

March 7, 2011

127-285 Ridge Road,  
Gravenhurst Ontario  
P1P 1X9

Trillium Lakelands District Board  
76 Pine Street  
Bracebridge, Ontario  
P1L 1N4  
Attn: Board of Trustees

Dear Board of Trustees

**RE: Harm to my children because of CAS workers interrogating my children at their school**

I would like to file a formal complaint with the Board regarding the harm caused to my two daughters at their schools by workers with the Family, Youth and Child Services of Muskoka. I have been doing some research on this issue and have come to the conclusion that the rights and freedoms of my children have been violated by Children's Aid Society workers who in my opinion have acted very unprofessional and bully children and their parents.

**Background**

Because of a separation between myself and my ex-partner, I have been the subject of false allegations by my ex-partner. It is not unusual for former spouses to abuse child protection services and sometimes police in an effort to create difficulties for their former partner during court proceedings. Everyone knows that false allegations are used as a weapon in family court all the time especially early in the proceedings. While this is unfortunate, the involvement of child protection agencies during the investigation of these false allegations can cause considerable harm to children if not done in the most least harmful and professional manner.

As a result of these allegations, in March of 2009, workers with the Family, Youth and Child Services of Muskoka showed up at my door without any notice. Initially, I was harassed with a bunch of frivolous allegations and concerns. CAS workers went through my cupboards, fridge, and examined the bedrooms looking for anything they could find. The experience was embarrassing and degrading. To think that some stranger had the right to just barge into my home without prior notice and to go through my home without a court Order was frightening to say the least. I was criticized because the worker found a penny on the floor. A "safety concern" for my young daughters said the worker.

On another occasion, the CAS worker demanded that I take the diapers off of my two preschool children so that the CAS worker could examine their private parts. I complied out of fear after being led to believe by CAS workers that I must do as they command or face consequences.

I have since learned that this CAS worker should not have conducted an examination of my children as the worker is not a doctor or nurse and simply not qualified to engage in what would be considered as a physical examination of my pre-school children. What this CAS worker did was simply disgusting and unprofessional. Yet today, this same worker is walking around the hallways at my children's school. How many other children are having their private parts examined by this CAS worker who has no authority to demand such compliance?

During another visit by workers to my home, the worker insisted that I sign some papers. I was not explained what these papers were all about or what the implications of signing these papers were. I was just told I had to sign them. I was not given a copy. To this day I cannot remember what was written on these papers as at the time I was so intimidated by the CAS and was under the impression that I must do what they said or bad things would happen to my children. I was not told of my rights to obtain legal counsel before signing these papers which to date the CAS workers have never provided me with a copy of.

On a number of occasions the CAS worker went to visit my two children at Glen Orchard Public School in Muskoka Lakes. At the school, my two daughters were told to go to a room to be interrogated by the CAS worker without my informed consent and without the informed consent of my two daughters. My daughters were forced by school officials to meet with the CAS worker against their wishes. Each time my daughters were interrogated by the CAS worker at their school they would come home upset and tell me how upsetting it was for them and how they did not like the CAS worker questioning them at their school. My daughters told me how embarrassed they were because of this. My children now hate this worker for what she had done to them. Unfortunately at that time, I did not know what my rights were or what my children's rights were to protect them.

### **Moving to Gravenhurst in July 2010 and a new school**

July of 2010, I moved with my children to Gravenhurst. My two girls started into a new school, Gravenhurst Public School in September of 2010. My daughters were happy to be going into the new school and we all thought that the issue of being embarrassed and humiliated by CAS workers at their old school was put behind them. Unfortunately, this was not to be the case.

### **Unlawful detention and interrogation of my children at their new school**

In September, shortly after the children started their new school, the CAS worker showed up again at my door and said that she now wanted to interview the children at their new school. I told her no. I told the CAS worker that my children were excited to be in their new school, had met new friends and that they did not wish to have the CAS worker come to their new school and embarrass them as had been the case in Glen Orchard Public School. I told the CAS worker that I wanted the children to have a fresh start from CAS interference in their school. Again, I reminded the CAS worker that if she wanted to speak to my children she could as long as it was not at the school.

Immediately, the CAS worker became confrontational with me and told me that she could interview the children wherever she wanted and that there was nothing that the school board or I could do stop her. I felt so powerless at that time and so put down.

In spite of me telling the CAS worker that my daughters were being distressed by CAS visits at their school, in spite of me telling the CAS worker that I did not give my consent for her to interview my children and in spite of me telling the CAS worker that my children did not want to speak to the CAS worker at their school, the CAS worker went ahead and with the help of school officials, forced my two children to attend another one of her "secret" interrogations at the school.

My children have told me about these interrogations by the CAS worker. They are first told that someone wants to meet with them and they are led to whatever room the CAS worker can find available. My children tell me that the CAS worker asks questions about how they are treated at home, the language used in the home, personal questions about their mother and about their mother's fiancé and their biological father. All of these questions are asked in secret and behind closed doors at the school. Who is to know if these CAS workers are using leading questions or

not? I suspect that that CAS workers do not want to record these secret interviews with the children so that nobody will know what questions they asked the children.

In essence we have the school facilitating a CAS worker to unlawfully bully children and interrogate them during interrogations inside school premises where no accurate record is kept. All this is done in secret and with no witnesses to ensure that no CAS worker can be held accountable! While highly trained police officers generally will conduct interviews with children at the police station on videotape, we have CAS workers who have no authority to do so, conducting secret interviews with children with the help and assistance of school officials. This all sounds too suspicious and all too unaccountable to me.

To add insult to injury, my children report seeing this same CAS worker in the halls at the school, most likely spying on other children. My children have reported that this CAS worker has come up to them to ask them questions in the hallway in front of the other students. They are very uncomfortable with this CAS worker yet are forced to see her and speak to in the halls when she approaches them. CAS workers should be sticking to their jobs outside in the community and not be coming into schools and pretending to be friends with the students.

### **Apprehension last Monday**

A more recent issue which has prompted me to write this letter is that just last Monday one of my daughters was outside the school office. The same CAS worker who has caused so much harm to our family was at the school and spoke to my daughter. A few minutes later, my daughter witnessed the CAS worker take a grade two student away. My daughter knew what was going on. This struck fear in her and put thoughts in her mind that this same CAS who has been harassing her may come to the school and take her away next.

My children worry about CAS workers harassing them at their school. It is wrong that my children should have to go to school and to have to face this worry. They should not have this fear reinforced by seeing how easy it is for the CAS workers to take a child out of the school.

At one point my daughters enjoyed school so much and looked forward to going to their new school but their experience with CAS workers in their school has negatively impacted on them. This is so sad. Schools are supposed to be a place where children feel safe and have fun.

As far as I am concerned the workers with the Family, Youth and Child Services of Muskoka have got to be stopped from bullying and intimidating children at their schools. I do not want my children going to school in fear of CAS workers taking them down to some room for yet another one of their "secret" and unrecorded interrogations anymore.

At this point in time, I have decided that the CAS has done enough damage to my children. I am formally advising the Board that effective as of the date of this letter that my children are not to be interviewed or even spoken to by CAS workers at their school. I do not want CAS workers even speaking to my children in the hallways. As far as I am concerned CAS workers have no business at the schools, especially being visible in the hallways and pretending to be friends of the students. CAS workers do not have my consent to interview my children nor have they had my informed consent at any time. Be advised that if CAS workers are allowed access to my children at their schools by school officials after this date without my prior informed consent then I shall take legal action against the Board and against any school board employee involved in the violation of my children's rights.

To provide assurance to myself and my children that CAS workers will not be harassing my children or violating their rights anymore, I am asking that the either the Board or the Principal of

Gravenhurst Public School, write a letter to the Family, Youth and Child Services of Muskoka advising them that their workers are not to enter my children's school to interview or to even speak to my children without my prior informed consent. I also request that a copy of this letter sent to me which I will share with my children to assure them that their school will protect them from being harassed anymore at their school by CAS workers.

My children and I have nothing to hide from CAS but if these CAS workers want to speak to my children for legitimate reasons then I want them to make arrangements and to do their interviews away from school premises.

In closing, my family's experience with the Family, Youth and Child Services of Muskoka has been very, very unpleasant. The CAS workers are unprofessional and seem to be more skilled in bullying children than dealing with issues efficiently and affectively. CAS have no business in our schools.

A response in writing from the Board is expected.

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa Watterson".

Lisa Watterson  
127-285 Ridge Road,  
Gravenhurst Ontario  
P1P 1X9.