



Canadian Coalition
for the Rights of Children
Coalition canadienne
pour les droits des enfants

Issue 6, February 2010

Newsletter

Missing Pieces

Missing pieces describes Canada's Third Report on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Essential facts on the real-life conditions for children in Canada are missing. Lists of programs do not include outcomes. Inconvenient truths are ignored.

That's where you come in. The CCRC is preparing an alternative report. It will fill in the missing pieces and paint a picture of children's rights in Canada as it is on the streets, in the schools, and in the halls of power. Groups have organized to work on different sectors, such as health, youth justice, child welfare, and others.

You are invited to participate in this project. You will find the Third Report from the government on our website. You will also find the plan for the report that we will write together. If you would like to contribute, contact the lead person of the most relevant sector, or Lisa Wolff and Kathy Vandergrift, members of the steering committee for more information.

Niagara Charter of Children's Rights and Report: a Good Example

The Niagara Region Public Health Agency takes children's rights seriously. Their annual report is a good example of useful reporting – one that can be done elsewhere. Local authorities are showing leadership across Canada. Check out this example on the CCRC website under news.



MP Marc Garneau (on left) presenting Jocelyn Formsma with her award.

Congratulations to Jocelyn Formsma, Child Rights Award Winner

Congratulations to Jocelyn Formsma for winning the first Article 12 Award for her efforts to give voice to aboriginal children from the local to international level.

The Article 12 award is one of four awards to recognize ways that Canadians practice respect for children's rights in their daily work.

Omar Khadr and Best Interests of the Child

The Supreme Court of Canada's decision in the Omar Khadr case declared that his Charter rights were violated, but left the Government to decide on an appropriate remedy. A key component of the declaration is that Omar Khadr was a child and he had no one to defend his best interests. This reflects the CCRC's submissions to the court. So far the Government is refusing to ask for Omar Khadr's repatriation as a remedy, but has announced they are considering other options. The CCRC argues that the Government must base its remedy on the "best interests of the child," including a plan for rehabilitation and reintegration, as provided in the Optional Protocol on Children in Armed Conflict. See full commentary on our website.

Aboriginal Child Welfare Appeal Postponed Again

September, November, April, and now another attempt to have the claim dismissed. Delay and blockage. That's what first nations children have encountered after they made a claim to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal about discrimination in funding for child welfare. The First Nations Children, Family and Caring Society have a strong case; and the Auditor General confirmed their analysis. The need calls for early resolution of the claim. If the facts are wrong, they can be corrected in the hearing. Delay and obstruction are unacceptable.

This is one order the Prime Minister should give: resolve this now, instead of spending more money on lawyers' fees while children suffer. The CCRC has written a letter to the PM (posted on our website); we don't mind if you copy ours to send your own.

Child Poverty and Parliament

In November, the House of Commons passed a resolution calling for the immediate development of a strategy to eliminate poverty in Canada, including specific plans to address child poverty. In December a Senate report on poverty, housing, and homeless, entitled *In From the Margins*, included several recommendations that would benefit poor children in Canada. One of them is an increase in the National Child Benefit to \$5,000 by 2012. In addition to housing, early childhood education, and other services, the report recognizes the value of rights-based approaches. And Bill C-304, a social housing strategy that includes rights-based components, reached Third Reading stage. Progress stalled when parliament was prorogued. The CCRC proposes that the Throne Speech include these good ideas, as one part of a National Children's Agenda. Addressing child poverty is also good for the economy, which has been named as the priority for the Throne Speech. Tell your MP that this time the promise to end child poverty needs to mean something now, not twenty years from now.

International Complaints Mechanism under Discussion

The goal of having a complaint process under the Convention on the Rights of the Child is one step closer to reality, but still faces significant hurdles. The meeting of the Working Group appointed by the UN Human Rights Council was inconclusive, but members continue to work toward getting a mandate to start drafting the optional protocol at the spring meeting of the UN Human Rights Council. The CCRC has a committee working on this. If you would like more information, contact Sara Austin at Sara_Austin@worldvision.ca.

For more information about the Coalition visit our website:
www.rightsofchildren.ca
