

NEWS RELEASE

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Meaningful consultations are needed to make the draft Yukon Government's Child and Family Services Act better.

Whitehorse – Kha Shade Heni, Mark Wedge of Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Chief Ruth Massie, Ta'an Kwach'an Council, and NGOs say meaningful consultation is needed to improve the draft Yukon Government Child and Family Services Act (CFSA). The consultation process began five years ago and in the draft legislation many of the important issues raised are absent.

"We have a real opportunity to improve this legislation to make it cutting edge", says Kha Shade Heni Mark Wedge. "This is once in a generation chance to make real changes for the well being of Yukon children."

Kha Shade Heni Wedge, and Chief Massie, state the foundation of this draft act is positive but there are several issues that should prevent it from being adopted.

There are four key issues with the draft Child and Family Services Act:

- 1) **No Child's Advocate** – the CFSA does not provide for an independent Children's Advocate despite repeated calls for one in the consultation process and all but four jurisdictions in Canada having one.
- 2) **Discretionary and Unaccountable Power of the Director** – the draft act fails to address the load of concerns that the director of Family and Child Services has too much discretionary power to make decisions for a child in government care.
- 3) **Collaboration and First Nation Involvement** – the draft act does not reflect the government to government relationship between the Yukon and Self-Governing First Nations.
- 4) **Recognition of Extended Family and the Rights of Disabled Parents** - the draft Act proposes several positive changes to recognize extended family members but participation in key decisions is reduced or removed and parents with physical or mental challenges have less ability under this draft to remain involved as parents as they did under the old act.

"By failing to address these issues were letting down a future generation of Yukon children." says Wedge.

Eleanor Millard for the Grandparents' Rights Association of the Yukon says "We're disappointed in this draft. It needs to be more specific in areas of child advocacy,

grandparent's rights and payments to extended families that are caring for children who otherwise would be in Government care. “

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