

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Simms' column sent wrong message

In a column on Feb. 5, ("Failing the parents, failing the children"), Randy Simms wrote "a visit from Child, Youth and Family Services can mean a trip to hell," and he asks "how many kids have been separated from their parents needlessly as a result of overreaction?"

With these statements, Mr. Simms demonstrates that he does not understand the role of Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS) in this province.

CYFS exists to ensure that children who are in need of protection receive care and support.

For the more than 90 per cent of children involved with CYFS, this intervention occurs within the family.

Different situations

But every situation is different and we cannot make generalizations from one family's situation.

There have been many public discussions about child apprehensions in the past.

We have seen situations where children have remained in the care of families and the public believed they should have been apprehended.

We have heard about other situations where children have been apprehended and the public believed they should have remained with their families.

We need to point out though, that these judgments and opinions are often being made with incomplete information.

Focusing on one factor to the exclusion of others, which are not part of the public debate, is concerning for social

workers.

The decision to apprehend a child is not one that is taken lightly. According to the legislation governing children's protective services in this province, an apprehension occurs when a child is in need of protective intervention and "a less intrusive course of action that would adequately protect the child is not available."

Furthermore, this decision is scrutinized by the department of CYFS and also by the court.

Thus Mr. Simms' comment about the secrecy of the work of CYFS is not an informed conclusion.

Privacy rights

As individuals, people can disclose what they like about themselves.

However, social workers, like other professional groups, must uphold the right to privacy of all people who are their clients.

Social workers cannot discuss the details of their clients' circumstances in public as this would not be helpful to the families, and especially the children, who are involved.

Mr. Simms also refers to taking children to a transition house as a mistake.

This kind of uninformed statement builds public fear.

It is not accurate to say that children will be apprehended solely because a woman seeks help or avails of services for women whose lives are affected by violence.

Women and children have the right to a life that is free from violence and abuse, and as a community we support

this.

Social workers are concerned that children and families may not receive the help and support they need out of fear and inaccurate information.

There is also potential to negate all of the work, good decisions and good outcomes that happen daily in the lives of children and families in this province.

Everyone would agree that children need to grow up in safe and supportive environments. This is a goal that we are all trying to reach together.

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