

CAS once had severe backlog

From page 1.

any increase in calls.

But Spicker said York's CAS suffered for years from provincial underfunding.

In fact, the situation became so desperate, most of the board of directors resigned in 1991 over funding shortfalls.

However, York's CAS continued to be the lowest funded of the 55 agencies in the province, receiving \$48 per child served compared to the \$154 provincial average.

Two years ago, former social services minister Janet Ecker threatened to fire the board if it failed to clear a severe backlog of children requiring immediate care.

The backlog meant it was taking the CAS weeks — and in some cases, months — to investigate complaints of neglect and abuse.

Provincial legislation requires incoming cases to be investigated within 21 days.

While the situation has improved in the past two years, Spicker said laying off administrative assistants will hurt the agency because the workers provide support to front-line social workers.

In addition to the assistants, chief financial officer Cam Ross and Sheryl Cohen Shecter, who headed the human resources department, have been laid off.

Ross was with the organization for 19 years, while Shecter, who is on a year's secondment with the Ministry of Community and Social Services, was with the agency for 20 years.

Their jobs will be combined into a new position, director of corporate services.

McNamara said the CAS needs a new person to lead the department because "the responsibilities of the combined

position are such that they require strong skills in both areas."

Meanwhile, communications director Myra Hurst was also laid off. Hurst had been with the CAS for more than 24 years.

McNamara admitted employees were hit hard by the news of the layoffs.

"The news wasn't very pleasant to our staff. Our staff are feeling upset about it," he said.

"But my sense is people are feeling we have to move on and adjust to the funding formula."

But Spicker said employees remain "devastated" by the layoffs.



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