

10 steps for children in Canada ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Full report in pdf ^[2]

Excerpts:

Introduction

The Third/Fourth Review of Canada's record on children's rights resulted in a long "todo" list that ranges from specific policy changes to reforming the way we govern for children in Canada. Specific policies can be changed easily; structural reform is a challenge. Both are necessary for children now and for the future of Canada.

"What's next for children's rights in Canada?" There is no single answer, but there are feasible steps we can take. The report from the expert UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, called Concluding Observations, makes many of the same recommendations that Canadians who care about children's rights are making. We hope that individuals, groups, and all governing bodies will pursue specific items on the "to do" list. Together we can build a Canada fit for children, and fit for all the rest of us as well.

Government Action Plan

The Canadian government delegation stated before the UN Committee that Canada is fully committed to protect children's rights by implementing the Convention. We now ask that they table a public response to the report within a year, clearly indicating how they plan to act on its recommendations. If they reject recommendations, they owe Canada's children an explanation or an alternative action.

Other countries with comparable economic and political conditions are making progress. Taking no action in Canada is not acceptable.

Step by Step

The Concluding Observations are comprehensive; they address the full range of children's rights. To move from report to action, the CCRC plans to focus on specific areas in turn and draw attention to improvements that we can make in Canada. The following list of 10 Steps For Children in Canada is a starting point. It combines specific and systemic changes across the scope of children's rights, but it does not cover everything. The Convention itself remains our touchstone and we hope readers will dig into the full report as well. It can be found on the CCRC website at www.rightsofchildren.ca. ^[3]

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9. Access to affordable, quality childcare

\$100 per month per child was not adequate to help families purchase quality childcare in 2006, when it was introduced; it is even less so now. This policy is still held up as the primary solution to the childcare challenge for young families. Childcare in Quebec was held up as a good practice before the UN Committee, but in Canada it remains the exception rather than common practice.

The review highlighted the need for developmental care for children under age 3, as well as affordability, training requirements for childcare workers, and equitable policies that help to close the gap for children in less wealthy households.

"improve the quality and coverage of its early childhood care and education by ...increasing the availability of early childhood care and education for all children." (Concluding Observations, paragraph 72)

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Conclusion

Canada cannot afford to ignore the issues raised in this review. Our children deserve better governance at all levels. We know what needs to be done. Working together, we can make progress, starting with the following steps:

1. Collect accurate data, analyze it, and publicly report on the situation of children.
2. Create a consistent framework for policies that affect children.
3. Implement a national strategy to prevent all forms of violence against children.
4. Take immediate action on specific policy changes identified in the review.
5. Establish a national ombudsperson for children.
6. Ensure equitable treatment for Indigenous children and other minority groups.
7. Consider the best interests of the child and views of the child in all decisions.
8. Inform children about their rights and train the adults who work with them.
9. Provide access to affordable, quality childcare.
10. Make the youth criminal justice system consistent with the Convention.

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