadian Centre of Substance Abuse. The Costs of Substance Abuse in Canada 2002: Highlights [Internet]. Ottawa: Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse; 2006 (cited July 17, 2017). Available from: <http://www.ccsa.ca/Resource%20Library/ccsa-011332-2006.pdf> (Accessed February 2, 2018).
7. National Children's Alliance. Standards for Accredited Members: 2017 Edition [Internet]. Washington: National Children's Alliance; 2017 (cited October 25, 2017). Available from: <http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/sites/default/files/downloads/NCA-Standards-for-Accredited-Members-2017.pdf> (Accessed February 2, 2018).
8. Walsh WA, Cross TP, Jones LM, Simone M, Kolko DJ. Which sexual abuse victims receive a forensic medical examination? The impact of children's advocacy centers. *Child Abuse Negl* 2007;31(10):1053–68.
9. Cross TP, Jones LM, Walsh WA, et al. Evaluating children's advocacy centers' response to child sexual abuse. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. 2008 (cited July 17, 2017). Available from: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/218530.pdf> (Accessed February 2, 2018).
10. Walsh WA, Lippert T, Cross TP, Maurice DM, Davison KS. How long to prosecute child sexual abuse for a community using a children's advocacy center and two comparison communities? *Child Maltreat* 2008;13(1):3–13.
11. KMPG. The Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre: Social Return on Investment Study. Calgary: Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre; 2015.
12. National Children's Alliance. Annual Report 2016: Empowering Local Communities to Serve Child Victims of Abuse [Internet]. Washington: National Children's Alliance; 2017 (cited July 17, 2017). Available from: <http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/sites/default/files/downloads/NCA-2016-Annual-Report.pdf> (Accessed February 2, 2018).



Bryan M. Larkin
Chief of Police

Office of the Chief of Police

September 12, 2018

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Waterloo Regional Police Service, we are pleased to support Child & Youth Advocacy Centres, across Ontario, in their request for funding to help protect children and youth in our province.

As Chief of Police, I see first-hand just how important organizations such as Child & Youth Advocacy Centres are when it comes to building vibrant, healthy and safe communities.

The Child & Youth Advocacy Centre model is internationally recognized as best practice in child abuse investigations and is one that is proven to reduce trauma for both child victims of crime and investigative professionals. These centres provide an invaluable service to not only police services, but to our young people, their care givers and to the community as a whole.

The well-being of children and youth in our province is a collective responsibility. Ensuring there is a safe, neutral place for children to go, where specially trained investigative and support personnel are available, should be of the utmost importance. Children experience trauma in many different ways and, as such, require different and unique approaches to help them heal. When they come to the Child & Youth Advocacy Centre, they are experiencing several emotions –fear, anger, vulnerability. We must do whatever we can to help these young people heal, move forward, feel connected to their community and, as a result, live a successful, prosperous life.

Because of the important work that is being done each and every day by those at the Child & Youth Advocacy Centre, it is my belief that funding must be made available to support the development and sustainability of these centres across Ontario.

Best regards,

Bryan Larkin,
Chief of Police

People Helping People



FAMILY &
CHILDREN'S SERVICES
OF THE WATERLOO REGION

September 11, 2018

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of Family and Children's Services of the Waterloo Region, I am writing to express our support for the development and sustainability of Child/Youth Advocacy Centres (C/YAC) across Ontario.

The wellbeing of children and youth in our communities is a collective responsibility and as such, ensuring a safe, neutral place and specially trained investigative and support personnel are available to children/youth victims of crime is an important priority. The value of the C/YAC model of excellence in investigations of crimes against children/youth is recognized within our community, and we believe, development and implementation of C/YACs should be of high priority for the Government of Ontario.

As a working group member, along with police, the Crown attorney, Waterloo Region Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centre and Lutherwood, we worked for three years to make a C/YAC a reality in Waterloo region. Through our work, we know that our C/YAC has been a positive experience for children and youth. I believe it is invaluable for children, youth and caregivers to be greeted warmly during one of the biggest crisis of their lives. Advocates who remain involved once the investigation is complete ensures that children and youth receive the help they need to begin to heal.

The harmful, long-term effects of early trauma are well documented, and those lasting effects negatively impact our communities, province and future generations. We ask that the Government of Ontario act now to support a proven model, to help children and youth and to ease the traumatic nature of these investigations for our front-line responders.

Sincerely

Karen Spencer, MSW
Executive Director

HEAD OFFICE
200 Ardelt Ave., Kitchener, ON N2C 2L9
t: 519-576-0540 | f: 519-576-4709
toll free: 1-844-772-1515

BRANCH OFFICE
168 Hespeler Rd., Cambridge, ON N1R 6V7
t: 519-623-6538 | f: 519-576-4709

FAMILY CENTRE
65 Hanson Ave. Kitchener, ON N2C 2H6
t: 519-772-4399 | f: 519-576-4709

*Family & Children's Services of the Waterloo Region
is incorporated as the Children's Aid Society of the
Regional Municipality of Waterloo.*

www.facswaterloo.org