

St. Stephen's Anglican Church

1121 - 14th AVENUE SOUTH WEST
CALGARY, ALBERTA T2R 0P3



CHURCH OFFICE: 244-4879
244-2271

April 12, 2000

To whom it may concern:

I am pleased to provide this statement regarding my dealings with the Children's Aid Society through 1995 in support of and, at times, on behalf of the [redacted] family, members of St. Simon's Anglican Church, Oakville, where I was rector from 1992 to 1997.

The unfolding of the circumstances involving the [redacted] and the Halton Region Children's Aid Society, right from the beginning, revealed to me a shocking abuse of power on the part of the CAS, a callous disregard for fair process, and an unwillingness to make any attempt to reintegrate the [redacted] daughter, with her family following her removal from the home in January, 1995. Instead, [redacted] became a pawn in the battle of wills between [redacted], her father, in his attempts to see her receive proper medical and psychiatric attention, and the CAS, who seemed solely concerned to protect their reputation after a botched handling of this case.

My involvement with the family has been documented elsewhere (in separate statements including those dated January 26, June 26, September 18 and December 10, 1995.) This statement concerns my attempts on their behalf to effect a breaking of the impasse that existed between the family and the CAS as the case entered the fall of 1995.

In the fall of 1995, Irene Richards, a church member well known to the [redacted], and I visited Ann Mulvale, Mayor of Oakville, outside the Halton Region Council chambers. Ms. Mulvale was aware of the circumstances involving the [redacted] and the CAS and was offering to help us gain access to the Board of Directors of the Halton Region CAS through Ron Carter, a Regional Councillor and a member of the CAS Board, in order to raise our concerns that the family had never received a fair hearing. She introduced us to Ron Carter, who promised to take our concerns to the next Board meeting. The result of this intervention on our behalf, conveyed to us by Ms. Mulvale, was that Mr. Carter was told at that meeting that this was one of the "worst cases of abuse the CAS had ever dealt with." No further information was offered substantiating this claim and Mr. Carter felt no choice but to withdraw his questions.

In November, 1995, I sought an appointment with Terrance Young, MPP for Oakville North, to seek his help in pressing for a full investigation into the case by the Minister of Community and Social Services. He agreed to meet with the [redacted] and then, having done so, promised help in contacting the Minister's office. However, following a phone conversation with CAS director Ron Coupland the next week, Mr. Young suddenly withdrew his support. Mr. Coupland had reiterated to Mr. Young that this was one of the "worst cases of abuse the CAS had ever dealt with." Furthermore, in reference to a current media report from the US about a Sri Lankan man kidnapping his intended bride, Mr. Coupland had added, "Maybe they do that sort of thing there!" Mr. Young asked that neither he nor Mr. Coupland be quoted, but said that with this new "evidence" he could no longer offer to help the [redacted] in their quest for a fair hearing.

PLEASE NOTE

NAMES OF FAMILY ERASED BECAUSE OF COURT ORDER BANNING IDENTITY OF CHILD + FAMILY



But most significant was a meeting that took place on September 26, 1995, in the office of the Right Reverend Walter Asbil, then Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Niagara. In attendance were the Bishop himself, Rob Welch, diocesan Chancellor (legal advisor to the diocese), Archdeacon Ralph Spence, myself, and two lawyers: David MacKenzie, representing the CAS, and Megan Pallett, representing the child. The meeting had been sought by David MacKenzie in the wake of some damaging public comments that had been made by local Anglican churches about the CAS in relation to this case.

At this meeting several revelations were made about the relationship of the CAS to the diocese. One was that the church could expect to "have egg on its face" for attempting to take up the child's cause. Another was that, should the father, [redacted], fail to be reigned in in his fight with the CAS, he could "lose his daughter forever." Both of these seemed to be veiled threats directed at the church should it continue to help the [redacted] press for a fair hearing.

At the same meeting, both David MacKenzie and Megan Pallett agreed that the issue was no longer whether or not abuse had taken place; the issue was protecting the child because she *believed* abuse had taken place, causing the CAS to step in on her behalf. Megan Pallett agreed that, in any case, steps ought to be taken to reintegrate [redacted] with the family through visits arranged with her mother, [redacted]. This reintegration has never taken place, now more than five years later.

At every turn, as these events show, the CAS, from early on, sought to discourage and dissuade those who sought to raise questions about its handling of the case and who supported the in their quest for a fair hearing. This did nothing to assuage the concerns of many people, myself included, that the CAS was more interested in protecting itself than it was in protecting and working for her reintegration into her family.

Respectfully,



Brian E. Pearson
Rector, St. Stephen's Church