



PUBLIC GUARDIAN
AND TRUSTEE OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA

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For immediate release

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Public Guardian and Trustee releases first annual report on child and youth guardianship services

Key findings outline the challenges and opportunities associated with delivering child guardianship services in British Columbia

VANCOUVER – The Public Guardian Trustee of British Columbia (PGT) today released the first annual report on its child and youth Guardian of Estate services, which details specific challenges and offers key recommendations for improvements to BC's child protection and guardianship systems.

The release of the Child and Youth Guardianship Report 2008/2009 fulfills a commitment made by the PGT to report on Guardian of Estate services. As Guardian of Estate, the PGT is responsible for overseeing the legal and financial interests of children who have been placed in the custody of the Province through a court order. These children are orphans, children going through adoption, or children in continuing care as a result of child protection concerns. The PGT services come in many forms, including going to court on a child's behalf, tracking down financial benefits for the child and managing investments.

“Protecting these vulnerable children is a role that the PGT takes very seriously,” said Jay Chalke, QC, Public Guardian and Trustee. “Our hope is that this report will serve to better tell the collective story of the young people under our guardianship and offer proposals to improve the services to them.”

The report includes several recommendations for service improvements. One proposal is for a study to determine who should be the legal guardian of children in intermediate forms of provincial care. The goal is to ensure that children in these alternative care arrangements provided by the Province receive the protection of a guardian where that assistance is needed.

“The new ways in which support is provided to children in provincial care create a more flexible and responsive system - and that's a good thing,” said Chalke. “However, we must also ensure that children in these intermediate forms of care don't fall through the cracks.”

The PGT has also recommended improving financial literacy support for children and youth in care – including a basic understanding of the banking system, credit cards, and managing investments – in preparation for when they turn 19 and become responsible for managing their own finances.



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“Understanding how to properly manage money is a key skill to ensuring that our young people successfully transition to making their own financial decisions,” said Chalke. “We look forward to working together with our partner agencies to develop better programs that teach these skills. This will give children in care a stronger start as they become productive and successful adults.”

The report contains a summary of 624 critical incident reports received from the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and Delegated Aboriginal Agencies during 2008/09 for 463 children, reflecting approximately 7 per cent of the over 6,000 children in continuing care during the year. No conclusions should be drawn from the information contained in the reports at this time. The PGT reviews each report and determines whether further action is required to protect the legal or financial interests of the child. Such reviews, and legal proceedings if any, can take considerable time.

In total, the report makes seven recommendations to further improve services for children and youth, including:

- continuing consultations between the PGT, MCFD and Delegated Agencies on creating opportunities to streamline the exchange of information
- developing a PGT outreach program to ensure that service partners understand their relationship with the PGT
- through the Children’s Forum, continuing to encourage child serving agencies to work together effectively, avoiding duplication of services, and having appropriate information sharing protocols in place
- reviewing the possibility of the PGT providing Guardian of Estate services from regional offices, with particular emphasis on relationships with Delegated Agencies
- in partnership with MCFD and Delegated Agencies, taking further steps to ensure that youth in care become more financially literate as they approach the age of majority
- continuing to work with the government to modernize the legal definition of guardian to clarify the roles of guardians
- urging the government to carry out a review of legal guardianship roles for children receiving services under alternative care arrangements

A copy of the Child and Youth Guardianship Services Report 2008/2009 is available at [www.trustee.bc.ca/Child and Youth Guardianship Services Report 2008-2009](http://www.trustee.bc.ca/Child%20and%20Youth%20Guardianship%20Services%20Report%202008-2009)

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About the Public Guardian and Trustee of British Columbia

The PGT is an independent Provincial corporation with a mandate to protect the financial and legal interests of British Columbians who cannot look after themselves. Specifically, the PGT activities are to:



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- Protect the legal and financial interests of children and youth under the age of 19.
- Protect the legal rights, financial interests and personal care interests of adults who need assistance in decision making.
- Administer the estates of the deceased when there is no one willing or able to take on this duty, the estates of missing persons, and personal trusts.

The PGT has a staff of 234 and a budget of approximately \$22 million. Close to 60% of revenues are fees for service, while the remainder is funding from the Province.

The PGT currently serves about 33,000 clients and manages almost \$790 million of client assets. Approximately 22,000 of the clients are children and their assets are valued at \$181 million.

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