



BC ASSOCIATION of  
SOCIAL WORKERS

## **Press Release Re: Representative for Children and Youth Report April 17, 2008**

The Representative for Children and Youth's Report on Amanda, Savannah, Rowen and Serena, *From Loss to Learning*, is a careful, compassionate and comprehensive review of four tragic deaths that provides the public with a clear, stark and often disturbing look at British Columbia's child protection system. It provides the public with an understanding of how an underfunded, organizationally chaotic child protection system, along with a chronic shortage of trained social workers to protect children, leads to child deaths. The Representative's report on the deaths of Amanda, Savannah, Rowen and Serena also puts the face of children to the scathing observations and 64 recommendations made by Judge Ted Hughes in his 2006 BC Child and Youth Review.

The Representative's Report confirms the need in BC for an independent officer of the legislature who is able to assure the public that government, Ministry and professionals serving children will be held accountable for how well they fulfill that public duty. The report notes that the Representative's role is not to fault-find. The Report's respectful treatment of child protection social workers reflects the Representative's understanding of how systemic failures impact the ability to protect children. In the past social workers were often scapegoated when children died in the care of the government. In this report the entire child protecting system, including community agencies, police, the Coroners office, and other are examined in a respectful, comprehensive and penetrating manner.

BCASW asks Minister Christensen, Deputy Minister du Toit and the MCFD leadership team to give the Representative's Report a careful read, to acknowledge the systemic issues behind these tragic child deaths and to commit to the timely addressing of the thoughtful recommendations made by the Representative.

BCASW agrees with the Representative when she writes, "we not only ponder how and why a child died, we also ask if there is anything that could have been done to prevent it." The Representative's report makes it clear that much can be done to prevent further child deaths. The question for government is whether there is political will to create an effective, well resourced child protecting system.