

Petition to the Nova Scotia House of Assembly

WHEREAS Section 2 of the *Public Inquiries Act* authorizes the Governor in Council to cause an inquiry into any public matter within provincial legislative jurisdiction;

WHEREAS the *Children and Family Services Act* (CFSA, s. 2) aims to protect children from harm, promote family integrity, and make the best interests of the child paramount, while the *Legal Aid Act* (s. 5B) seeks to deliver quality legal services and improve access to justice for low-income Nova Scotians in family matters;

WHEREAS persistent concerns exist that accountability and disciplinary mechanisms under the *Social Workers Act* are insufficient to ensure social workers act within statutory duties and professional standards, undermining CFSA purposes and creating an urgent need for independent review and reform;

WHEREAS an independent public inquiry would examine achievement of these statutory purposes and provide evidence-based recommendations for reforms to the CFSA, *Legal Aid Act*, *Social Workers Act*, related policies, and court processes.

THEREFORE we, the undersigned residents and concerned citizens of Nova Scotia, call upon the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to urge the Minister of Opportunities and Social Development, in consultation with the Minister of Justice, to recommend to the Governor in Council the immediate establishment of a public inquiry under the *Public Inquiries Act* (R.S.N.S. 1989, c. 372, as amended) into the administration of the child protection system, access to justice in child protection proceedings, and related accountability mechanisms under the *Children and Family Services Act*, *Legal Aid Act*, and *Social Workers Act*, with scope including effectiveness of practices, family preservation, workload and support for social workers, legal representation barriers, equity for vulnerable communities, guardians ad litem accountability, complaint/review processes, and opportunities for legislative reform.

Under the *Public Inquiries Act* (Sections 2–5), the inquiry would be initiated by the Governor in Council, with commissioners empowered to summon witnesses, compel evidence on oath, and exercise Supreme Court-like powers. Section 5A protects testimony from use in other proceedings (except perjury), encouraging open participation. The process would be transparent, publicly announced province-wide, with open hearings (consistent with privacy protections), public reporting of findings and recommendations (redacted as necessary), and opportunities for all affected parties to contribute.

This inquiry would enhance public confidence, support front-line workers, close critical accountability gaps, prevent harm, strengthen families, and ensure Nova Scotia’s legislation and practices evolve in the best interests of children and communities.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Printed Name	Address/Community	Signature