

# Halton Children's Aid Society

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Charitable Registration No. 0159939-01

## **Message from the Board President and Executive Director**

The Halton Region continues to be a fast growing and changing region. The three main demographic changes are growth in population, diversity and poverty. Although our poverty rates are lower than those in the GTA, the number of children living in poverty has increased by 17% between 1997 to 2005. Increased child poverty is most pronounced in single parent families and 58% of the children living in poverty live in single families. Poverty trends also tend to be racialized - disproportionate to immigrants and people of color (i.e., from 1 child in 10 for European groups to 1 child in 2 for African groups). The incidence of poverty strongly correlates to involvement in the Child Welfare system and in Halton the high cost of housing exasperates the situation.

The Society is beginning to feel and track the impact of the downturn of the economy on service demands. There was an increase in investigations of 6% over last year and a 10% increase in average ongoing cases open for service, thus continuing the trend that we have experienced over the last couple of years. We remain committed to our community based service delivery model and have increased community placements to seventeen.

Increases in service demand challenge our capacity to meet workload demands and our service delivery model.

Our children in care are declining by 6%; more children are going into permanent arrangements with adoptions up 75% (14). The average number of children in care stabilized at 256. The majority of our children in care remain in the teenage years with the most populated age being 15 years. We continue to see an increase in our youth attending post secondary education with an uptake in the use of bursary money provided by our Foundation (\$63,000). Therefore, educational support and independence training remain key programming initiatives. We implemented the

new Ontario Child Benefit Equivalent (OCBe) policy that provides savings for children's education, independence, social, cultural and recreational activities.

Although service is first and foremost on our minds, a few other changes occurred. In January 2009 we moved to our new location for the South office at 1445 Norjohn Court in Burlington. Board volunteers and staff worked hard to make this move come together on time and under budget. Special thanks to the Property committee for the time spent over two years to make this happen and to the Foundation who provided extra funding to make the common areas of the building user friendly for children and families.

The Board focused on two main governance initiatives: revising and instituting a new set of Bylaws in June 2008, upgrading policies and procedures to bring its governance framework to a higher standard and stewarding the development of a new Strategic Plan.

The Board and staff remain committed to better outcomes for children, targeting safety, permanency, education and the delivery of our community based service model. Special thanks to those who make a difference in children and families' lives:

- Over 127 staff for their hard work and patience in this ever changing environment;
- Over 105 volunteers worked close to 9,000 hours and touched the lives of 500 of our children;
- Our Foundation Board for their volunteer hours as they continue to reach new fundraising goals;
- Our foster parents help our children everyday and provided approximately 33,202 days of care;
- Our community partners including the Our Kids Network.

In closing, we leave you with our new vibrant and easy to remember Vision Statement :

**"Helping children, youth and families thrive."**

Sincerely,  
Martine Lewis, President & Nancy MacGillivray, Executive Director