

RECOMMENDATION NO. 16

The Sub-Committee recommends that Health and Welfare Canada, in cooperation with provincial and territorial health departments, develop more appropriate, effective, and economical treatment-delivery programs for victims of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and Foetal Alcohol Effects. Such programs could include group homes or special treatment centres that recognize and provide for the unique problems and needs of these children.

An important component of the treatment of children with FAS or FAE is a stable home environment and a sense of security and parental caring. The testimony that we have received indicates that many children suffering from alcohol damage are born into dysfunctional family situations. Many are removed from the birth family into foster care or become adopted. In the case of many FAE children, as discussed earlier in this report, the adoptive parents are unaware of the alcohol damage that their adopted children have suffered.

Elsbeth Ross is Executive Director of the Adoption Council of Canada. She and her husband are the adoptive parents of two FAE children. In her testimony to the Sub-Committee, Ms. Ross emphasized the importance of a stable home environment for alcohol-damaged children:

" . . . these children are adoptable and more should be adopted . . . It takes them out of the foster care system and provides a permanent, stable home for them, with strong advocates. Our experience shows they do better with this care."⁶⁴

In many foster homes, such children do in fact receive good care and, if the financial situation of such foster homes were more favourable, many foster parents would adopt these children. These children do have special needs for medical and psychological care, and educational assistance, and the associated costs are often too high for the average family. A program of subsidized adoptions would enable more families to adopt FAS and FAE children. Although such a program would require additional government expenditures, money would almost certainly be saved over the long term.

First, family care is less costly to the state than is institutional care. Second, the children will benefit from a stable, caring home environment and will be more likely to mature into healthy, productive citizens. In the case of FAE children, in particular, there may be a reduced probability that the individual will come into contact with the criminal justice system.

Although adoption issues lie within the provincial domain, we believe the Minister of Health and Welfare Canada can provide leadership in this area by initiating discussions with his provincial and territorial counterparts. The matter of income assistance to families with FAS and FAE children should be included in these discussions.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 17

The Sub-Committee recommends that the Minister of Health and Welfare Canada provide leadership and consult with his counterparts in the Provinces and Territories to develop and implement programs to subsidize adoptions of children with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and Foetal Alcohol Effects and to provide income assistance to families with FAS and FAE children.

⁶⁴ Proceedings, Issue 15, p. 6.