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December 9, 2013

Ontario Association for Family Mediation
Accreditation Committee

TO WHOM THIS MAY CONCERN:

Re: Kelly Edmonds

Until very recently, Kelly Edmonds was one of the lawyers on the provincial panel of the Office of the Children's Lawyer ("OCL"). She was initially selected to join the OCL's (then the Official Guardian's) panel in 1989, having just been called to the Bar of the province one month earlier. The two people who provided her with references at that time (and who were partners in the firm she had just joined) conceded Ms. Edmonds' lack of experience, but went on to describe her as being very bright and as having demonstrated enthusiasm and dedication during her work for them the previous summer, leading them to invite her to join the firm. Having had the pleasure of working with Ms. Edmonds as her regional supervisor since 2009, I can attest to these attributes (and the many more noted below), and to the fact that Ms. Edmonds has gained extensive experience in family law in the intervening years. I have been continually impressed with both the quality of Ms. Edmonds' work and her personal and professional strengths throughout the years. I am delighted to provide this reference on her behalf.

As a panel lawyer with the OCL's family law and child protection practice, Ms. Edmonds represented children in custody and access and child protection matters. Ms. Edmonds' responsibilities included meeting with parents and children and receiving information from people who were significant in the children's lives in order to formulate positions on behalf of her child clients. She held disclosure meetings, initiated and promoted settlement discussions, drafted Minutes of Settlement and Parenting Plans and attended at court.

The work we do involves direct engagement with children and their families at a very vulnerable time in their lives. Ms. Edmonds' calming and gentle presentation with both children and adults is a definite asset. Her interpersonal relations with OCL staff (intake, accounts/referral and counsel), OCL clinical investigators, child clients and their families were always welcoming and positive.

As one of only two panel agents in the Haldimand-Norfolk region - serving courts in Cayuga and in Simcoe - during the time I worked with her, Ms. Edmonds carried a high volume of cases. Despite the large number of cases, Ms. Edmonds could easily discuss nuanced details

about each file and has an exceptional sense of when and how the parties should be approached to canvas settlement options. Although this "radar" is one that can be honed with experience and practice, it is one that often needs to be learned and that does not come intuitively, as it does for Ms. Edmonds. Her ability to understand the dynamics between the parties, the impact on the children and to carefully craft her approach to resolution efforts will serve her well as she embarks on this stage of her career.


Ms. Edmonds always worked collaboratively with the OCL clinicians. She clearly enjoyed this collaboration and appreciated the clinical perspectives they lent to various issues. Conversely, every clinician with whom she worked spoke highly of Ms. Edmonds' abilities and her focus on resolving cases in practical and workable ways that focused on the children's interests.

A review of notes made by the OCL in-house counsel who had the pleasure of supervising Ms. Edmonds before me attest to the high regard in which she has been held since joining the panel. The notes made following the bi-annual file reviews describe Ms. Edmonds as an excellent panel lawyer who exceeds expectations in all facets of the evaluations. In addition to comments regarding her strong legal knowledge and skills, my predecessors also noted Ms. Edmonds' excellent dispute resolution skills. My own experience working with Ms. Edmonds certainly reflected the positive experience of my colleagues. Ms. Edmonds, in fact, did not require much supervision – I often told her that I learned something each time I spoke with her, and I appreciated the knowledge she shared with me.

Ms. Edmonds has excellent judgment. She puts forward positions on behalf of her child clients in a clear and cogent manner. She is an excellent advocate. Her written and oral communication skills are excellent. I worked with her on a complex appeal where the OCL's position on behalf of the child evolved in the lower court and the appeal court as circumstances changed. Ms. Edmonds was able to explain the OCL's position in a comprehensive manner. In a lengthy judgment, Ms. Edmonds' submissions on each point of the appeal were adopted by the appeal court. It is unlikely that a less experienced and skilled counsel could have articulated the OCL's position on each issue in the appeal in such an accessible and clear manner. The child, who was only 4 years old when the appeal was heard, received the stability and permanency that she deserved largely as a result of Ms. Edmonds' strong advocacy on her behalf.

I recommend Ms. Edmonds for O.A.F.M. accreditation without reservation. Ms. Edmonds will be an invaluable asset to the field of alternative dispute resolution in family law matters. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any further information.

Yours truly,



Linda Feldman
Counsel
Office of the Children's Lawyer