



News Release

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Highland Shores Children's Aid Develops 2013/14 Budget Based on New Child Welfare Funding Model

At a Board meeting held this evening at its Belleville office, Highland Shores Children's Aid Executive Director Mark Kartusch outlined plans for the Society's 2013/14 budget. Budget development was guided by the new provincial funding formula for Children's Aid Societies which was developed by the Commission for Sustainable Child Welfare and came into effect on April 1, 2013.

The new formula allocates funding to each Society based on a combination of both socio-economic and volume-based factors. As a result, the model calls for a 2% decrease in the budget each year over the next five years for Highland Shores which represents approximately \$950,000 per year.

For fiscal 2013-14, Highland Shores is forecasting a budget of \$45,740,001. The Society finished the 2012-13 year with a modest surplus.

"While we understand the fiscal environment and the need for a new funding model, the Society is concerned with elements of the model and its implementation within our local communities and across the province. That being said, we are committed to continuing our mandate to focus on the safety, permanency and well-being of children, youth and families and will continue to work with the government in meeting the challenges that this model creates", said Mark Kartusch, Executive Director of Highland Shores.

In order to meet its budget demands, the Society will be taking some difficult steps which include closing its Residential Treatment Program (RTP) and reducing three service support programs by one staff member each as well as reducing its after-hours reception coverage. Also, with the redundancies from the implementation of the new service model for the amalgamated agency, some reductions will be made in management, administrative and service staff positions. In total, approximately 20 positions within the organization will be affected by the combined budget reductions and changes to the service model.

As the Society is forecasting a continued decrease in the number of children in its care, it will also continue to ensure that staffing levels appropriately match the volume of work.

In addition, the Society has identified several areas where it will generate budget savings such as reducing overtime and mileage and reducing the costs of placing children in OPR care.

Commenting on these actions, Mark Kartusch, Executive Director said, "We are very proud of the work of the staff of the Residential Treatment Program and the results they have achieved with the youth they have supported over the years. However, operating a group home such as the RTP is simply not possible in this new fiscal environment as we cannot continue to support the demands the business of group care places on our organization. While taking steps such as this closure and the reduction of staff are very difficult for the Society because of the impact it has on valued members of our organization, our intent is to lessen that impact using methods such as attrition or reassignment before resorting to layoff in situations where this is possible."

This new fiscal environment will require many CASs to fundamentally re-think how they deliver child welfare services. We will continue to be committed to delivering the best possible service to our clients while being accountable to the public with regard to the use of public funds.

As Highland Shores moves into the future, our hope is to create a healthy, sustainable organization that meets the needs of our communities in Hastings, Northumberland and Prince Edward County.

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