

**SUBMISSION TO: THE MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES  
REGARDING THE 2010 REVIEW OF THE ONTARIO CHILD AND FAMILY  
SERVICES ACT (CFSAS).**

**FROM: THE LIMBO TASK FORCE OF THE SPARROW LAKE ALLIANCE,  
JANUARY 28, 2010.**

The Limbo Task Force has a particular focus on the safety, stability and prospects for attachment for children in the care of the Province of Ontario. A special objective is to achieve effective permanency planning for all children as soon as possible after they are admitted to care. A major concern is that, as reported in the 2007 Ontario Child Welfare Review, over 9000 Crown wards need permanent placements and family bonds. This Task Force welcomes the review of the Child and Family Services Act, and appreciates the opportunity to request attention to means of enhancing permanency planning. These require refinements to the legislation, alteration in the funding formulae and the allocation of funds in order to:

1. **EXPAND THE NUMBER OF SUBSIDIZED ADOPTIONS**, both relative and non-relative. Few adoptions are now being subsidized, and considering that the Ontario Child Welfare Review, 2007 categorized over 80% of Crown wards reviewed as special needs children and youth, the pool of potential adopters would be greatly increased if people felt assured that the costs of meeting both presenting or potential health or educational needs would be covered.
2. **EXPAND THE NUMBER OF KINSHIP CARE ARRANGEMENTS BY INCREASING THE AVAILABILITY OF SUBSIDIZATION.** To gain more permanent placements, subsidization, particularly for children with special needs, should be made much more available than it is at present.

In addition, the Limbo Task force also endorses the following recommendations of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies:

1. **MODERNIZE THE LANGUAGE OF THE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES ACT.**

Certain expressions in the Child and Family Services Act have connotations that are stigmatizing for the children and youth involved. For instance the word "apprehension" is generally applied to criminals. Even the word

“custody” is frequently associated with the expression “taken into custody”, which is again applied to criminals.

At the time of the last CFSA Review, the Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies put forward the following recommendation, which the Limbo Task Force strongly endorses:

“That serious consideration be given to modernizing some of the archaic and/or stigmatizing language of the CFSA.”

Examples are replacing terms such as “apprehension” and “custody” by terms such as “bringing into care” or “admission to care.” Such changes would remove any implication of criminality and substitute the concept of protection.

While the Limbo Task Force stands ready to help in identifying words that carry the risk of stigmatizing children and youth who come into care and in proposing alternatives, it also recognizes that the experts in this area are the children and youth themselves. Their input would be essential.

## **2. EXTEND THE AGE OF PROTECTION**

Extend the age of protection to age 18 as most provinces do. It is inappropriate to fail to provide support to children over 15 who are or have been suffering from abuse or neglect.

## **3. EXTEND SUPPORT TO YOUTH LEAVING CARE**

Provide support to some former Crown wards to the age of 25, rather than just until the youth turns 21, as many of these vulnerable young people have not completed their high school education or career preparation by age 21.

## **4. IMPROVE SERVICES TO ABORIGINAL CHILDREN.**

The Limbo Task Force supports a thorough review of services to Aboriginal children. This can be accomplished successfully only if the First Nations people participate fully in the review process and have the necessary resources to consult extensively within Aboriginal communities.

## **5. EXAMINE AND REDUCE BARRIERS TO INFORMATION SHARING**

The Limbo Taskforce supports the examination of relevant legislation in order to reduce or eliminate barriers to appropriate information sharing. These barriers currently impede or prevent diverse agencies from effectively collaborating to protect children. . Also, children and youth should have a stated right to records relating to them. Communication and coordinated effort to protect children can be enhanced while still ensuring privacy and protection.

The Limbo Task Force of the Sparrow Lake Alliance appreciates the intent of the legislative review, and the opportunity to make this brief submission. Although some of the above recommendations represent increased costs to the Province of Ontario in the immediate or near future, investments to secure permanent placements and the health, education and well-being of permanent wards are crucial to our society: we either pay now or we pay later.

Yours sincerely,

**Dr. James Wilkes**  
**Chairman of the Limbo Task Force**