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SOUTH EDITION



Share your events online and in print

Have an upcoming event you want to share with the community? It's easy and free to include it in our calendar. It's as simple as signing up for a free account on our website, www.mississauga.com, then visiting www.mississauga.com/mississauga-on-events to post your event to our online calendar. Each week we feature a selection of those online events in the Thursday print edition. For consideration in the print edition, events need to be included in the online calendar at least a week before they take place.

ONLINE AT
mississauga.com

Events Calendar

1 JANUARY	14 FEBRUARY	17 MARCH	25 APRIL
13 MAY	24 JUNE	4 JULY	15 AUGUST
4 SEPTEMBER	31 OCTOBER	11 NOVEMBER	25 DECEMBER

See what's happening by visiting our online community calendar.
www.mississauga.com/mississauga-on-events

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STRIKE WAGES ON

Peel Children's Aid Society frontline workers are concerned about the level of service being provided to the most vulnerable members of our community

8

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Recordings capture mother's threat to hit, lock child in dog cage

Case underscores community need for striking child protection workers

ROGER BELGRAVE

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The day Joshua turned 9-years-old, his mother threatened to punch the Brampton boy in the face and lock him in a dog cage.

The family pet urinated on the child's bed and his mother was in no mood to clean up after the animal.

"Turn that God damn mattress over and scrub it," she yelled. "If I hear any banging, I'm gonna bang your bloody head off that bloody wall," you can hear his mother say in a recording provided to the Guardian. The horrible abuse perhaps highlights the urgent need to resolve a labour dispute that sees Peel child welfare workers on strike.

It was a late night tirade captured on audio recorded by the boy's older sister, who is concerned about her brother's well-being.

"... scrub the f--- out of that mattress before I punch your face into it...the next time that dog gets out of the cage after nine o'clock in the night I'll punch your face. I'll put you in his cage and I'll lock you in there."

The verbal lashing continues for more than five minutes as the mother grows increasingly frustrated with the 9-year-old's inability to properly tend to his pet and clean up after the animal.

"You think cause it's your birthday you're going to get any special treatment," she warned.

The episode culminates with the sound of a belt snapping, followed by the unmistakable wails of a child.

"Shut the f--- up," the sobbing child is told.

These disturbing sound bites from this young boy's life are among several recorded by his teenage sister, Isabelle.

The audio reveals a mother's shocking verbal abuse, threats, ridicule and intimidation that raise concerns about physical beatings and neglect.

In several episodes recorded on Isabelle's phone, her mother is heard unleashing expletive-filled outbursts at Joshua.

He is berated for the dog's poor behaviour and for complaining about having no underwear or socks to wear to school in winter.

In other audio clips the mother refuses to cook for the 9-year-old, tells him to make his own lunch and repeatedly threatens to beat him.



Rob Beintema/Metroland

Frontline workers from the Peel Children's Aid Society have been on strike for 12 weeks. They voted 93 per cent to reject a final offer on Tuesday.

Isabelle left her mother's home last year and stayed in a shelter for several months before recently getting an apartment.

The home she described leaving is not a nurturing environment.

According to Isabelle, her mother and live-in boyfriend regularly use and sell drugs.

She contacted police with concerns for her brother and provided the audio recordings.

Police turned the complaint over to Peel CAS, she said.

Isabelle said the agency first entered the family's life after a drug bust. She was just a child at the time.

"Every time I contact CAS and I tell them over the phone and they go forward, they don't do anything, so I just decided to go to the police to see what they could do," said Isabelle.

She said the agency hasn't told her anything about her brother's situation since hearing concerns and the recordings in September.

Joshua remains under their mother's care, according to Isabelle.

Peel CAS confirmed a manager, filling in for striking staff, responded to Isabelle's call for aid.

Peel CAS spokesperson Lucie Baistrocchi said the agency couldn't provide details about a child protection case to a complainant or the media.

However, she explained all calls are answered by qualified child protection workers trained to assess each situation and determine the risk and level of response required.

While Peel CAS and unionized workers remain at a negotiation standoff in the ongoing 12-week strike, a reduced workforce of replacement staff provide critical community and child protection services.

The agency's contingency plan has pressed into service management and employees from neighbouring children's aid societies to handle existing caseloads and new calls for aid.

Peel CAS officials have stressed qualified personnel are still fielding those calls and responding to the region's child protection needs, albeit on a priority basis.

"The care and safety of children and families we work with continues to be our priority," Peel CAS CEO Rav Bains has insisted.

The union raised concerns about service levels from the outset of the work stoppage.

Roughly 200 replacement workers cannot assume the duties of 435 frontline child protection professionals, administrative personnel and support staff without some of Peel's most vulnerable residents falling through the cracks of stopgap measures, according to the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

Those concerns have been echoed by some voices in the community.

MPP Monique Taylor, the New Democratic Party (NDP) children and youth services critic, has called on Premier Kathleen Wynne to step in and resolve the labour dispute.

Taylor told the story of a 14-year-old girl who has been in care since finding her mother's dead body in September.

"This youth is in desperate need of care, counselling and support - support Peel CAS has not been able to provide," according to Taylor.

When the strike began, there were approximately 300 children and youth in care and the agency was receiving about 500 calls a day. The agency said it now has 130 Peel CAS staff and 90 management child protection staff from other children's aid societies handling 280 to 320 calls a day.

Cases like Joshua's underline the serious child protection issues in Peel requiring the attention of trained caseworkers.

The names of Joshua and Isabelle have been changed to protect their identity.