



December 20, 2016

Dear Premier Notley,

On Behalf of ALIGN, a membership organization of over 100 community services, we want to acknowledge and compliment your Child Intervention staff on their professionalism and hard work. We recognize that many times they are facing real tragedy in real time. Often, the general public is unaware of this work. We at ALIGN are aware as many of our agencies also work with those children and their families to ensure they are safe and well and able to function in the community.

In light of the recent events in the news, we would like to remind all Albertans that partisan perspectives have no place in this work. Being the Minister of this portfolio is a very difficult appointment. Unfortunately, there is no way the job can be done without risks. The problems that lead to children being taken from their homes and placed in care are intractable, complex and multidimensional.

If the news media is correct, clearly there were challenges in having the Serenity/Marie case reviewed by all involved. That is certainly of concern and unfortunate. Should there be an all party child intervention panel established we would highly encourage you to involve experts in the child welfare field, review previous recommendations and their progress, and then make recommendations. We would be happy to support this process and offer any assistance you may require.

We also want to remind all parties that there are many children and families involved in the care system that are thriving and doing well with the supports they are offered. Prevention, early intervention and support for families have to remain the priority to ensure that the majority of children, youth and families are safe and well cared for in Alberta and remain in their families. Over the last 10 years there have been multiple reviews and thousands of recommendations to improve the system. Many of those have been implemented and the system over all is improving. There are less children coming into care, more staying at home, services are getting to families in a timelier fashion and for those in really challenging situations, resources are being found to help those young people and their families through their crisis and challenges.

First Nation communities struggle and there are two systems, provincial and federal, working sometimes at cross purposes. The Alberta government can help in supporting Jordan's principle and ensuring that the federal funding is in place as is required for these communities.



There are other Ministries that also need to be considered when thinking about the welfare of children and families in Alberta. Those Ministries must be considered in the development of a better care system. While the OCYA does not have a mandate to look at Education, Health and other ministries they are all needed to support our families.

Once again, we urge you to consider experts as you develop the all party child intervention review panel. Please consider the excellent work that has been taking place over the last 5 years and remember that child deaths, while tragic, do not represent the overall care system in Alberta. We can all continuously improve and the agency sector that provides much of the services in Alberta is willing to learn and grow alongside the child intervention system within Government. We are all working hard for Alberta's children, families and communities.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Barraclough
Executive Director

.cc I. Sabir, Minister of Human Services

.cc Brain Jean leader of the Wild Rose Party

.cc Ric McIver interim leader of the PC Party

.cc David Swann leader of the Liberal Party

.cc Greg Clark Leader of the Alberta Party