

"The third (point) is that we really don't know enough . . . What we know is the end result, children and adults who have incredible problems trying to manage in society.

"The fourth (point) I think, is implications for the ways that our systems work in terms of providing help to mothers who are drinking before their children are born, to the children themselves, to the care-givers. We don't know enough about how to provide help to people who have a mental disability and have been abused.

"The early months after a child is born are absolutely critical to the future for that child. The need for good assessment, the need for knowing what (the) prognosis would be, and the need for realistic supports, especially with moms who are struggling with alcoholism and many other issues . . . We need, I believe, to work toward keeping these children in their families and with their communities . . . The removal of the child (from the community) impacts on the child in terms of the attachment. It impacts on the mom and dad in terms of, what's the point of getting better if you've lost your child? It impacts on the family because they're losing one of their family members. It impacts on the community because of lessening their accountability.

"You're told that all these kids need is love and a good home. That's not enough. It's not enough for them. It's not enough for the parents. There's no shortage of love for these children . . . You have foster and adoptive parents who are very eager. They want to be the best parents ever . . . They're very optimistic. They think, "We're going to fix this kid. They just need a better situation in life and everything's going to be okay.

"We're often really naive and very uninformed about our particular child's history, as well as the impacts of foetal alcohol . . . If you look at it from the kid's point of view, they're scared. They've been moved around often. They're hurt. They're angry . . . You have super parents on the one hand and very traumatized children on the other. It's a time bomb waiting to go off, and it's a time bomb that people don't know about . . . I believe the struggle is to rescue this (situation) before the kids get dumped on or before the parents dump on themselves or go under financially . . . many marriages break up over this.

"Society monitors kids more when they start to reach 12 or 13. The Young Offenders Act kicks in which is a real concern for most of us . . . We may not have noticed it earlier, but by the time these kids enter adolescence, particularly middle adolescence, that poor judgement really begins to stand out . . . it is a real volatile time. For many people, I believe the child is not able to remain in the home at that point. The key is for professionals not to then say well, you've had an adoption breakdown. What we've had is a really tough situation and we need to find a way to manage that for everybody.

"The other thing I think that really comes in in adolescence is that we parents begin to get really, really concerned about the long-term future for our children. What are they going to do? How are they going to be supported? How are they going to work? . . . The challenges are to find appropriate school placements, to find an accepting social network for practical non-judgemental support . . . Long-term struggles are employment, leisure activities, independent living and finances and the whole notion of what will happen (to our children) after we die . . .

"I think as a society we're not quite prepared to look at the costs of what we're doing and what our behaviour is doing to our children. I believe these children will force the issue for us and make us look at it. I think we have some real tough questions to answer."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Proceedings, Issue 12, pp. 28-30, 32, 34-35.