



# Statement

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## Recognizing National Child Day

Canada's National Child Day – marked on Nov. 20 each year – commemorates the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC)* and gives us the opportunity to step back and take a look at the state of children and youth in our country and to ask whether our laws and policies reflect the intent of the UNCRC.

Governments must ensure that *Convention* rights are always protected; rights such as safe water to drink, a safe place to live, the best health care available – and that all children have the right to a family.

That's why my Office is focused on improving rates of adoption and other permanency planning for children in care. At any given time, more than 1,000 British Columbia children and youth in government care are waiting to be adopted. During the release of my 2014 report *Finding Forever Families: A Review of the Provincial Adoption System*, the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and my Office committed to a joint venture to encourage adoptions, and to issuing periodic updates on the status of B.C.'s waiting children.

Of particular concern is the sheer number of Aboriginal children in care and waiting for family permanency. In partnership with Aboriginal communities and agencies, we need to take specific measures to find family arrangements for these children. Whether that is through traditional adoption or through custom or tribal adoptions, the outcome is the same: children deserve – and have the right to – a family.

To this end, I have asked the Select Standing Committee on Budget and Finance for a lift to my Office's budget for permanency advocacy staff. These advocates would focus specifically on working in partnership with MCFD, communities and adoption agencies to achieve shorter waits and better outcomes for children and youth waiting for adoption.

For three years, Canada's child and youth advocates – including my Office – have partnered with leading non-governmental organizations in a national campaign to promote children's rights – including the right to a family. The Child Rights Education Week initiative runs Nov. 16 to 22 this year. Details can be found here: [www.crew-sede.wix.com/nov2015](http://www.crew-sede.wix.com/nov2015)

As a province and as a country, we need to turn conversations into action. Upholding the *UNCRC* is fundamental to improving outcomes for vulnerable children and youth at home and around the world.

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