



Halton CAS seeks revenge against local family!

Theft charges against Oakville couple show that Halton CAS is more concerned in seeking revenge than helping families

By Mike March, Justice Reporter

In a shocking display of abuse of power and influence and a waste of tax dollars, an Oakville couple have been charged by the Halton Regional police for theft of confidential files from the Halton Children's Aid Society.

The charges were laid on December 8, 2007, at the insistence of the Halton Children's Aid Society, an agency which is supposed to be helping children and families in the community, not persecuting them.

The couple is scheduled to appear in the Milton, Ontario court on January 30, 2008.

The parents did not steal the confidential files, never had any intent to do so, nor did they ever even want to have the files in their possession in the first place.

A careless and obviously forgetful Halton CAS worker, Barb Turkowska, who should not have taken the CAS files into the private residences of one of her clients in the first place, forgot the files at the Oakville couple's home.

What was even more inexcusable was that the careless Halton CAS worker did not even realize that the files were missing or where she had left them.

According to the parents, it was only when they contacted the local newspaper to make the worker's mistake known did CAS realize that confidential files had been left behind.

Had the couple had bad intentions, they simply could have kept the files and denied ever having seen them, even if asked.

In an attempt to make the Halton CAS accountable by bringing attention to the serious flaw in CAS procedures, the family went public with the story and arranged to have the files returned through a Toronto lawyer, Mr. Ian Mang, who did this on a pro bono basis.

The parents said from the beginning that it was their intent to bring attention to the obvious flaw in CAS procedures in which confidential files were being put at risk by CAS workers who obviously were

careless and forgetful.

Most citizens would be outraged if family doctors carried their medical files into the homes of patients during house calls and it was this sort of reasoning which prompted the couple to act in the manner which they thought would do some overall good for the community.

It seems, however, that the Halton CAS was not happy with news coverage of the incident and decided to take the matter even further with the parents who had embarrassed the agency by exposing its faults.

Rather than just licking its wounds and admitting that its own forgetful and careless worker was the cause of the problem in the first place, the Halton CAS pushed the Halton Police to lay charges against the financially struggling parents in an attempt to divert blame from themselves and on to the parents.

What the Halton CAS should have done when it got its files back was to leave the parents alone and to focus their attention on their own internal policies and procedures instead.

After all, CAS had had their files returned, no damage was done to anyone and none of the confidential information went anywhere except back to the CAS.

The only result was the embarrassment to the Halton CAS and its worker, certainly something the agency could quickly recover from.

The whole affair was clearly an isolated incident that was not likely to ever happen again, certainly not again to involve this couple.

Nancy MacGillivry, Executive Director of the CAS, was quoted in the Oakville Today newspaper as acknowledging that the CAS had learned from this incident and has taken steps to ensure it doesn't happen again.

According to McGillivry, changes in policies and procedures were made as a result of the incident.

If that was the case, then why charge the parents whose only motive was to make a bit of noise to

embarrass the agency for procedures which its own executive director admitted were faulty?

If anything, it appears that the attention brought to bear on the Halton CAS resulted in positive changes which would not likely have resulted if the Oakville couple had not gone public with their story.

Making public institutions accountable through the news is one of the important functions of a free and independent press.

By pushing the police to lay charges against the parents, the Halton CAS has set in motion a series of costly and time consuming events which will likely cost tens of thousands of our tax dollars and accomplish nothing except to tie up valuable police and court services (all at the expense of taxpayers).

Unfortunately, the most damage will be inflicted upon the couple and their children.

Before this incident, the parents were already struggling financially to support their family and this action by the Halton CAS will put them thousands of dollars into debt to defend themselves.

These significant and needless legal expenses will put them behind financially for four to five years while they pay them off.

While the Halton CAS submits its bill to the taxpayers, the family is left with no help and will be left with a huge burden of legal expenses.

Without a doubt the actions of the Halton CAS will take significant amounts of money from the parents - money which should be used to benefit the children.

The actions of the Halton CAS are clearly contrary to the interest and well being of this couple and their children and smack of revenge and abuse of power and influence, not justice nor the interests of the residents in the Halton Community.

This is not the first time, however, that the publicly funded Halton Children's Aid Society has misused its unbridled power against the children and families of Halton.

On April 12, 2000, Brian Pearson, the acting minister at St. Simon's Anglican Church in Oakville, wrote an open letter in which he slammed the Halton CAS for what he referred to as their "shocking abuse of power" and "a callous disregard for fair process."

In his letter, he described how one of the former heads of the Halton CAS, Mr. Ron Coupland, had made racial remarks about an Oakville family they were dealing with and issued veiled threats against members of the church congregation for attempting to provide community support to the family.

A copy of the letter can be seen on the internet at

<http://www.canadacourtwatch.com/LettersOfInjustice/2000April12-LetterFromRevBrianPearson.pdf>

Reverend Pearson wrote in his letter that the Oakville family was threatened by the Halton CAS back in 1995 with not ever having their child returned to them if they continued to oppose the agency.

As of the present, more than twelve years later, the child referred to in the Minister's letter has never been returned to the care of her parents; the threats by the Halton CAS back then appearing to be fulfilled.

The child was robbed of her childhood and stripped of her rights to a relationship with her family and younger siblings.

CTV news was threatened with a lawsuit for airing its 20 minute national news documentary on the Halton CAS, a documentary called "Presumed Guilty"

Again, just last month, in December of 2007, a Burlington teenager provided video testimony in which she disclosed being lied to and tricked by workers with the Halton Children's Aid Society.

The teen also disclosed being beaten and robbed while in the care of the Halton CAS, right inside a CAS supervised facility in Halton!

The teen reported that she has never been anywhere in her life where she felt more afraid of her personal safety than when she was in the care of the Halton CAS!

The teen also reported that workers attempted to prevent her from submitting her evidence in which she describes her abuse while in care of the Halton CAS.

In April of 2007, another family wrote a letter stating that one Halton CAS worker had attempted to blackmail them by demanding that they sign legal papers or have their infant taken from them.

The citizens of Halton should not be fooled by these latest Halton CAS shenanigans.

This sneaky move by the Halton CAS to arrest and charge the Oakville couple for theft is certainly not about doing something good for children and families in the Halton community.

It is about getting revenge and it seems that the powers to be at the Halton CAS are insensitive to the needless misery and destruction their actions cause to yet another family.

Halton police should be better using their resources to catch real criminals, not wasting valuable police resources criminalizing parents.

For similar reasons the Halton CAS should be protecting children who really need their services, not wasting resources and spending more of our tax dollars on what many see as nothing less than an abuse of its power and influence.