

**MINISTER'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE
for the
*CHILD YOUTH and FAMILY SERVICES ACT***

**ACTIVITY PLAN
2008-2011**

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR:

Pursuant to the *Transparency and Accountability Act*, the Minister's Advisory Committee (MAC) will report as a Category Three government entity. I am pleased to provide the Activity Plan for the Minister's Advisory Committee (MAC) for the period of April 2008 – March 2011. The Minister's Advisory Committee is a legislated committee under Section 75 of the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*. This Committee is appointed by the Minister and is responsible to review the operations of the Act and report to the Minister on whether its principles and purpose are being achieved.

This Activity Plan also provides an overview of the MAC and identifies key objectives to be accomplished for this reporting period. In the development of this plan careful consideration was given to the strategic directions of government, as communicated by the responsible minister. While the Committee does not have a direct role in the achievement of these strategic directions at this time, they are an accountability mechanism and do contribute to achieving the overall mandate of the Minister/ Department. My signature below is indicative of the committee's accountability for the preparation of this plan and the achievement of specific objectives contained within.

Sincerely,

Des Dillon
Chairperson
Minister's Advisory Committee

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1.0 MAC Overview

On January 5, 2000, the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act (CYFS Act)* was proclaimed. Accountability for interventions under the new Act is provided through a number of statutory provisions. One of these accountability statutes is Section 75 of the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* which provides for the establishment of a Minister's Advisory Committee (MAC).

This is the second committee appointed under the legislation to conduct the review of the operations of the *CYFS Act*. The work of the first committee concluded on December 5, 2005 with the tabling of the final report into the House of Assembly by the Minister.

The committee meets as required but it is generally every other month. The Department of Health and Community Services covers travel and other associated costs for the work of this committee. A program consultant at the Department provides support and strategic direction to the Committee.

2.0 Committee Membership

Representation on this advisory committee is appointed in accordance with Section 75 (2) of the Act. The MAC is comprised of a maximum number of 10 individuals from across the province that has a particular interest and expertise in children's issues. Membership is as follows:

Des Dillon	Chair; appointed under Section 75 (2)(f) as a community representative
Vacant	appointed under Section 75 (2)(d) as the legal aid lawyer representative
Michelle Sullivan	appointed under Section 75(2)(f) as a representative from Memorial University's School of Social Work
Karen Mitchell	appointed under Section 75(2)(a) as a consumer representative
Brian Lyall	appointed under Section 75(2)(e) as a representative from a cultural minority
Vacant	appointed under Section 75(2)(b) as the representative from a health board

Ivy Burt	appointed under Section 75(2)(c) as a representative of the minister
Mary Bungay Gaultois	appointed under Section 75(2) (f) as a community representative
Vacant	There is currently one (1) vacancy to be filled under Section 75(2) (a) for a consumer representative.
Vacant	There is currently one (1) vacancy to be filled under Section 75(2)(e) for a person representing a cultural, linguistic or racial minority group.

3.0 Mandate

In accordance with Section 75 (1) of the *Child Youth and Family Services Act*, the following mandate has been set out for the Minister's Advisory Committee.

"The Minister shall establish an advisory committee whose function is to review every two years, the operations of this Act and to report to the Minister concerning its operation and stating whether, in its opinion, the principles and purpose of the Act are being achieved."

4.0 Primary Clients

The primary client of the Minister's Advisory Committee is the Minister of Health and Community Services in accordance with Section 75 of the *CYFS Act*.

5.0 Values

Our central philosophy is to promote the safety, health and well-being of children, youth & families with the best interest of the child being paramount. The core values of the MAC are founded in the general principles defined in section 7 of the *Child Youth and Family Services Act*. These principles are as follows:

- the overriding and paramount consideration in any decision made under this Act shall be the best interests of the child
- every child is entitled to be assured of personal safety, health and well-being
- the family is the basic unit of society responsible for the safety, health and well-being of the child
- the community has a responsibility to support the safety, health and well-being of a child and may require assistance in fulfilling this responsibility
- prevention activities are integral to the promotion of the safety, health and well-being of a child
- kinship ties are integral to a child's self-development and growth and if a child's safety, health and well-being cannot be assured in the context of the family, the extended family shall be encouraged to care for the child provided that a director can be assured that the child's safety, health and well-being will not be at risk
- the cultural heritage of a child shall be respected and connections with a child's cultural heritage shall be preserved
- in the absence of evidence to the contrary, there shall be a presumption that a child 12 years of age or over is capable of forming and expressing an opinion regarding his or her care and custody

The MAC will demonstrate these guiding principles through the following core values:

Integrity	We are committed to ensuring recommendations that are based on review processes, findings and evidence.
Collaboration	The committee shall make every effort to create opportunities for input and participation of individuals, groups, organizations and communities in the review process.
Privacy	We are committed to ensuring that sensitive information is held in confidence and is shared only with those who need to know and is treated with care and responsibility.

6.0 Vision

The vision of the Minister's Advisory Committee is:

All children are healthy, valued and respected and where families and communities are supported to create safe, nurturing environments.

7.0 Mission

As a category 3 government entity the MAC has the option of adopting the mission of the Department of Health and Community Services or developing our own. The Committee has determined that neither of these options are appropriate at this time because the legislated mandate is specific to the mission of this committee. The mission statement in the 2007/08 transitional activity plan was reviewed and deemed to be redundant with the mandate. For that reason, the MAC has decided not to adopt the mission of that Activity Plan.

8.0 Objectives

The MAC will report to the Minister on the operations of the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* by 2009. This report will be based on the recommendations of the 1st MAC report of 2005 and will provide information on the current status/progress of these recommendations. The MAC will develop mechanisms to elicit input from all stakeholders who participated and helped inform the report of the 1st MAC. Consideration will also be given to current initiatives that are directed at 'Strengthening the CYFS System' and other reviews or reports that are relevant to operations of the *CYFS Act*. This feedback will form the basis for the 2nd report.

By 2010, the MAC on CYFS Act will have put processes in place to prepare itself to advise the Minister concerning the operations of the CYFS Act and whether its principles and purpose are being achieved. By 2011, the MAC will have advised the Minister concerning the operations of the CYFS Act and whether its principles and purpose are being achieved.

The following objectives outline the Committee's priority areas for fiscal years ending March 31, 2009, 2010 and 2011. These objectives will be reported on in the relevant annual reports.

Objective 1: By 2009, the MAC will have advised the Minister on the progress achieved on the recommendations of the MAC 2005 report.

Measure: Report submitted to the Minister

Indicators:

- Recommendations of the MAC 2005 report are reviewed to determine the extent to which they have been implemented
- Current initiatives aimed to strengthen the CYFS system are reviewed to assess Government's progress
- Documents detailing how Government could improve the CYFS system are reviewed (e.g. Turner Review and Investigation and Deloitte Report)
- Other reports/reviews are considered as part of the review process (i.e. In Care Review, Clinical Review of CYFS)
- Gaps are identified to highlight areas not currently being addressed
- Priority areas for further action are recommended
- Information is obtained from departmental officials, regional health boards and other key stakeholders to determine the status of current strategies aimed at strengthening the CYFS system

Objective 2: By 2010, the MAC will have put processes in place to prepare itself to advise the Minister concerning the operations of the *CYFS Act* and whether its principles and purpose are being achieved.

Objective 3: By 2011, the MAC will have advised the Minister concerning the operations of the *CYFS Act* and whether its principles and purpose are being achieved.