



For Immediate Release

Manitoba's Children's Advocate Assumes Responsibility for Section 10 Reviews

WINNIPEG, MB-September 15, 2008 - Today, with the proclamation of *Bill 11, The Children's Advocate's Enhanced Mandate Act* (The Enhanced Act) the responsibilities of conducting Section 10 Reviews will be transferred to Manitoba's Children's Advocate. These reviews will now be referred to as "Child Death Review Special Investigations."

The Children's Advocate said her office would investigate the context in which services are delivered in a manner that respects the inherent dignity of all persons. Her goal is to conduct timely reviews which are inclusive and accountable, honouring the voice and life of the deceased child.

"Through the humbling experience of our work on the 2006 report *Honouring Their Spirits*, we have developed a vision for a society in which the safety, well-being and best interests of all children are paramount," said Billie Schibler, Manitoba's Children's Advocate. "Our journey will focus on viewing the world through the eyes of the child and honouring the spirits of these children by amplifying the voices of those who are no longer heard."

Schibler will advocate for the rights of all children to quality services by:

- giving voice to children who have died,
- investigating and reviewing programs and services that were or could have been provided,
- reviewing circumstances surrounding the death of that child related to standards or quality of care.
- identifying ways in which programs and services can be improved, and
- making relevant and culturally appropriate recommendations.

To maximize the potential for improvements to Manitoba's child serving systems, the Children's Advocate has assembled a multi-disciplinary advisory committee to provide cross-jurisdictional analysis of the special investigation review reports and tentative recommendations. The Children's Advocate will appoint committee members for a three-year term, with a possible reappointment for a second three year term. (*Brief Bios of committee members are attached.*)

Members will be formally delegated responsibilities to maintain confidentiality in relation to all matters of the Child Death Advisory Committee.

Under the Enhanced Act, the scope of the "special investigations" have been broadened beyond child and family services to include reviews of the standards and quality of services of **any** publicly funded social service that was provided to the child or, in the opinion of the Children's Advocate, should have been provided.

The process in which Section 10s are investigated will change as a result of Bill 11. Prior to the Bill, s10 reviews were conducted via file reviews, telephone, and some face-to-face interviews. The OCA will place more emphasis at the community level, meaning investigators may visit residences and communities and publicly funded agencies that had contact with children in care prior to their death.

Based on the findings and the recommendations in the "Strengthen The Commitment" report submitted to the Minister of Family Services and Housing in October 2006, amendments to *The Child and Family Services Act*, *The Ombudsman Act* and *The Fatality Inquiries Act* were made to accommodate changes in legislation governing Section 10 (s10) reviews.

The Manitoba Ombudsman will follow the Children's Advocate's recommendations and report annually on government's progress in implementing the Children's Advocate's recommendations.

It is important to note that the Chief Medical Examiner retains responsibility for investigating cause of death and maintains the power to call for a public inquest if deemed necessary.

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For more information, contact:

Billie Schibler, Manitoba's Children's Advocate, 204-945-1364 or 1-800-263-7146.

The Children's Advocate will be available to media on Monday, September 15th from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.