



News Release

For Immediate Release
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Sweeping New Report Looks at Life Today and Possibilities Tomorrow for B.C.'s Children and Youth

VANCOUVER – A unique report released today takes a sweeping look at young lives across the province, using as wide a lens as possible to examine the state of British Columbia's children and youth.

B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth and the Provincial Health Officer released *Growing Up in B.C.* on the opening morning of the 2010 Champions for Children and Youth Summit.

The joint report by Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond and Dr. Perry Kendall is a ground-breaking examination of six important aspects of child well-being – health, learning, safety, behaviour, family economic wellbeing and family, peer and community connections.

Turpel-Lafond said that in the report, the voices of youth were brought to the forefront, a focus was placed on the most vulnerable child and youth populations, and leading Canadian scholars were engaged to comment on findings.

“The special areas chosen for examination in this report provide a broad and balanced picture of B.C.'s young people – the positives and the negatives, from infancy through adolescence. We look at how well they are doing right now and the data will help predict how well they will do in the future,” said Turpel-Lafond.

“The report is the start of important conversations about ensuring that all infants experience the conditions they need to have the best possible start in life,” said Kendall. “It continues the conversation towards what is necessary for children to have opportunities to learn and thrive, and for adolescents to be supported, guided, and ultimately to make healthy life choices.

“The goal from all of this is to identify a detailed set of indicators that can influence child and youth health and well-being, and that can be tracked by government over time,” he said.

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Growing Up in B.C. provides the context for the next two days of Summit discussions led by international child research specialists and Canadian experts in the field of children and youth services. Summit presenters and delegates will also hear from children and youth, ensuring that their voices are included in meaningful discussions.

“We look forward to this report and our Summit sparking conversations and initiating action to ensure that all B.C. children are happy, healthy and given the support and opportunities they deserve,” said Turpel-Lafond.

The Summit, October 18th and 19th at Vancouver’s Sheraton Wall Centre, is a follow-up to the successful 2008 event, and is organized by the Representative for Children and Youth.

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Media Notes:

- Media are invited to attend all sessions of the Summit. Advance registration is not required however media are requested to check in at the registration desk.
- Full Summit program information and an online version of *Growing Up in B.C.* can be found at www.rcybc.ca.

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Backgrounders attached (2):

- Growing Up in B.C. Report Highlights
- 2010 Champions for Children and Youth Speakers



Backgrounder

Highlights *Growing Up in B.C.*

A Joint Report by the Representative for Children and Youth and the Provincial Health Officer

Growing Up in B.C. was undertaken to better understand and raise awareness of the state of child health and well-being in the province. The report is unlike any other in B.C. – the voices and views of youth are fundamental to the findings, and the report focuses on the most vulnerable child and youth populations.

The report reviewed the following areas: child health, child learning, child safety, family economic well-being, family, peer and community connections and child behaviour.

Key Findings

- Teenage birth rates have declined.
- Rate of youth suicide has gone down.
- Intentional injuries to children and youth have decreased.
- Nearly 80 per cent of young people graduate from high school within six years of entering Grade 8.
- Over 60 per cent of youth reported having volunteered in the past year.

Worrisome Trends

- Aboriginal children and youth encounter significant disadvantage and face more health risks.
- Children of Status Indian mothers are twice as likely to be prenatally exposed to some type of substance use compared to other children.
- Children in care are nearly three times more likely to consider suicide – and nearly six times more likely to have attempted suicide at least once – than youth who have never been in care.
- Aboriginal children and children in care are less likely to experience success in school.

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- Aboriginal youth are less likely to feel safe in school and report they are more likely to be bullied, teased or picked on.
- Children in care are more likely to engage in risky behaviour, such as using tobacco, alcohol and drugs.
- Children in care are more likely to have gone to bed hungry.
- Youth physical activity rates go down with age, as do the number of teens who report that they like school and think their teachers care about them.
- Poverty was seen by youth as impacting all aspects of life – housing, food, substance use, school and sports participation.

What Youth Said

- Youth consistently identified having an adult in their life to turn to for support and guidance as an indicator of well being.
- Young people in middle school are seen as particularly vulnerable.
- Youth felt they need to be more involved in these types of reports if child health and well-being outcomes are to improve.
- Youth in care consistently talked about the challenges they face in everyday life, such as creating and maintaining long-term relationships, having no-one to see them graduate, not having adult support or financial means to encourage them to do well in school or apply for post-secondary education.

What Was Missing

- Key areas of child and youth health and well-being could not be reported on due to a lack of reliable data.
- These areas include:
 - a consistent definition of special needs
 - a lack of indicators of good mental health or emotional well-being
 - indicators of parenting capacity, to understand how to better support parents when issues are identified
 - the number of children and youth who experience domestic violence
- These are important areas, and the experiences of these vulnerable groups need to be captured.



Moving Forward

- Don't understand enough about how some populations of youth overcome the challenges they are faced with and others are unable to.
- Don't understand enough about the role that culture plays in the decisions young people make.
- Need to continue to involve youth in this conversation, and work together to improve our knowledge in these important areas.
- Provincial Health Officer is working with Canadian Institute for Health Information to identify a comprehensive set of child health and well-being indicators for B.C.
- Goal is to develop a more detailed set of indicators that can be tracked.
- Need to link data on resources available to families – such as income, services etc – with outcome data – such as education, health etc – to better understand how well families are doing and where support should be better focussed to improve life for the province's children and youth.

Growing Up in B.C. report can be found at www.rcybc.ca .



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2010 Champions for Children and Youth Summit Speakers

Keynote speakers include:

Olympian Clara Hughes, flag bearer for Canada's 2010 Olympic Team

Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn A-in-Chut Atleo

Ryan Clayton, member of the City of Vancouver's LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) Advisory Committee and Youth Activist

David E. Park, research associate, Justice Institute of British Columbia, economist emeritus Vancouver Board of Trade and author of *Kids 'N Crime: Economic Aspects of Development and Prevention of Criminality among Children and Youth*

Naomi Haines Griffith, motivational speaker and family systems specialist from Nashville, Tennessee.

Full list of additional Summit session speakers and program information can be found at www.rcybc.ca .