

CANADA AND THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

2003 REVIEW OF CANADA'S RECORD

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Children lose out when 45 recommendations are ignored

The Government of Canada is failing in its responsibility to promote and protect the rights of all children in Canada. More than 10 years ago Canada ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), but, many Canadian children are still missing out on essential benefits, rights and freedoms.

In 2003 Canada filed its second country report under the Convention. The review by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child resulted in 45 recommendations for action by the Canadian government. Few have been implemented—and children are paying the price.

One recommendation urged the government to inform Canadians of our country's mixed record by making the results of the review widely available. Yet little has been done to inform Parliament or the public. The Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children (CCRC) believes Canadians have a right to know—indeed, will *demand* to know—what Canada is doing to protect the rights and well-being of its youngest citizens. We urge you to speak out and make children's issues a more urgent priority for both federal and provincial governments.

This fact sheet lists 10 important actions, selected from the 45 recommendations—actions that could make a big difference for Canada's children. They illustrate three areas for improvement:

1. Basic principles for all decisions that affect children
2. Tools to ensure the rights of children are respected
3. Specific actions for vulnerable groups

Why is the Convention on the Rights of the Child important?

- The Convention addresses all the issues that affect children within one integrated framework that puts the well-being and rights of children right at the centre
- It respects children as active participants in Canada, with rights, responsibilities and needs for protection in ways appropriate for age, gender, and other circumstances
- It treats all children in Canada with equal respect, regardless of place of birth, race, economic status, or other considerations; as such it can help to prevent children's issues from getting caught in current federal-provincial disputes
- It provides an international standard; Canada and all provinces have ratified the Convention, along with almost all countries in the United Nations.
- It has accountability mechanisms that can be used by Canadians to hold their governments accountable for the way they treat children in Canada

Find out more about Child Rights in Canada

- Copy of the CRC: www.rightsofchildren.ca/resources_e.htm
- Youth-friendly version of the CRC: www.rightsofchildren.ca/sir/index.htm
- Canada's last CRC Report and report from the CRC Review Committee: www.rightsofchildren.ca/tools_e.htm
- Toolkit for community monitoring: www.rightsofchildren.ca/tools_e.htm

TEN ACTIONS FOR ALL OF CANADA'S CHILDREN

1. End discrimination

Six recommendations call on Canada to end discriminatory practices that leave some children behind. Children deserve equitable treatment regardless of birthplace, race, gender, or other factors. Please see Backgrounder on the CRC and Discrimination.

2. Promote Best Interests of the Child

Canada was asked to ensure that the key principle of “best interests of the child” is understood, integrated into all laws affecting children, taught to professionals who work with children, and reinforced in programs for children. Please see Backgrounder on the CRC and Best Interests of the Child.

3. Report to public for accountability

Canada was asked to “strengthen monitoring, particularly between federal, provincial, and territorial authorities,” provide data on children across Canada, and make reports public. Regular monitoring and public reporting on the situation of children helps to make all agencies accountable for how they treat children. Please see Backgrounder on the CRC and Accountability.

4. Establish a National Advocate for Children

“Establish at the Federal level an Ombudsman’s Office responsible for children’s rights...”
A national Children’s Commissioner would work with young people across Canada to promote and monitor respect for their rights and investigate and resolve complaints. Please see Backgrounder on the CRC and Accountability.

5. Make child rights the law in Canada

Every nation is asked to make the Convention part of its national laws and two Senate reports recommend the same, yet Canada has not done so. Please see Backgrounder on the CRC and Canadian Law.

6. Teach children their rights

Canada was asked to ensure that children’s rights are taught in every school. Please see Backgrounder on the CRC and Basic Services.

7. Ensure access to health care and early childhood care

Canada was asked to ensure “equal enjoyment of all children with the same quality of health services” and that “quality child care is available to all children, regardless of their economic or geographic status.” Please see Backgrounder on the CRC and Basic Services.

8. Reduce the gap in life chances between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children

Canada was asked to give urgent priority to improve the situation of First Nations children. Please see Backgrounder on the CRC and Vulnerable Groups.

9. Reduce homelessness and help street children

Canada was asked to increase services for homeless children and address the factors that contribute to this issue, including child poverty. Please see Backgrounder on the CRC and Vulnerable Groups.

10. Put a stop to economic exploitation of children

Canada was asked to make sure that working children in Canada know their rights and have effective avenues to protect them. Please see Backgrounder on the CRC and Vulnerable Groups.