



Photo by Marta Iwanek

A rally and candlelight vigil was organized by Members of Canada Court Watch and the Ontario Coalition for Accountability to protest Children's Aid Society and to promote the need for government accountability on the organization Feb. 18 in Picton. Here, Danielle Bloomfield looks down at her sign. She says her whole life she has had foster brothers and sisters and oftentimes questioned the decisions made to put them there.

CAS under spotlight at protest

Picton location chosen for the rally following ministry investigation of significant issues

By Solana Cain

A small group gathered to air big grievances against children's aid societies, on Family Day in Picton.

Across from a Tim Hortons at Main and Walton streets, about a dozen people stood on the street corner, holding up signs against Children's Aid and demanding an ombudsman and more oversight into each society.

Kelly Leveque carried a petition in her hands and wore a sign around her neck that read 'Children's Aid Destroys Families.'

"I have been fighting them now a

total of 21 years," said Leveque about Children's Aid. "They [CAS] are destroying families that don't need to be destroyed."

Organizer Curtis Kingston of Canada Court Watch, chose a Picton location for the rally because of a recent news story detailing an unreleased government investigation into significant issues by Prince Edward County CAS in screening foster homes, as reported by *The Belleville Intelligencer*.

"The Picton CAS and multiple CASS in the area kept stating that this was one occurrence, one issue, somebody fell through the cracks and so on," said Kingston.

"But what we've come to find out is that this wasn't just one foster parent."

Since November 2011, three former foster parents have been convicted of sexual abuse and another three foster parents were charged with sex crimes in the fall of last year, according to the

Intelligencer.

"The reality is that we do need child protection. Obviously there are kids that need to be apprehended or they need help. They are getting abused," said Kingston.

"My issue is when children get taken for frivolous reasons, and then they get put into homes that are definitely no better from where they were taken from in the first place.

"We're trying to raise awareness on the issues so that hopefully one day CAS will be held accountable for their actions," said Kingston, who says the societies need oversight, specifically an ombudsman.

Mark Kartusch, executive director of Highland Shores Children's Aid Society said, "Our first and primary goal always is to make sure that children can stay with their family always."

Kartusch said Highland Shores, newly amalgamated Northumberland

and Hastings Children's Aid societies, looks for extended family, or kinship, first.

The rare cases when a child needs to be placed into a foster home, case workers have five days to be in family court and provide justification for removal.

"I certainly understand that the public has the right to express their viewpoint," Kartusch said. "Clearly it's upsetting when children are brought into our care and removed from their homes. That's why it's a last resort."

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services funds and monitors CASS, develops policy to support the child welfare program, and licenses children's group homes and foster homes, said spokesperson Bre Betts, spokesperson for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

If a family feels they haven't been taken care of properly, they can file a complaint with the Child and Fam-

ily Services Review Board. Someone trained in assessing situations, other than the primary caseworker, will investigate the complaint.

The Ombudsmen of Ontario has the authority to investigate occurrences in the course of the administration of a governmental organization.

The Ombudsman has not interpreted this authority to investigate children's aid societies which are independent legal entities in Ontario, said Betts.

Kartusch says Highland Shores CAS has many effective mechanisms in place to screen potential foster homes and deal with complaints.

"Every time you add another oversight mechanism, you're adding cost to a system that's all ready burdened," says Kartusch. "How many is too many?"

The rally continued into the night, with a march down Main Street followed by a candlelight vigil.

St. Paul's Anglican Church gets historic designation

By Vivek McCague

St. Paul's Anglican Church on St. Paul Street in Belleville has been designated a historical site by the Belleville city council on Feb. 19.

The decision is now in its 30-day waiting period where people can express the pros and cons of its designation. After the waiting period the by-law is official.

"The church dates back to 1874 when St. Thomas' Church had the little mission church built. It is now the only remaining mission church in the Anglican diocese of Ontario," said Stanley Jones, chair of Heritage Belleville.

St. Paul's belongs to the parish of St. Thomas' and St. Paul's Anglican churches. Stanley Jones had been working on helping the church receive historical status for just over three months now. Jones said the main reasons for the designation of the church was for its small size (smallest church in Belleville), the carpenter gothic style windows, the hand-carved belfry, the stucco cladding and the carefully designed stained glass windows.

Advantages for being designated a historical site are sometimes buildings receive grants from federal, provincial or municipal governments and receive extra listings or more advertisements an added tourist attraction.

"St. Paul's Anglican Church is rich with history, nobody knows it's here, hopefully more people come see it now."



Photo by Vivek McCague

Stanley Jones poses by a stained glass window and the ten commandments at St. Paul's Anglican Church. St. Paul's successfully received approval to designate the church as a historical site and is now in the 30-day waiting period.

Batteries to be part of new program

By Sandra Kielback

The city of Belleville now has a plan to lower the amount of unwanted batteries that are thrown into the garbage.

Tanya Delaney, operations supervisor at Quinte Waste Solutions and her team, have come up with a pilot program to help Belleville and Thurlow residents safely dispose of unwanted batteries.

"This is a long time coming and I know this pilot project will be as successful as the composting and recycling pilot programs have been," said Belleville Mayor Neil Ellis.

"It's a great project," said city councillor Tom Lafferty, chair of the Green Task Force.

Canada Post will be distributing clear battery-recycling bags with orange markings on them on the week of March 4, with the regular mail. These bags will be picked up on citizens' regular scheduled blue box collection day during the week of March 18-22.

"You just follow the instructions on the bag, fill, seal and put on top of your blue bin," said Delaney.

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