

# UN report affirms child care advocates' messages <sup>[1]</sup>

Advocacy update

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Excerpts:

The scope of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is broad and the needs of Canada's vulnerable children, youth and families, in particular, are well-described in the compelling reports submitted to you [the Committee on the Rights of the Child] by our colleagues. As you complete your deliberations, we encourage you to consider that Canada can afford to address these needs while simultaneously developing, funding and implementing a plan to advance universal rights in early childhood, such as child care. In fact, as a global leader, Canada should be held accountable for no less.

These are the closing words of the **final communique** <sup>[2]</sup> we shared with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in the lead up to their review of Canada on September 26 and 27, 2012. Thanks to your support, we were also able to advise the Committee that more than 70 organizations - both large and small, representing millions of Canadians from coast to coast - had now endorsed our **Declaration for a Child Care System in Canada**. <sup>[3]</sup>

Throughout our **Child Care is a Right project** <sup>[4]</sup>, we have consistently reminded the Committee, and Canadians, of the "**Tale of Two Canadas**" <sup>[5]</sup>. For example, Canada is routinely and simultaneously ranked among the wealthiest countries in the industrialized world and the weakest in public support for families with young children. As a result, child poverty is high, access to quality, affordable child care services is low, and many of Canada's youngest children are cared for in unregulated settings.

Although multiple international assessments and research reports affirm these concerns, Canada's public reporting does not. In fact, without providing any evidence to back up its claim, the federal government states that its approach "allows parents to choose the child care option that best suits their family's needs."

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recently concluded its review of information provided by Canadian governments and by the NGO community, including documents submitted under our Child Care is a Right project. On October 5, 2012 the Committee issued its **Concluding Observations** <sup>[6]</sup>. Regarding child care (page 17, numbers 71 and 72), the Committee:

...is concerned that despite the State party's significant resources, there has been a lack of funding directed towards the improvement of early childhood development and affordable and accessible early childhood care and services. The Committee is also concerned by the high cost of child-care, the lack of available places for children, the absence of uniform training requirements for all child-care staff and of standards of quality care. The Committee notes that early childhood care and education continues to be inadequate for children under four years of age. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned that the majority of early childhood care and education services in the State party are provided by private, profit-driven institutions, resulting in such services being unaffordable for most families.

These observations were followed by a series of related **recommendations** <sup>[6]</sup>.

This outcome confirms the fact that clearly your voices have been heard on the international stage, and your views and lived experiences are reflected in the outcome: **essentially, the UN agrees with us. Congratulations and thank you to every advocate in every province and territory who has worked so hard to ensure that child care receives the attention it deserves!**

However, while this is a cause for celebration we must also acknowledge our ongoing frustration with Canadian governments who continue to deny the child care crisis. Their weak public reporting encourages the general public to think that Canada is doing better at supporting families with young children than we really are. It also forces child care advocates to spend precious time and resources proving - once again - that the crisis exists, instead of working with communities and governments to actually solve the problem.

So let us focus on the solutions. Canadians can and must demand that our governments live up to their human rights commitments. It is time to hold our elected representatives responsible. It is time for Canada to build an accessible, affordable, high quality system of Early Learning and Child Care for our children, for women, for families, our communities and economy.

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