

Canada `mediocre' in child welfare [CA] ^[1]

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Source: Toronto Star

Format: Article

Publication Date: 14 Feb 2007

AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

Canada is failing to put child welfare on the frontline of social policy, indicates a study released today by the United Nations children's fund, UNICEF.

The overview of child well-being in 21 developed countries rates Canada 12th on the list &em; tied with Greece, a poorer nation &em; and far behind the Netherlands and Sweden, which rated first and second.

Britain was lowest on the agency's scale, and the United States ranked second lowest.

But, says Lisa Wolff, UNICEF Canada's director of advocacy and education, "we are in a mediocre position in relation to the most advanced countries in the way we deal with our children."

Although Canada was 6th on the list for material well-being &em; which includes the percentage of children living in poverty, in households with unemployed parents, and suffering educational deprivation &em; Wolff said the picture is less rosy on closer examination.

"We have 13.6 per cent of households with an income that is less than 50 per cent of the median. UNICEF believes that should be reduced to 10 per cent, as nine other advanced countries have done.

"When you look at the relative poverty rate, Canada is 15th out of 24 (developed) countries."

And, she says, "what disturbs us is that the relative poverty rate hasn't budged for many years. As a wealthy country we are not doing well enough for our children."

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The UNICEF study, done by the agency's Innocenti Research Centre in Florence, gave a breakdown of child well-being in six categories.

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- reprinted from the Toronto Star

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