

## Ministry of Children and Family Services' Response to the Public Fatality Inquiry - Alexandru Gabriel Radita

On March 25, 2024, a fatality inquiry report was released concerning the May 7, 2013, death of 15-year-old Alexandru Radita. The purpose of the inquiry, conducted by the Honourable Provincial Court Judge Sharon L. Van De Veen, was to review the circumstances under which the death occurred and share any recommendations for the prevention of similar deaths. The *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act (CYFEA)* requires a public response from Children and Family Services (CFS) regarding recommendations made to the ministry through fatality inquiries.

The death of a child is devastating for family, friends, community and others involved with the child and family. Our thoughts are with those who continue to grieve for Alexandru.

The inquiry report makes six recommendations directed to Alberta and British Columbia Child and Family Services {sic}.

CFS' response includes information gathered from the following sources:

- a review of existing policies, and
- a review of current ministry initiatives, practice, and program directions related to issues identified in the report.

We welcome the recommendations laid out in the fatality inquiry report and thank the Honourable Provincial Court Judge Sharon L. Van De Veen for working on behalf of vulnerable children, youth and families in Alberta.

Recommendation	Ministry Response	Actions Planned or Underway
<p><b>Recommendation 1:</b> <i>It is recommended that screening processes within both the Ministry of Child and Family Services in British Columbia as well as Alberta be reviewed and strengthened to ensure that a thorough review of prior dealings between families and Child Services is carried out, specifically including the severity of parenting issues historically dealt with along with the urgency and significance of the person making the child protection report. The ongoing risk to the child evidenced by the history and significance of the person making the report should be carefully considered notwithstanding that the Child Protection Services file has been closed for some time.</i></p>	<p>Alberta CFS accepts this recommendation in full and considers this recommendation complete.</p>	<p>In 2019, Alberta CFS undertook a transformation of the child intervention intake process to ensure timely identification of risk and safety factors, more comprehensive information gathering and analysis, review of relevant history and improved decision making. The transformation included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introducing a consolidated intake unit with five regional teams.</li> <li>• Updating the phone system, creating one phone number for Albertans to call.</li> <li>• Embedding Signs of Safety ® (SofS®) into how CFS gathers and analyzes risk and safety for children and youth. The comprehensive risk assessment considers themes or patterns of behaviour, frequency/severity of behaviour and potential impact on a child to support decision making on outcomes and next steps.</li> <li>• Developing extensive training for child intervention practitioners (CIPs) and leadership on the intake process, including how to gather and analyze information.</li> </ul> <p>During the intake process, CIPs review any child intervention records related to the child/youth, siblings, guardian(s) and any other persons living in the family home to understand past patterns and themes.</p> <p>In gathering information, the CIP asks questions about the family’s history, including prior residency. If a family is known or believed to have lived in another jurisdiction, CIPs contact other</p>

		provinces/jurisdictions to obtain information on previous history of involvement with their child protection system.
<p><b>Recommendation 2:</b> <i>It is further recommended that regular auditing of the screening processes be carried out along with ongoing staff training to ensure the thorough review recommended takes place, in light of the heavy caseloads of reports received by the BC and Alberta Ministries. It is notable that when Dr. Metzger contacted the BC Ministry in 2009, the report was actually reviewed by a supervisor who determined to take no action.</i></p>	<p>Alberta CFS accepts the intent of this recommendation and considers this recommendation complete.</p>	<p>Alberta CFS has completed two evaluations of the child intervention intake process that was implemented in 2019 using both qualitative and quantitative measures, and a third is in progress. These reviews seek to measure and evaluate practice to address gaps and leverage strengths.</p> <p>The new intake process was designed with ongoing oversight in decision making, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requiring an intake meeting comprising the intake practitioner, another delegated staff and a CI supervisor who critically think through and analyze the information gathered to determine outcome (close or open for further assessment).</li> <li>• Submission of the completed intake to the CI supervisor for final review and approval.</li> <li>• Clear documentation of all consultations and decision-making process.</li> </ul> <p>CFS provides significant ongoing training to all CIPs and leadership, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blended delegation training for practitioners completed within the first six months of employment to help achieve competency in their role.</li> <li>• Practice supervision training for child intervention supervisors to develop competency in the four aspects of supervision – administrative, human resources, practice and leadership.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The working together for safety series, which provides training on the SofS® framework and tools to support comprehensive, balanced risk assessments and collaborative planning with families and their network.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> <i>It is recommended that the provisions of the Provincial/Territorial Protocol be amended to address the situation where a child having a history with a Ministry moves to another jurisdiction after the Ministry's file has been closed. It is recommended that specific authorization be included in the Protocol for an originating province to alert a receiving province if a child who is the subject of concluded dealings with the Ministry may nevertheless be in need of protection which may include medical treatment necessary for their health or survival. From the evidence before the Inquiry, it appears the existing provisions of the Provincial/Territorial Protocol emphasize ongoing investigations which are current and have open Ministry files. Ministry files which are closed, like the Radita files, are not given the same emphasis, regardless of how serious the family history has been.</i></p>	<p>Alberta CFS does not accept this recommendation.</p> <p>All provincial and territorial child welfare legislations include a duty to report concerns of child abuse and neglect. If a province or territory has reasonable grounds to believe a child is in need of protection, whether the family has current, previous, or no child intervention involvement, the situation is brought to the attention of the jurisdiction where the child resides via mandatory reporting to</p>	<p>The Provincial/Territorial Protocol on Children, Youth and Families Moving Between Provinces and Territories outlines the roles and responsibilities of statutory child welfare organizations when working together to provide child welfare services to children and families moving between provinces and territories. The protocol includes criteria for issuing child protection alerts.</p> <p>The Protocol requires all provinces and territories to notify the receiving province/territory if a family moves when there is active child intervention involvement.</p> <p>Child intervention files are closed when the decision is made that the child is no longer in need of protection. Child welfare agencies do not have the authority to share information on families once a file is closed.</p> <p>The Protocol, signed by all Canadian provinces and territories, undergoes a formal review every five years or sooner at the recommendation of the Provincial/Territorial Directors of Child Welfare Committee (DCW).</p>

	the appropriate child welfare agency.	
<p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> <i>It is recommended that the current consultations within the BC Ministry dealing with the expansion of the issuance of alerts to other jurisdictions when families have moved and their whereabouts are unknown be pursued in circumstances where a child may be in need of protection. It is further recommended that consideration be given to the issuance of alerts being placed upon provincial and where necessary, inter-provincial, federal and other information systems connected to child welfare. It is recommended that part of this consultation ensure that such alerts are not dependent upon an open investigation within the Ministry and that the severity of prior dealings between the family who have moved and the Ministry itself be thoroughly considered.</i></p>	<p>Alberta CFS accepts, in part, the intent of this recommendation that falls within our mandate and considers it to be complete.</p>	<p>This recommendation was issued to the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development.</p> <p>The Alberta CFS Statutory Director is a member of the DCW and participates in all reviews of the Protocol. A formal review of the Protocol is conducted every five years or sooner at the recommendation of the Provincial/Territorial Directors of Child Welfare Committee (DCW).</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5:</b> <i>It is recommended that the Child Welfare authorities in both Alberta and British Columbia as well as other jurisdictions consider the examination of a general alert system whereby a high-risk child who may need protection is noted on available data systems of other stakeholders in child health and well-being including educational and pharmaceutical authorities in order to prevent isolation of such children and ensure availability of state intervention when needed, as often as needed. Consideration of such a general system of alerts in the case of particular children necessarily involves legislative</i></p>	<p>Alberta CFS does not accept this recommendation.</p> <p>Alberta has a duty to report concerns that a child or youth may be in need of protection (at risk of abuse or neglect) with 24-hour a day capacity to receive and</p>	<p>The guiding legislation for child intervention services in Alberta is the <i>Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act</i>, which grants the authority to provide services to children who are or may be at risk of being abused or neglected. Collecting and disseminating information on families with no active child intervention involvement is outside of our mandate.</p>

<p><i>changes authorizing both the collection and dissemination of personal data in view of existing privacy restrictions as well as consideration of existing databases in stakeholder agencies.</i></p>	<p>respond to reported concerns.</p> <p>There would be challenges in establishing a general alert system with information sharing from a legal and technological standpoint.</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 6:</b> <i>It is recommended that the BC and Alberta Ministries institute a program to expand existing collaborative relationships with other stakeholders involved in the well-being of children. These stakeholders include local school authorities, health services, police services and pharmaceutical services. From the evidence before the Inquiry local educational authorities specifically local schools, would not generally consider contacting the Alberta Ministry or police requesting a wellness check in circumstances where a child is absent from school for an extended period of time, even though often school absences are accompanied by serious parenting issues placing children at risk.</i></p>	<p>Alberta CFS accepts the intent of this recommendation that falls within our mandate and considers this recommendation in progress.</p>	<p>Alberta CFS is committed to continuous improvement and collaboration. CFS has several methods of engaging with stakeholders from other child and youth serving ministries and organizations and will continue to explore opportunities to further enhance these relationships.</p> <p>CFS provides presentations to various stakeholders, including schools, health and law enforcement organizations, about the child intervention system and the transformation of the intake process, both of which speak to the duty to report a child who may need intervention.</p> <p>CFS recognizes that more can be done to improve relationships and communication with child and youth serving ministries and organizations and is exploring new methods of communicating the ministry's role and mandate to other ministries, governing bodies, organizations and the general public.</p>