



MCFD contracts outside review in child sex abuse case

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Longtime civil servant Bob Plecas to lead independent review



A horrific child abuse case, revealed in a court ruling last week, is now the subject of a review that could lead to sweeping changes at the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Minister Stephanie Cadieux announced Friday that respected former civil servant Bob Plecas has been hired to lead the process.

"Faith in the ministry has been shaken and I understand why," said Cadieux.

The case centred on a Vancouver family. In a scathing **ruling** released July 14, BC Supreme Court Justice Paul Walker said government social workers actions were 'egregious.' After the ministry removed the couple's four children from the mother's care, staff ignored her repeated warnings that her husband, the children's father, was sexually molesting three of them including the youngest, while she was in government care.

Cadieux said she still has not decided whether the province will appeal the decision, but the situation clearly calls for some kind of outside review, and that's what Plecas has been tasked to do.

"It is not designed to retry the case. The review is not focused on fault finding, it's focused on strengthening the child welfare system in British Columbia."

Plecas will be joined by panelists to be nominated by the Child Welfare League of Canada. The panel has a mandate to review policies, legislation and standards that were in place at the time of the case, from 2008 to 2012, to review records and ministry actions and make recommendations.

"Perhaps there's things that can be corrected in the system, and that's what I'm going to do," said Plecas.

But BC's Representative for Children Youth, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, is not impressed.

"It doesn't make any sense to me because why wouldn't we look at policies up until today, 2015 and how the ministry is working with children and families today," she said.

Turpel-Lafond says she will monitor Plecas' work on the case. But is still considering using her own powers to investigate as well.

"I can interview people under oath, I can compel documents including up to cabinet documents and i can comment on them. his contract is a very limited contract for a limited purpose."

Cadieux told reporters Turpel-Lafond's office would normally handle reviews like the one being handed to Plecas.

"But the representative has made extensive comments in the media," she said. "Evidence that she has significant feelings as to what should happen here."

But in a case involving sexual abuse of a child in care Turpel-Lafond says it is her job to speak out.



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