

## **Canadian African-Asian Family Advocacy Services**

*Working to achieve fairness, justice and racial equality for children and families in the community*

**586 Chamberlain Rd., Burlington, Ontario. L7L 2V5**

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Thursday May 1, 2003.

Halton Children's Aid Society  
5045 South service Road  
Burlington Ontario  
L7L 6M9  
Tel 905 333 4441  
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Attn: Robert Neill, Intake Supervisor

Dear Mr. Neill

### **RE: Lack of worker qualifications and due process**

Thank you for your letter of April 24, 2003 in which you confirm that Ms. Lori Vromans, a worker with the Halton Children's Aid Society who has been conducting a criminal related child abuse investigation, is not a qualified social worker nor a member of the Ontario College of Social Workers as per the Ontario Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998.

In light of my previous complaint to the Halton CAS about Ms. Lori Vromans's slanderous and false allegations against myself while assisting a Halton family during a criminal child abuse investigation, I am deeply concerned after being informed by your agency that criminal child abuse investigations are being conducted by workers within your agency who are not duly qualified social workers nor licensed with the College of Social Workers nor any other professional licensing body. As I indicated in my letter to your agency, Ms. Vromans acted in a very unprofessional manner at the police meeting and made malicious and unfounded allegations personally against myself. She even had to be told by the police officer present to control herself. It was quite clear to me that Ms. Vromans had taken a personal position in the case and had lost sight of objectivity and neutrality with this case in which she was involved.

I find it very disturbing that Halton CAS field workers are unlicensed, especially where workers are working alongside police in matters where parents potentially could be criminally charged and jailed based on information from the CAS. Information from the investigation of workers with a CAS agency carries significant weight in a police investigation and it seems unprofessional that the investigation of such important information relevant to the protection of children and the administration of justice is put in the hands of persons at the Halton CAS who are not even licensed social workers. Many in this community would consider social worker as the minimum qualifications expected of those who work for a CAS agency. CAS agencies receive significant funding from the government so there should be no excuse why workers involved with criminal investigations not meet the minimum qualifications and credentials of a licensed social worker.

In light of complaints against CAS agencies and deaths of children in the past, The Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998, was introduced into law in the Province of Ontario specifically with the purpose of making those who work with children and families in the province more accountable in the work they do and to give the public some kind of assurance that persons who work with protecting children at least work under a published code of ethics and guidelines. The College also has an independent disciplinary process which also gives the public some level of accountability.

I am sure that most residents in Halton, if asked, would say that they believe that workers who are investigating child abuse with the Halton Children's Aid Society would be social workers or at the very least, some kind of licensed professional, especially where criminal charges against parents are being investigated. Residents of Halton would be surprised to learn that Ms. Vromans from your agency is not a licensed worker and being allowed to do the work she is doing through your agency.

Having persons with CAS who are not fully licensed and trained as social workers get involved with criminal investigations is significantly affecting the quality of services being provided to children and families in Halton in a negative way and possibly exposing the agency and the taxpayers of Ontario to higher risk of lawsuit due to lack of worker training and accountability. While the Province of Ontario has introduced the Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998, to help protect children in the province of Ontario, it would seem that the Halton Children's Aid Society has chosen not to provide children and families within Halton, the protection which this Act was intended to provide the residents of Ontario. I find it unacceptable that workers with your agency are given the responsibility of investigating potentially criminal matters and are not even licensed. I am sure many other residents of Halton would agree with me on this issue.

Ms. Vromans appears to be conducting the kind of work that would fall within the realm and jurisdiction of a social worker, so why is she not licensed as required under law by the Province of Ontario? Is your agency just calling Ms. Vromans a "child protection worker" in order to allow the Halton CAS to skirt the intent of legislation which was intended to protect children and families in Ontario?

At this time I would very much appreciate answers to the following questions:

- 1) Could you please provide me with a legal definition of "Child Protection Worker" and advise me if this title is in any way formally recognized in law or by any profession.
- 2) Could you please advise me as to what the minimum qualifications for persons to be hired on as "child protection workers" with your agency?
- 3) Could you please advise me as to what screening process is used when "child protection workers" are hired with your agency?
- 4) Could you please advise me as to how many workers that the Halton CAS currently has working in the field and how many of these are licensed and how many are not licensed by the College?
- 5) What additional training, if any, do child protection workers receive or are required to take prior to them being appointed as child protection workers.
- 6) In the last paragraph of your letter, you have referred to Ms. Vromans as being engaged in a "professional practice" that does not fall under the purview of the College. This would lead one who was to read your letter as believing that Ms. Vromans is a member of some

professional body. Could you please advise me of which profession, Ms. Vromans may be a member of and which licenses she holds in her profession?

- 7) Could you please advise us as to how long Ms. Vromans has been with the Halton Children's Aid Society so that we might have some idea of her experience?
- 8) Could your agency provide us with a copy of Ms. Vroman's curriculum Vitae (resume) so that we, as residents and taxpayers of Halton, can see what kind of experience Ms. Vromans has, especially what formal training she has in conducting criminal child abuse investigations.

A few years ago, workers with your agency were involved in a horrendous scandal where a Halton family had one of their children taken from their home with veiled threats being made against citizens in the community by the Halton CAS, including its executive director, Ron Copland, the husband of Bonnie Brown, Member of Parliament for Oakville. The abuse of this family by the Halton Children's Aid Society even made national television.

In case you may not be aware of this local scandal, for your information, I have enclosed a copy of a VHS videotape called "Presumed Guilty." I have even included a copy of a letter from a local church minister who has stated that he and members of a local church in Halton were the victims of veiled threats from your agency. I am aware that a multi-million dollar lawsuit has been launched against your agency and a number of Halton CAS workers individually and personally and that this matter is currently before the court. I have been told that in one case involving a Halton family, one of your own social workers mentioned in her notes that a young mentally-ill girl was sexually assaulted while in the care and control of the Halton Children's Aid Society, yet to the understanding of the this girl's family, the Halton CAS did not pursue criminal charges against the person responsible for this criminal act. Could this be because the Halton CAS did not want this information to become public in order to protect its own reputation? In the letter from the former minister of St. Simons church which I have attached, he too makes mention that the Halton CAS seemed more interested in protecting its own reputation than it seemed to be in protecting children.

I would suggest that you share the enclosed video with Ms. Vromans and others on your staff as members of your staff could get themselves in a situation at some time in the future and find themselves personal respondents in a lawsuit. This video may serve as good training for them and remind them of their duty to be objective and unbiased in their work.

I would also suggest that that the Halton Children's Aid Society makes it a policy of the agency that only duly licensed social workers be allowed to investigate child abuse matters which involve police or custody disputes involving family court. Workers without licenses should be restricted to dealing with less serious matters such as neglect and discipline problems or where families are voluntarily requesting help or monitoring from your agency. Investigations involving custody disputes or police should involve only those workers duly trained and licensed as social workers.

Ontario family court judge, Justice Mary Lou Benotto has stated that a review of the justice process in Ontario revealed that false allegations are rampant in family court and often go unpunished. For your information, I have attached a copy of Justice Benotto's presentation. Dealing with child abuse in custody and access matters is highly complex matter and only those at the CAS with the qualifications of a licensed social worker should be involved in the investigation of these complex matters. Your worker, Ms. Vromans, as you have indicated, is not provincially licensed and does not meet the level of qualification and training as would a licensed social worker.

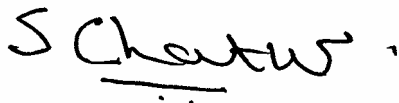
Community agencies such as ours have come into existence because of mounting public complaints regarding bias and incompetence of workers with various government funded agencies such as children's aid agencies. It is our mandate to ensure that workers with agencies such as yours work professionally and are accountable to the people of the community in which they serve.

The documentary tape from the CTV "Presumed Guilty" clearly shows that workers with the Halton CAS, have in the past, falsely accused others and presumed others to be guilty. Ms. Vromans has drawn some conclusions and made statements which would seem to indicate that she has made some presumptions of guilt against innocent people to the harm of the child involved.

The Province of Ontario has passed legislation to reduce the likelihood of workers with CAS agencies conducting themselves in this manner. Yet, in spite of your agency's past history of harm to children by your workers making false assumptions, it seems that you agency still chooses to hire unlicensed social workers for its investigations. Does your agency not learn from its past mistakes and take steps to correct them so that similar problems will not be created afterwards?

Your response in writing to the concerns I have raised would be greatly appreciated. As my original letter was directed to Mr. Walsh, I would also appreciate it if you could copy this letter and your response to your Executive Director, Mr. Walsh, so that he may be kept informed.

Yours truly



Sam Chatur  
Child and Family Protection Worker

P.S. In the future, could you please properly direct your correspondence to the organization as listed on the letterhead, not just to myself personally as in your letter of April 24, 2003. All correspondence is reviewed by other members of our organization and is shared with other concerned residents of Halton.

Enclosures:

- 1) Copy of CTV television documentary, "Presumed Guilty" regarding abuse of a local child and her family by the Halton Children's Aid Society. (VHS videotape)
- 2) Copy of letter from the former Rector of St. Simon's Anglican Church in Oakville regarding the abuse of power by the Halton CAS and veiled threats against the citizens of Oakville by the agency during the time that Ron Coupland was the Executive Director of Halton CAS. (2 pages)
- 3) Copy of "Ethics in Family Law" by Justice Mary Lou Benotto (6 pages)

cc: All members of Provincial Legislature, Province of Ontario  
All members of House of Commons, Government of Canada  
Members of the Senate of Canada  
Various members of the media  
Ontario College of Social Workers  
Ean Algar, Chief of Police for Halton  
Members of Council, Region of Halton  
CTV Television Network