



News Release

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Report on Children's Rights in Canada Released Today

The Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children (CCRC) released a comprehensive analysis of Canada's compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child today. The report, "Right in Principle, Right in Practice," assesses how well Canada respects the basic rights of children and makes recommendations for major improvements. This report is independent of the official report done by the Government of Canada. It was submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, to inform its third review of Canada's implementation of children's rights in 2012.

Too many children face obstacles that prevent them from realizing their full potential, according to this report, even though the basic needs of most children in Canada are met. Canada needs to develop the full potential of every child, says the report, in order to meet the challenges of an aging population. We cannot afford to let adolescents fall through the cracks of a fragmented support system, ignore the fact that an estimated 25% of young children are not ready for school, or tolerate the high rate of violence against children. Developing the full potential of every child is central to children's rights. The report asserts that giving higher priority to fulfilling the rights of children is not only the right thing to do; it is also strategically important for Canada's future.

The report shows that Canada can do much better. It cites numerous international studies on children's well being that rank Canada below average or near the bottom of comparable countries. For infant mortality, Canada was 24th of 30 countries; 22nd for health and safety; and 20th for child poverty.

"Canada lacks a coherent policy framework for children," said Kathy Vandergrift, Chair of the Coalition. "That needs to be fixed in Canada. November 20 is National Child Day. We hope this report will help Canadians focus on what needs to be done to improve Canada's poor performance on children's rights."

The report recommends specific actions and systemic improvements. It proposes immediate steps to improve the situation of the most vulnerable children, such as closing gaps in child welfare systems, equal access to education and child protection for Aboriginal children, improved access to mental health services, and doing a child rights assessment of proposed changes in youth justice.

To protect the rights of all children, the report calls for a National Children's Commissioner, making the Convention part of Canadian law, and better mechanisms to ensure that the best interests of children are given high priority by all governments.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a comprehensive framework for children's policy that is missing at both the federal and provincial levels of government. "Children deserve better than the sporadic, reactive, and fragmented attention they receive by governments today," said Vandergrift, "all Canadians, children and adults, would benefit from a more coherent, consistent approach to fulfilling the rights of children in Canada."

The full report and a summary of key points are available on the CCRC website at www.rightsofchildren.ca.

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