



Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies

The voice of child welfare in Ontario

09 ANNUAL 10 REPORT

WE ARE YOUR CHILDREN'S AID





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EXECUTIVE MESSAGE: "WE ARE YOUR CHILDREN'S AID"



The voices of vulnerable children and families in Ontario must be heard by government, the news media and the public. The resources children and their families need to ensure their safety and to restore their well-being must be available when required. This is the work of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS), the voice of child welfare in Ontario.

In 2009/2010, substantial initiatives resulted in significant strides towards these goals.

"I Am Your Children's Aid" tells the stories of children, youth, parents and workers whose lives have been changed by Children's Aid Societies. This powerful public awareness campaign has been seen across Ontario in print, at cinemas, on-line, and on television. It has been heard on the radio in English, French, Cree, and Oji-Cree.

In consultation with members, OACAS focused its 2009/2010 advocacy efforts on three priorities: improved services to Aboriginal children and families, adoption, and youth growing up in care. Meetings with politicians and government staff, submissions to government and the *2009/2010 Child Welfare Report* advocated strongly for these priority populations.

In 2009/2010, many member agencies faced, and continue to face, a funding crisis. OACAS advocated aggressively for sustainable child welfare services that can meet the important mandate of protecting children. Press conferences were held, media inquiries were answered, and briefings, meetings, and presentations were made to the Ontario government. The funding issue will continue to be a focus in the future.

OACAS' strength in creating both dialogue and solutions concerned with the well-being of children was demonstrated in three successful symposia: "Building Bridges to Belonging", "Keys to Quality", and "Critical Connections: Where child safety and woman abuse intersect". Child welfare and children's services experts, professionals, and practitioners were brought together to raise the profile of both child welfare issues and the OACAS.

After a year of extensive consultation with members, the Board of Directors completed the board restructuring. Revised by-laws designed to streamline OACAS governance in order to better serve the members and the vulnerable children of Ontario were passed at a special meeting of members in November 2009.

Although much has been achieved, there is still much to be done. There is still a very long journey ahead to secure the services and supports Aboriginal children and families need, to support a strong public adoption system, and to give every child in care the opportunity to grow up in a family.

As OACAS approaches its 100th anniversary in 2012, efforts to improve infrastructure, resources, programs, and activities are being made so that OACAS can continue to provide quality services to its members.

OACAS joins with the members, their boards, volunteers, foster parents, staff, children, youth and families to proudly declare, "I Am Your Children's Aid!"



Donna Denny

Donna Denny
President



Jeanette Lewis

Jeanette Lewis
Executive Director



MISSION

OACAS, in support of its members, is the voice of child welfare in Ontario, dedicated to providing leadership for the achievement of excellence in the protection of children and in the promotion of their well-being within families and communities.

ORGANIZATION

OACAS has represented and served the Children's Aid Societies of Ontario (CASs) since 1912.

OACAS is a membership organization, providing system support so that CASs may better serve their communities. OACAS engages in government relations, communications, public education, event management, youth advocacy, scholarships and bursaries for youth, information management, education, and training.

Governed by a voluntary Board of Directors, OACAS responds to the province of Ontario on the development of legislation, policy, standards, and review mechanisms as well as on contentious issues. As the voice of Ontario's CASs, it advocates in the best interests of the communities they serve.

OACAS also represents the interests of its members in public forums and, on a non-partisan basis, makes presentations to standing committees of the Ontario Legislature and meets with political leaders and government staff.

A critical role for OACAS is building public awareness. The people of Ontario must understand the needs of children, youth and families in order to support the measures necessary for the safety and well-being of all children in this province.

In these ways, OACAS is the voice of child welfare.

**A CRITICAL ROLE FOR
OACAS IS BUILDING
PUBLIC AWARENESS —
IN ORDER TO SUPPORT
THE MEASURES NECESSARY
FOR THE SAFETY AND
WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN
IN ONTARIO.**



HISTORY

In 1912, 60 Children's Aid Societies came together to form the Associated Children's Aid Societies of Ontario. Since its incorporation in 1920, OACAS has undertaken many challenges on behalf of children and youth and the member agencies that serve them. During the 1920s, the Association and member agencies pressed for the creation of one government department responsible for all public welfare funding and legislation. In 1931, the first Minister of Welfare was appointed. In the mid-1940s, a provincial government grant enabled OACAS to reorganize and to hire, for the first time in 1946, a full-time paid Executive Secretary. Full-time staffing allowed OACAS to expand its services, becoming a clearinghouse of information and a communications vehicle among member agencies.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Throughout its history, the Board of Directors has been committed to achieving OACAS' mission through representing member agencies. To establish a strong reciprocal, co-operative, and responsive relationship with member agencies, the OACAS Board communicates extensively with Board Presidents and Executive Directors.

In June 2009, 28 directors of the OACAS Board were elected at the annual meeting of the membership. This board structure was reviewed, and following

extensive consultation, a new board structure approved. At the OACAS Annual General Meeting in June 2010, a 16-member board will be elected, made up of a President, a Past President, six Agency Board Directors and six Agency Executive Directors—one from each Zone, and two Directors-at-Large.

MEMBERS:

Ontario's Children's Aid Societies are mandated under the *Child and Family Services Act (CFSA)* as the only organizations with the authority to:

- Investigate allegations of abuse and neglect
- Protect children, when necessary
- Provide services to families in order to protect children and prevent circumstances requiring the protection of children
- Provide care or supervision for children assigned to its care
- Place children for public adoption

Each Children's Aid Society is an independent, not-for-profit corporation governed under the *Corporations Act* by an elected board.

SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

OACAS recognizes the achievements of the past year under each of the strategic directions.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

CHILDREN

- Advocated changes to post-secondary supports for Crown wards and former Crown wards, including changes to Ontario Student Assistance Plan (OSAP) rules which can mean an additional \$400 per month for students
- Increased collaboration in adoption services among CASs and with AdoptOntario. The number of CAS adoptions in Ontario increased by approximately 20% in 2009/2010
- Fostered a growing movement to find permanent families for youth – from “leaving care” to “belonging” – including the production and sale of more than 1,200 practice guides to help CASs act as “a good parent” for youth
- Formally endorsed advocacy campaigns to further the interests of the rights of Aboriginal children and families – the “I am a witness” campaign and “Jordan’s Principle”

PUBLIC COMMITMENT

- Launched the “I Am Your Children’s Aid” campaign resulting in 11,978 visits to the useyourvoice.ca and parlezpoureux.ca websites from January 8, 2010 to March 31, 2010, a 656% increase from the same period last year
- Hosted a joint press conference with AdoptOntario on November 3, 2010, in support of Adoption Awareness Month
- Hosted a press conference on the impact of government cut-backs on vulnerable children and families

BEST PRACTICES

- Launched the “Building Bridges to Belonging” and the “Critical Connections” guides
- Evaluated the High Risk Infant training program
- Delivered 1,922 days of training to 10,297 participants

MEMBER AGENCY CAPACITY

- Presented numerous submissions to government on behalf of children, families, and providers of service including a comprehensive response to the review of the *Child and Family Services Act*; a submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs; and a Submission to the Standing Committee on Social Policy on the Regulated Health Professions Statute Law Amendment Act

Advocated with government for funding for member agencies

- Hosted the 3rd annual YouthCAN Conference with 250 participants
- Hosted 3 consultations and 3 symposia

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Purchased additional space for office refurbishment

PROGRAMS & SERVICES



PROGRAMS & SERVICES

ADVOCACY & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

The OACAS Advocacy & Government Relations Program promotes or recommends policy directions and positions based on identified priorities. Advocacy may be directed to government, to other organizations or to the public. Advocacy strategies may involve collaboration and coalitions with other stakeholders.

OACAS also coordinates Government Relations on behalf of the child welfare sector and works with elected officials and their political staff, as well as senior government staff, to build relationships based on trust, respect, honesty, and quality information. Contacts may be made personally – through meetings or teleconferences, or more formally through correspondence and submissions. Although the primary focus of government relations is with the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, OACAS is actively engaged with at least eight other ministries. In addition, OACAS maintains and continues to develop a network of relationships with individuals and groups and other organizations – inside government and outside – who share common interests in children and families.

MEMBER SUPPORT

The OACAS Member Support Program provides direct support and services to our members. The services are delivered through OACAS communications methods and, wherever possible, through personal contact between OACAS staff and members. These services include issues management, monitoring the legislature, tracking policy and operational priorities, convening events, providing infrastructure and technical support, direct support to Zones, Networking Groups and Project Groups.

GOVERNANCE

OACAS Governance is exercised by the Board of Directors and its Committees. The Board has the full authority to provide overall direction to OACAS. The Board delegates authority to the Executive Director, who is empowered within the Board policies to conduct the business of OACAS. In exercising this authority, the Executive Director provides direction and leads the work of OACAS, through consultation with the Local Directors Section and other stakeholders.

**OACAS ADVOCATES FOR
AND SPEAKS ON BEHALF
OF ONTARIO'S CHILDREN'S
AID SOCIETIES.**



COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM

The OACAS Communications Program promotes the interests of OACAS member agencies, provides information to members about the work of OACAS and communicates to the media, the public, and other stakeholders about the Association, its member agencies, and child welfare in Ontario. OACAS leads external communications efforts to effectively represent OACAS and improve the image and reputation of CASs, strengthens member communications by providing appropriate and timely information to assist CASs in achieving their goals, and leads internal communications to engage and involve staff in OACAS operations and goals.

YOUTH PROGRAM

The OACAS Youth Program supports YouthCAN and other policy, advocacy and government relations work related to youth in care and youth transitioning to adulthood. YouthCAN includes Communications, Advocacy, and Networking. Guided by the policy test, “What would a good parent do?”, the Youth program is dedicated to positively impacting Ontario’s child welfare system so that youth in care are empowered, secure and can flourish in an environment that is conducive to realizing their full potential.

EDUCATION LEARNING PORTFOLIO

The Education Learning Portfolio focuses on training for Children’s Aid Society staff and resource families in child-focused, family-centred, strength-based practices

that protect children and respect families. Through a unique blend of presentations, case studies, small group discussions, and self-reflection assignments, participants learn to transform knowledge into skills. Critical themes and relevant issues pertaining to the daily practice of child welfare are examined. The curricula promote current promising practices related to child safety, diversity and anti-oppression, parent collaboration, resiliency, community development, and permanency planning. Delivered under contract to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the program develops reflective professionals, innovative leaders, and strong resource families in the province of Ontario.

INTERNAL OPERATIONS

OACAS develops and maintains an appropriate environment for staff, to ensure high quality service to our members and other organizations and individuals.

**YOUTH IN CARE ARE
EMPOWERED, SECURE,
AND CAN FLOURISH IN
AN ENVIRONMENT THAT
WILL ALLOW THEM TO
REACH THEIR POTENTIAL.**



STRATEGIC DIRECTION: CHILDREN

Promote the well-being of children in care and children receiving service from Children’s Aid Societies.

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

In 2009/2010, OACAS worked closely with government ministries to provide youth in care with the best possible opportunity to do well in school. This advocacy work emphasized the need for educators to identify youth in care, expect them to succeed, track their progress, and support them throughout their entire educational experience. Achievements were realized at the primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels:

- The Ministries of Education and Children and Youth Services introduced a data-sharing pilot project to track the progress of Crown wards
- The Ministries of Children and Youth Services, Education, and Training, Colleges and Universities expanded the Crown Ward Education Championship Teams
- The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities made changes to the Ontario Student Assistance Program, providing Crown wards with special exemptions and allowing them to retain more of their scholarship and bursary funding than in the past

PUBLIC ADOPTION

In 2009/2010, the Transformation Agenda and other recent changes related to adoption resulted in a 20 percent increase in CAS adoptions when compared with 2008/2009.

Raising Expectations, the August 2009 report of the Expert Panel on Infertility and Adoption, made more than 60 recommendations related to public (CAS) adoption. OACAS supported many of the recommendations for change including new provincial policies and funding, the removal of barriers to adoption, province-wide education, and recruitment. OACAS continues to be concerned about recommendations to create a single adoption agency that would become responsible for Crown ward case management.

Moving forward on many recommendations, OACAS created the Adoption Steering Committee which accelerated and intensified regional and provincial collaboration for public adoption. Measures implemented include:

- Improved accessibility to training for prospective adoptive parents
- Increased inter-agency adoption events, including workers and parents
- Increased sharing of tools and resources related to openness in adoption, public engagement, and case planning

On November 3, 2010, OACAS hosted a joint press conference with AdoptOntario in support of Adoption Awareness Month.

YOUTH

Bringing together the ideas and efforts of youth, CAS staff, local and international experts, OACAS worked to improve services for youth through shifting the emphasis in service philosophy from “leaving care” to “belonging”.

More than 400 participants attended “Building Bridges to Belonging”, a forum on permanency planning for youth featuring leading international researchers, media personalities, CAS experts, adoptive parents, and youth. The “*Promising Practices*” guide, which provides concrete ideas for helping to build permanent connections for youth, was launched at the event.

In the interest of improving services for youth, OACAS has also advocated, with others, for changes in the *Child and Family Services Act (CFSA)* in order to extend protection to youth up to the age of 18 and to allow youth up to the age of 25 to continue to receive support. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services 2010 CFSA review sought input on barriers or challenges posed by the *Act* as well as changes that could improve outcomes for children and youth.

ABORIGINAL SERVICES

OACAS continued to advocate on behalf of services for Aboriginal children and families. In 2009/2010, OACAS made public commitments to two initiatives designed to improve child welfare services for Aboriginal children, Jordan’s Principle and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society “I am a witness” campaign. Jordan’s Principle is a child-first principle for resolving jurisdictional disputes involving the care of First Nations children. The “I am a witness” campaign asks Canadians to commit to follow the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal’s review of a complaint that the federal government discriminates against First Nations children by providing them with less child welfare funding and fewer benefits than other children.

As well, OACAS pressed the government to make Aboriginal children and families a priority in funding decisions and in the work of the Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare.

OACAS provided enhanced advocacy related to disproportional funding cuts in designated Aboriginal CASs, supporting several Members’ of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) motions in the Ontario Legislature as well as providing background information to the media.

BRINGING TOGETHER THE IDEAS AND EFFORTS OF YOUTH, CAS STAFF, LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS, OACAS WORKED TO IMPROVE SERVICES FOR YOUTH THROUGH SHIFTING THE EMPHASIS IN SERVICE PHILOSOPHY FROM “LEAVING CARE” TO “BELONGING”.



SCHOLARSHIPS AND BURSARIES

Thanks to the generosity of donors many young people have the opportunity to pursue post-secondary education.

CLARK AWARDS

From the generosity of Ron and Nancy Clark, the Clark Bursary Fund was established in 1989 to assist former Crown wards or youth receiving services from Ontario Children's Aid Societies to attend post-secondary education and training. The Clark Bursaries of \$4,500 per year for university students and \$3,000 per year for college students are awarded to youth pursuing post-secondary education. In 2000, the Clark Grant of \$1,000 was introduced for youth in care and former youth in care pursuing educational, employment or skills development programs who require financial assistance. In 2007, the Clarks introduced the Clark Graduation Award of \$1,000 for Clark Bursary recipients who have completed post-secondary education. Currently, 82 young people are actively pursuing post-secondary studies with the support of the Clark Bursaries, Clark Grants and Clark Graduation Awards. In 2009:

- 10 young people received Clark Bursaries for university studies in the amount of \$4,500 for each of four years
- 10 young people received Clark Bursaries for college studies in the amount of \$3,000 for each of two (or three) years
- 20 young people received Clark Grants of a one-time scholarship of \$1,000
- 10 Clark Bursary recipients who completed post-secondary studies received the Clark Graduation Awards of \$1,000

PHD CANADA SCHOLARSHIP

In January 2007, PHD Canada (PHD), a media buying company, accepted OACAS as a pro-bono account. In addition to providing their services, PHD hosts an annual golf tournament with proceeds supporting children and youth in care. In December 2009, PHD Canada donated \$9,600 towards a scholarship to assist youth in care with their post-secondary education.

- 5 young people will receive this scholarship to be presented in 2010 as a one-time award of \$3,480

GAIL VANDERMEULEN SCHOLARSHIP

In 2009, the Gail Vandermeulen Scholarship was presented for the first time. Funds are raised through the generosity of Dr. Robert Flynn, University of Ottawa, who donates the honorariums of his publications, and from proceeds of the 2008 retirement reception for OACAS past director Gail Vandermeulen.

- 2 young people received a one-time scholarship of \$1,500 to help with their post-secondary education

RONA SCHOLARSHIP

The Rona Scholarship was created to assist current and former youth in care realize their post-secondary educational goals. OACAS renewed the partnership with the Children's Aid Foundation in support of the RONA Scholarship Program. RONA Home and Garden stores raised funds through teddy bear sales in support of the Child Abuse Prevention Campaign in October.

- 15 young people received a one-time RONA Scholarship of \$1,500

**THE OPPORTUNITY
TO PURSUE POST-
SECONDARY EDUCATION.**



STRATEGIC DIRECTION: PUBLIC COMMITMENT

Influence public commitment to addressing social policy affecting children and families.

- 47 member agencies contributed to year one of the campaign
- 31 stories were submitted to “tell your story” on useyourvoice.ca
- 11,978 visits to the websites from January 8, 2010 to March 31, 2010. This is a 656% increase from the same time period last year

EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

The “I Am Your Children’s Aid” campaign was launched in January 2010 to educate Ontarians about the ways they can get involved in protecting children and building strong families by fostering, adopting, volunteering, and advocating for the well-being of children and youth.

In partnership with Scott Thornley + Company, OACAS developed creative elements for a provincial campaign including:

- 6 television spots in English
- 3 radio spots in English, French, Cree, and Oji-Cree
- 43 print ads and posters in English and 10 in French
- 3 web banners
- useyourvoice.ca and parlezpoureux.ca websites

In partnership with PHD Canada and Cineplex Odeon Theatres, OACAS implemented a provincial communications plan which included pro-bono media placement in major markets across the province for the campaign to appear on television, on radio, in print, online, and in Cineplex cinemas.

PUBLICATIONS

The *OACAS Journal* and *The Voice* were distributed to OACAS’ external stakeholders. *The Voice* is sent electronically to more than 2,200 subscribers including public, government, media, and other external stakeholders. The *OACAS Journal* is published quarterly to 4,200 subscribers in both a print and email version and features articles on research and practice in child welfare.

- 9 issues of *The Voice*
- 4 editions of the *OACAS Journal*

Development of the first comprehensive child welfare report began in 2009 in consultation with member agencies. Published in April 2010, the *2009/2010 Child Welfare Report: Your Children’s Aid*, focused on and made recommendations in three priority areas:

- services for Aboriginal children and families
- adoption
- youth growing up in care

STRATEGIC DIRECTION: BEST PRACTICES

Identify, promote, and implement services and organizational best practices.

TRANSFORMING KNOWLEDGE INTO SKILLS

The unique OACAS Education Services program equips child welfare professionals, managers, and resource families with the necessary knowledge, competencies, and tools to make critical decisions about child safety while working alongside families for better outcomes for children.

EDUCATION SERVICES REVIEW

In early 2009, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services commissioned an evaluation of Education Services. More than 500 individuals from the child welfare sector and government participated in individual interviews, focus group sessions, and an online survey to evaluate and review the OACAS education and training program.

While there were suggestions about course content changes, results show the existing curriculum is sufficient to meet the needs of learners in the program, demonstrating that Education Services has kept up with the best practices in the child welfare sector, as well as in the field of pedagogy and distance education.

Survey results show:

- 81% of child welfare workers and CASs agreed that course facilitators are well prepared to teach their course
- 86% of the respondents agreed that the courses reflected the populations they served
- 97% showed that learners agreed course content was relevant to child welfare practice
- 94% agreed they were given an opportunity to evaluate the course

TRAINING AND EVALUATION OF HIGH RISK INFANT PROGRAM

OACAS, in partnership with the Child Welfare Institute, evaluated *Working with High Risk Infants and Their Families*, an advanced child welfare practice course. This training provides child welfare professionals with a framework to identify, assess, and respond to infants at risk as a result of child, parent, medical, societal, or environmental factors.

The evaluation shows that the High Risk Infant (HRI) training increases knowledge which increases the likelihood that child welfare professionals can meet the needs of this most vulnerable population of children. Of 125 child welfare professionals who completed the two-day HRI Advanced Child Welfare Practice Training, 82 percent provide direct services to infants. Seventy-four percent of participants had never taken any previous HRI training.

Results showed that participants gained a significant increase in knowledge from the HRI training. Before the training, participants averaged two correct answers out of 10, and after the training, averaged eight correct answers.

- 94% of participants indicated they learned more about High Risk Infants than they previously knew
- 85% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the training
- 94% of participants indicated that the training will assist them in the performance of their job

WORKING ALONGSIDE
FAMILIES FOR BETTER
OUTCOMES FOR
CHILDREN.



TRAINING DELIVERY ACTIVITY LEVELS

OACAS held 686 training sessions, delivered 1,922 days of training and trained 10,297 participants. The average class size was 15. Of 686 training sessions held in 2009/2010.

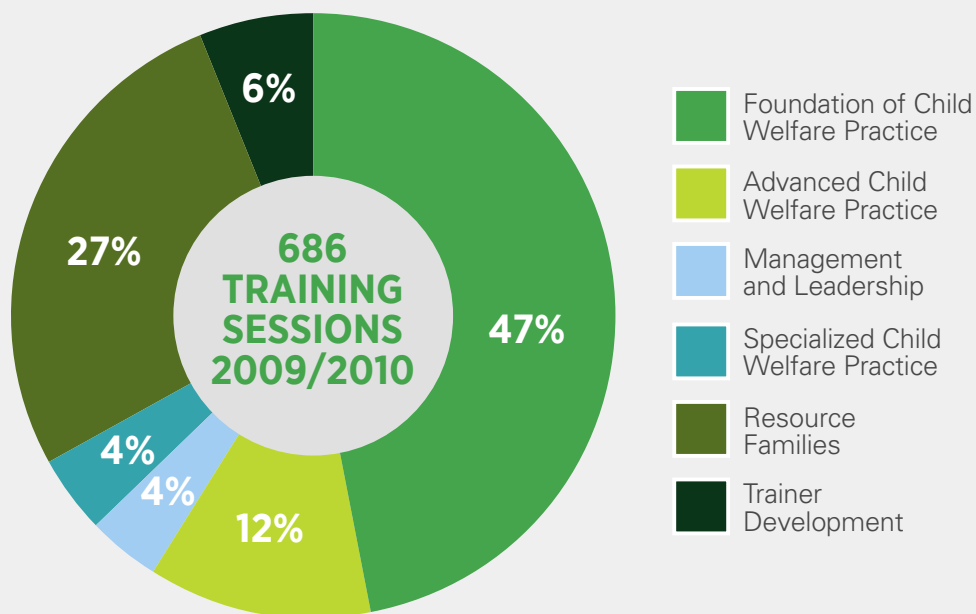
- 47% were in the Foundations of Child Welfare Practice
- 27% were in Resource Families categories

Training in Advanced Child Welfare Practice represents 12 percent of the training sessions held and 12 percent of 10,297 participants.

CRITICAL CONNECTIONS SYMPOSIUM

“Critical Connections: Where Woman Abuse and Child Safety Intersect,” a symposium to increase awareness of the impact of woman abuse on the safety and well-being of children and families, was sponsored by OACAS in partnership with the Violence Against Women sector, Children’s Aid Societies, Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, the Child Welfare Secretariat, and the Ontario Women’s Directorate.

The new guide, *Critical Connections: Where Woman Abuse and Child Safety Intersect - A Practice Guide for Child Welfare Professionals in Ontario*, was launched.





STRATEGIC DIRECTION: MEMBER AGENCY CAPACITY

Strengthen the capacity of member agencies to fulfill their mandate.

FUNDING ADVOCACY

Funding challenges for Children's Aid Societies escalated in June 2009 when the Minister of Children and Youth Services made a series of announcements that resulted in a provincial CAS funding crisis.

The Ministerial decisions included:

- a roll-back of prior year economic adjustments
- 0% increase for 2009/2010 rather than the projected 2%
- a retroactive cap on administrative funds and removal of capital funding

These decisions accounted for approximately \$54M of an estimated \$67M shortfall for Ontario's Children's Aid Societies.

At the same time, the Minister announced the creation of a Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare to work in partnership with CASs to find more efficient ways to improve outcomes for children and youth in care. Appointments were made public at the end of November.

Advocacy for funding was a top priority for OACAS in 2009/2010 and included:

- Policy papers: Pre-Budget Roundtable and Pre-Budget Submissions and development of backgrounders and information bulletins

distributed to CASs and all Members of Provincial Parliament

- Media: meetings with media including the National Post Editorial Board; interviews and information provided to Toronto Star and television outlets; publication of OACAS letters and editorials; and a press conference in October and follow-up with the media regarding the funding crisis
- Government relations: contact with the Premier's Office, leaders of Opposition, the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the office of the Minister of Children and Youth Services, including a briefing of the new Minister appointed in October; contacts with the Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare; and provision of information to Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) when requested in support of public questions raised in Question Period and Private Member motions
- Member support: dedicated media support to agencies most affected by funding cuts including northern CASs, Aboriginal agencies, CASs in areas with community growth not matched by funding growth; support to CASs related to Section 14 Reviews including legal advice about process and judicial review, survey and report on funding reductions; and quarterly services and financial review

In December, one infusion of funding was provided to two designated Aboriginal agencies and, weeks before the end of the fiscal year, additional funds were provided to many agencies. Despite this relief, the estimated shortfall at year end was approximately \$34M. At least half of all CASs ended the fiscal year with a deficit.



FORMAL SUBMISSIONS TO GOVERNMENT

While funding advocacy was a priority, OACAS made numerous other submissions to government on behalf of children, families, and providers of service.

Most significant among these were:

- the comprehensive response to the review of the *Child and Family Services Act* discussion paper on behalf of member CASs
- a response from YouthCAN on behalf of youth across Ontario

In addition, OACAS engaged and collaborated with dozens of external groups to share positions and submissions, resulting in numerous voices speaking out for:

- changes related to protection of youth
- extending the age of support to 25 years
- new policies for information sharing and privacy

Other submissions addressed the *Family Statute Law Amendment Act* related to the placement of children with non-custodial parents and the *Regulated Health Professions Statute Law Amendment Act* which deals with qualifications of practitioners.

- February 2010: *OACAS Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs 2010/2011 Pre-budget Consultation*
- January 2010: *Review of the Child and Family Services Act, Recommendations of the Ontario Children’s Aid Societies*

- September 2009: *OACAS Submission to the Standing Committee on Social Policy Regarding Bill 179, Regulated Health Professions Statute Law Amendment Act*

QUEEN’S PARK TRACKING

OACAS has increased its capacity to monitor and report to members on the proceedings of the Ontario Legislature, anticipate changes to legislation, and respond to issues.

The *Week in Review* was distributed each Monday highlighting key bills tabled, motions, petitions, and statements, as well as questions raised during Question Period. Issues were posted on a daily basis when required.

In the fall, OACAS responded to a large number of questions and requests related to funding issues from CASs and local MPPs. In the fall session of the legislature, CAS funding was discussed almost daily, keeping the issue alive and making it relevant to all Members of Provincial Parliament.

OACAS HAS INCREASED ITS CAPACITY TO MONITOR AND REPORT TO MEMBERS ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE ONTARIO LEGISLATURE.



YOUTH PROGRAM

OACAS' youth program, YouthCAN, continued to lead advocacy efforts for services to youth, influencing government and agency decision-makers alike.

In 2009/2010, YouthCAN:

- Showcased its philosophy, program and results at an international conference "Connecting Now for the Future"
- Convened "Success! Play Life to Win", the third annual YouthCAN Conference, drawing more than 250 participants, a record number of youth, chaperones, speakers and presenters
- Facilitated youth input to the province's Expert Panel on Infertility and Adoption during the third annual youth retreat
- Facilitated youth consultation for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities on issues including age of care, emotional support, resiliency, and education
- Supported an increased number of zone-based networking activities
- Facilitated active advocacy and participation in regional meetings on CFSA and in Ministries of Training, Colleges and Universities; Children and Youth Service; and Education Championship programs

OACAS CONFERENCES, CONSULTATIONS AND SYMPOSIA

EVENTS MANAGEMENT

In 2009/2010, OACAS enhanced its capacity to organize high-quality, relevant, and effective events.

An Events Manager responsible for the strategic development of events joined OACAS in July 2009.

In addition to coordinating various aspects of the events, new communications tools were developed to promote events and encourage attendance, including announcements on the members' website, dedicated web pages on the public website, updates in the *Week in Review*, eblasts, posters, postcards, and outreach to staff at member agencies.

"BUILDING BRIDGES TO BELONGING" SYMPOSIUM

More than 400 practitioners, professionals, and service providers attended OACAS' first day-long symposium to stimulate thinking about true permanency planning for youth in care.

There were panel discussions on legal custody, family, and older adoptions showcasing innovative practices at local CASs. Keynote speakers included:

- Dr. Mark Courtney, Ph.D., Executive Director of Partners for Our Children, on foster care to age 21
- Dr. Aron Shlonsky, Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, on legal custody
- Patrick O'Brien, Executive Director, "You Gotta Believe", on extreme adoption
- Lorna Dueck, Executive Producer, Listen-Up TV, moderated a panel on adoption in Ontario

Building Bridges to Belonging: Promising Practices for Youth, a preferred practices guide created by OACAS and the Local Directors' Section Provincial Projects Group, was launched at the symposium.

PDRC WEBCAST

At the request of member agencies, OACAS hosted a webcast of the *2009 Report from the Paediatric Death Review Committee (PDRC)* and *Deaths Under Five Committee* on September 17, 2009. Dr. Bert Lauwers, Deputy Chief Coroner, and Karen Bridgman-Acker, Child Welfare Specialist, presented the PDRC's findings and recommendations to more than 47 agencies.

Q-NET SYMPOSIUM

"Keys to Quality: Investing in Excellence", a symposium on shaping the future of quality assurance practices in child welfare, was hosted in December by OACAS and Q-NET, the provincial quality assurance networking group.

Phase II of the Local Directors' Section project Building Provincial Quality Capacity, the symposium on a strategic approach to quality assurance, was attended by 135 senior child welfare leaders, boards of directors, and members of Q-Net. The *Keys to Quality* handbook was available at the symposium.

"CRITICAL CONNECTIONS" SYMPOSIUM

Child welfare and woman abuse agency professionals were invited to share knowledge and experience to build and showcase collaborative programs and identify trends, new programs, and research. Internationally recognized speakers Leslie Tutty, Dr. Jeffrey Edelson, and Dr. Linda Barker addressed more than 575 participants. A new practice guide was launched.

CONSULTATIONS

Consultations held in June, December, and March focused on the CFSA Review 2010, board governance, the Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare, the Cornwall Inquiry, the financial landscape and funding issues, public engagement, government relations, and social media. On average, 120 senior management staff and Board members from member agencies participate at the consultations. At the December Consultation, 144 registrants attended and presenters included members of the Sustainability Commission and the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

"PUTTING CHILDREN FIRST" CONFERENCE

The Steering Committee for "Putting Children First: Making a Difference", the 2010 child welfare conference, began work in June 2009. A call for workshops and presentation proposals drew more than 150 proposals. Ten keynote speakers have been scheduled to discuss key issues in sexual abuse, chronic neglect, and balancing risks and strengths. The conference will be held in June 2010.

GOVERNANCE

BOARD RENEWAL

Since 2008, the Board Renewal Task Force has been examining various governance models and structures that would streamline the Board's work. A special meeting of members on November 30, 2009 approved new corporate by-laws. The new Board structure will be in effect after the June 2010 Annual General Meeting.

ACCREDITATION/BY-LAW CHANGES

The Accreditation Coalition was awarded a three-year grant from the Trillium Foundation to develop an independent national accreditation organization that specializes in accreditation of human service organizations. OACAS and the child welfare field are represented on the Steering Committee and on the working groups of the Accreditation Coalition which is now registered as a corporation and known as the Canadian Council of Accreditation.

Changes to the OACAS by-laws approved by members at the Special Meeting of Members on November 30, 2009 eliminated reference to the OACAS Accreditation Program.

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES IN CHILD WELFARE.



COMMUNICATIONS

WEBSITE & NETWORKING SOLUTIONS

New tools to improve information gathering and promotions were introduced:

- A new tool to nominate and select bursary and scholarship recipients
- A refined and updated public website
- Revised and redesigned useyourvoice.ca and parlezpoureux.ca websites, the focal point of the Public Engagement Campaign
- The social media strategy on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter in support of the Public Engagement Campaign
- Electronic publications and e-blasts promoting OACAS events

MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

OACAS continued to keep members informed through a variety of print and electronic publications. There are six member specific publications:

- *In the News*, a daily email of headlines to 249 subscribers including CAS communications staff and Executive Directors
- *Week in Review*, weekly email to 1,479 subscribers with a summary of posting on the members' website

- *OACAS Journal*, a quarterly academic journal showcasing articles on research and practice in child welfare for front-line child welfare staff, management and researchers is distributed in print and via email to 4,200 subscribers
- *Board to Board*, from the Board President, issued at least 5 times a year in print and via email directly to 231 email subscribers
- *OACAS Extra*, an update from the Executive Director, was issued 4 times a year in print and via email directly to 1,194 subscribers. In an effort to streamline processes and reduce duplication of content, the OACAS Extra was discontinued
- Youth Program produced 3 *NOTICE* Newsletters for youth in care, former youth in care and youth champions at member agencies and distributed the e-version to 189 subscribers

CORPORATE BRANDING

Corporate branding ensures that OACAS publications, events, and materials consistently reflect the organization. Since the launch of the revised OACAS logo and brand in early 2008, a logo and brand was developed for Education Services in early 2009, and a new logo and brand is under development for the YouthCAN program. To ensure consistency throughout OACAS, a policy and procedure for corporate branding was developed and implemented.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION: OACAS INFRASTRUCTURE

Provide a productive and supportive working environment for Association staff.

OFFICE REFURBISHMENT

For several years, the service plan has included a renovation of OACAS offices. A needs analysis was conducted and plans drafted to accommodate requirements within existing office space. Although the outcome indicated existing space is too small to meet current and future needs, the option of relocation was ruled out due to the cost of requirements. In November, the OACAS Finance Committee and Board of Directors approved the purchase of additional space on the third floor at 75 Front Street East, the current location of OACAS offices. This purchase will allow OACAS to proceed with a renovation of the combined existing and newly purchased space that is designed to meet the goals of:

- Increased and improved meeting room space
- Improved security
- Appropriate workstations for offsite staff, students and member agency staff that are on-site for meetings
- Potential space for the co-location of other mutual interest parties, such as the North-South Partnership
- Future growth

ANTI-OPPRESSION PRACTICE

OACAS has been working toward embedding an anti-oppression strategy – a “lens” through which OACAS activities are viewed.

- Anti-oppressive practice was considered in the:
 - Re-drafting of the policy and procedure manual
 - Planning of the space selection/renovation
 - Visual images used in communications and education
- To better reflect the community, staff and management training has been held and OACAS has become much more diverse in its staff mix

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

OACAS continues to support a healthy and productive workplace.

In 2009/2010, OACAS staff attended the third annual staff development day on “Becoming an Excellent Communicator” and four bi-monthly meetings to stay informed about OACAS projects and priorities. Staff were updated on OACAS activities on the Intranet, the internal web site.



LOCAL DIRECTORS' SECTION PROJECTS

OACAS allocates up to \$100,000 annually to support priority projects from the Local Directors' (LD) Section. Each year the LD Section calls for proposals and a selection committee identifies those projects which fit the Section's priorities.

In 2009/2010, the following projects were funded:

- ↻ Trauma Response
- ↻ Child Protection Standards Review
- ↻ Executive Director Leadership Development
- ↻ Kinship Services
- ↻ "Building Bridges to Belonging"
- ↻ Development of an Anti-Oppression Framework
- ↻ Children in Care & Foster Care Standards Review
- ↻ Building Provincial Quality Capacity
- ↻ Enhancing Provincial Communications Capacity
- ↻ Child Protection Staff Counselling Skills



ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES BALANCE SHEET

(as at March 31, 2009)

	TOTAL 2010 \$	TOTAL 2009 \$
ASSETS		
CURRENT		
Cash	1,214,409	1,465,420
Accounts receivable	550,872	1,383,730
Prepaid expenses	1,045,825	81,629
Inventory	15,260	21,219
	2,826,366	2,951,998
DEFERRED COSTS		8,210
CAPITAL ASSETS	1,443,316	1,512,288
	4,269,682	4,472,496

LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES

CURRENT		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	1,512,855	1,817,431
Deferred revenue	481,439	535,705
	1,994,294	2,353,136
DEFERRED CAPITAL CONTRIBUTIONS		
FUND BALANCES		
Invested in capital assets	1,443,316	1,512,288
Externally restricted	152,628	160,042
Unrestricted	679,444	447,030
	2,275,388	2,119,360
	4,269,682	4,472,496



ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES INCOME STATEMENT

(as at March 31, 2009)

	TOTAL 2010 \$	TOTAL 2009 \$
REVENUE		
Membership fees	2,672,941	2,521,485
Government of Ontario	4,265,172	5,877,882
Registration fees	347,224	386,803
Interest income	115	14,188
Publications	71,702	73,028
Donations	295,292	244,509
Other	559,522	194,083
	8,211,968	9,311,978
EXPENSES		
Salaries	3,039,146	2,892,748
Employee benefits	612,365	569,667
Purchased services and training services	2,593,921	3,737,275
Travel	246,889	274,305
Office expenses	241,825	309,546
Occupancy costs	157,761	169,161
Publications and promotions	158,468	147,627
Amortization of capital assets	68,972	72,316
Facility rental	311,761	318,698
Equipment	108,741	496,762
Resources and memberships	51,870	28,129
Staff training	54,036	59,249
Bursaries awarded	297,650	251,750
Other	112,535	83,291
	8,055,940	9,410,524
(Excess of revenue over expenses)	156,028	(98,546)
Fund balances, beginning of year	2,119,360	2,217,906
FUND BALANCES, END OF YEAR	2,275,388	2,119,360



OACAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2009/2010

President: Donna Denny
Past President: Dennis Nolan
First Vice President: Jane Anderson
Second Vice President: Keith Sparling
Secretary/Treasurer: Al Law
Member-at-Large: Paul Zarnke
Member-at-Large: Gary Harron

REGION 1 Charron Sippola
Kenora-Patricia C&FS, Rainy River F&CS

REGION 2 Vacant
Dilico Anishinabek FC, Payukotayno James & Hudson Bay FS

REGION 3 Frank Gillis
Algoma CAS, Sudbury-Manitoulin CAS

REGION 4 Dennis Draves
Jeanne Sauvé FS, C&FS of Timmins & District, Timiskaming C&FS

REGION 5 Nancy Ringham
Thunder Bay CAS, Tikinagan North C&FS

REGION 6 John Stopper
FY&CS of Muskoka, Nipissing & Parry Sound CAS

REGION 7 Bill Wellman
Northumberland CAS, Kawartha-Haliburton CAS

REGION 8 Al Law
Hastings CAS, Lennox-Addington F&CS, Prince Edward CAS

REGION 9 Keith Sparling
Frontenac CAS, Renfrew F&CS

REGION 10 Suzanne Geoffrion
Leeds-Grenville F&CS, Lanark CAS

REGION 11 Barbara MacKinnon
Ottawa CAS

REGION 12 Ray Barnes
Prescott-Russell CAS, Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry CAS

REGION 13 M.J. Perry
York Region CAS, Durham CAS

REGION 14 Vacant
Simcoe CAS, Dufferin C&FS

REGION 15 Paul Zarnke
Peel CAS, Jewish F&CS, Native C&FS of Toronto

REGION 16 David Rivard
CAS Toronto

REGION 17 Marilyn Dumaresq
Toronto CCAS

REGION 18 Jan Lord
Halton CAS, Wellington F&CS

REGION 19 Gary Harron
Grey CAS, Bruce CAS

REGION 20 Marie Parsons
Huron-Perth CAS

REGION 21 Harry Emmott
Waterloo F&CS, Brant CAS

REGION 22 Dominic Verticchio
Hamilton CAS, Hamilton-Wentworth CCAS

REGION 23 Jane Anderson
Niagara F&CS, Haldimand-Norfolk CAS

REGION 24 Jane Fitzgerald
London-Middlesex CAS, Oxford CAS

REGION 25 Dan Weagant
Chatham-Kent CS, Elgin F&CS

REGION 26 Jamie Henderson
Windsor-Essex CAS, Sarnia-Lambton CAS



**Ontario Association of
Children's Aid Societies**

The voice of child welfare in Ontario

OACAS, in support of its members, is the voice of child welfare in Ontario, dedicated to providing leadership for the achievement of excellence in the protection of children and in the promotion of their well-being within families and communities.

www.oacas.org