

**Ministry of Children,
Community and Social
Services**

**Ministère des Services à
l'enfance et des Services
sociaux et communautaires**



Minister's Office

Bureau du Ministre

438 University Avenue
7th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1N3

438, avenue University
7^e étage
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1N3

Tel.: (416) 325-5225

Fax: (416) 325-5240

Tél. : (416) 325-5225

Télééc. : (416) 325-5240

127-2020-6622

June 24, 2020

Ms. Cara Faith Zwibel
Director, Fundamental Freedoms Program
Canadian Civil Liberties Association
czwibel@ccla.org

Dear Ms. Zwibel:

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association regarding child-parent access orders during the COVID-19 outbreak. As matters concerning children's aid societies fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, I am pleased to respond.

Children's aid societies are independent organizations governed by locally-elected boards of directors and, in the case of two Indigenous societies, Band Councils. Societies have the exclusive mandate for the delivery of child protection services, in accordance with legislation, regulations, and ministry policy and standards. Societies are responsible for determining how best to meet the needs of individual children in care during the COVID-19 outbreak, subject to any applicable court orders and informed by recommendations from public health.

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, societies are continuing to operate and provide services to children, youth and families. With respect to access, societies have been encouraged by the ministry to assess every family situation differentially and to make decisions on a case-by-case basis while also observing public health recommendations. Societies have also been encouraged to consider the use of technology, where appropriate. Societies are responsible for determining how best to proceed with family visits during the COVID-19 outbreak to protect the safety and well-being of children, youth, caregivers and families. Where access is court-ordered, if parties are unable to agree to alternative arrangements, the court's approval may be sought in order to change the specifics of the access order.

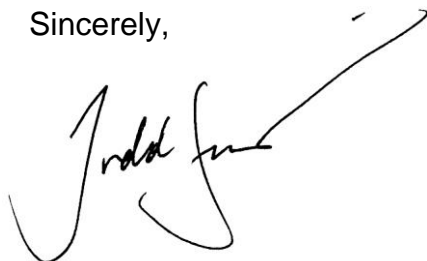
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The Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG) is aware that child protection proceedings can be difficult, time-consuming, and expensive for families who are already in the midst of a great deal of stress. MAG continues to work with justice partners to provide access to critical front-line justice services, while ensuring that urgent and priority legal matters can continue to be heard in our courts.

As the situation with COVID-19 evolves, we continue to work with children's aid societies, residential service providers and other partners to support them in providing child, youth and family services in ways that promote child safety and well-being and that are compliant with the law, while also considering the recommendations made by our provincial public health leaders.

Again, thank you for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Todd Smith
Minister

c: The Honourable Doug Downey, Attorney General
Mr. David Remington, Assistant Deputy Minister, Child Welfare and
Protection Division, MCCSS