



## FOSTER PARENTS SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

Charitable Status # 0873919-09

The Foster Parent Society of Ontario (FPSO) has prepared a number of recommendations for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to review, in preparation for the scheduled 2010 update of the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA).

### **Funding;**

FPSO is cognizant of the strains of current economic times, which will realistically affect child welfare over the next two or three years. *However, our children's wellbeing and future successes cannot and should not be jeopardized as a result of fiscal restraints that are beyond their control.*

*FPSO recommends* the Ministry of Children and Youth Services fund FPSO with an annual allotment of \$500,000.00 for the purposes of promoting fostering and properly representing the foster parents of Ontario in the province. This would truly enable us to work as part of the professional team.

### **Protection to Eighteen (18) years of age;**

*FPSO recommends* that the CFSA act be amended to allow children to come into care until their eighteenth (18<sup>th</sup>) birthday, with full and equal supports and services.

### **Protection of Youth at Risk;**

*FPSO recommends* that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services formally recognizes the sector of vulnerable youth whose challenges limit their abilities to function. Often to the detriment of these youth at the age of 18 they are referred to community living and removed from their foster families; whereas, they should remain in their foster families as long as required with full per diems. These children are currently being removed from their long term foster homes and the only familial relationships that they have known and embraced. Youth with undeveloped capabilities may need to remain in care indefinitely. Their attachment to their foster parents ensures that they are recognized as valued and thriving members of society.

*FPSO recommends* the Ministry of Children and Youth services recognizes those youth whose behavioural challenges, and low Emotional Quotient (EQ) encourages them to leave the protection of the society and along with it the security of their foster homes, group homes, or alternative care. This move may be by choice of the youth or requirement of the system. FPSO also recommends these youth be allowed to return to the protection of the Society.

### **Education**

#### **High School;**

*FPSO recommends* extending the foster home per diem for our youth in high school. The majority of youth in care find themselves turning 18, having not yet completed high school. This is due to trauma and some of the life experiences that foster children have faced in contrast to the general population as well as when their birthday falls within a calendar year. Lack of a high school diploma is the primary obstacle in the way of our children achieving a post secondary education.

**Post Secondary (within the foster home);**

*FPSO recommends* that the per diem be maintained for foster children who are still living in the foster home and attending a post secondary institution until the completion of the post secondary program or their 24<sup>th</sup> birthday, whichever comes first.

**Post Secondary (living on or by campus);**

*FPSO recommends* that all foster children, of post secondary age, who are in a program, and live on or by campus be covered by Extended Care and maintenance (ECM) until the completion of the program or their 24<sup>th</sup> birthday whichever comes first.

*FPSO recommends* that Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) at the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rate be applied yearly to the ECM amount in this category.

**Long Term Care and Kinship in Care as a Permanency Option;**

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services formally recognizes long term foster care as one of the pillars of permanence for some of our children in care. We understand how important it is for a child to know who they are and where they belong. For some children this belonging is in the foster home. Not all children can return home, not all children are suited for or interested in adoption, Kinship, Guardianship, and custody. For many children in care the only real permanence or sense of belonging is to remain with their foster families.

*FPSO recommends* that data be collected on the long term psychological impact or lifelong damage, to the separation of siblings and consequent individual adoptions. No family of children should be separated in foster care based on a dollar value or the assumption of foster parents being incapable of parenting more than four children. When siblings are raised together in the same foster home, they are able to maintain their identity, common history, and emotional connection. This will produce resilient adults.

**Adoption Subsidy;**

*FPSO recommends* that the Ministry of Children and Youth services direct funds for the purposes of adoption subsidy.

Foster Parents have adopted 58% of all children available for adoption in Canada. If agencies had specific monies designated for adoption subsidies, these monies would enable a greater number of children and youth with challenges to be adopted.

**Vested Interest;**

*FPSO recommends* the Ministry of Children and Youth Services reintroduces vested interest into section 61 of the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA) .

With vested interest returned to the CFSA act it enables foster parents, the primary caregivers of the children, to be able to speak on behalf of the child, they know best.

**Third party liability;**

*FPSO recommends* that the Ministry of Child and Youth Services provide an insurance rider to agency insurance policies to cover contingencies or exceptions for foster children in the province of Ontario, who are seriously injured. Foster parents should not be expected to cover treatment costs for a seriously injured child under their third party liability insurance due to a shortfall in the agency coverage.

**Provincial Foster Parent Bill of Rights;**

*FPSO recommends* the Ministry adopt the Provincial Foster Parent Bill of Rights drafted by FPSO for the protection of the foster parent’s rights in Ontario.

Some agencies have developed a list of Rights for their local foster parents. These documents differ greatly, leaving foster homes without the rights afforded to other community sectors. FPSO is preparing a draft for a Provincial Bill of Rights for foster parents. We would like to see the Ministry review and accept this document and adopt it into provincial policy for use in the child welfare system. Entrenching a foster parent Bill of Rights will both inform and protect Ontario’s foster parents. This will increase retention of foster homes.

\*Document attached\*

**In closing,**

A number of years ago the phrase “members of the professional team” was coined, promoted and used widely. Foster parents and agencies alike embraced the philosophy of the professional team, and gains have been made.

There is still room for further gain. The Service model has designated foster parents as, “service care providers”, which essentially removes us from the professional team. We wish to be fully recognized as a professional member of the team, not as less than a subcontractor.

We look forward to meeting with you to further discuss our recommendations for improvements in the future of child welfare.

Respectfully Yours:  
On behalf of the Foster Parents Society of Ontario

*Vanessa Milley*

Vanessa Milley  
Foster Parents Society of Ontario  
Governance and Policy Chairperson