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### Newfoundland and Labrador

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### Nova Scotia

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Youth Services

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### Ontario

Office of the Ombudsman

Children and Youth Unit

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### Prince Edward Island

Office of the Child and Youth

Advocate/PEI

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### Québec

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## MEDIA STATEMENT

November 19, 2022

### National Council for Children and Youth Seeks Progress on Health and Welfare in Recognition of National Child Day

SASKATOON – November 20 is **National Child Day**, a celebration of the global pledge made to children’s rights. Canada became a signatory to these rights by ratifying the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)* in 1991. With nearly 200 countries adopting the *UNCRC*, each year, on Nov. 20, the international community is reminded of its 54 Articles that guarantee special protections for children.

Nearly every decision of government – whether federal, provincial or territorial – impacts the rights of children. The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA), of which B.C.’s Office of the Representative for Children and Youth (RCY) is a member, continuously strives to hold Canada accountable for its legally binding commitment to implementing and protecting the rights of children under the *UNCRC*. On National Child Day and beyond, we must all hold Canada to account for making these necessary changes.

As part of the *UNCRC*’s cyclical monitoring process, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child issued its Concluding Observations to Canada in June 2022 ([found here](#)). This document includes numerous recommendations to advance the rights of children – many of which were identified as urgent. This year, CCCYA members have taken several opportunities to collectively, or individually, advocate for the implementation of these recommendations for the benefit of Canadian children.

Amid current pressures on health systems across the country and given the UN Committee’s health-related concerns and recommendations, the CCCYA submitted a brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health. The brief urged the Standing Committee to apply the principles of the *UNCRC* in its deliberations and offered concrete steps to address these protracted issues. “[...] the health of children in Canada does not reflect its status as a nation with some of the best economic, environmental, and social conditions in which to grow up,” said Dr. Lisa Broda, President of the CCCYA and the Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth. “According to UNICEF, Canada ranks a dismal 30<sup>th</sup> out of 38 rich countries in the overall well-being of young people, placing 30<sup>th</sup> for physical health and 31<sup>st</sup> for mental health. This is unacceptable.”

Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth, B.C.’s Representative for Children and Youth, emphasized the importance of children’s rights in the work of her Office.

“RCY is built on a foundation of upholding the human rights of children, youth and young adults and we conduct our individual and systemic advocacy accordingly,”

Dr. Charlesworth said, “In fact, we are recommending amendments to B.C.’s *Representative for Children and Youth Act* that would enshrine the *UNCRC* and other human rights conventions into our legislative mandate. It is very important for us and other members of the CCCYA to mark National Child Day.”

On behalf of the CCCYA, Dr. Broda participated in a roundtable organized by the office of Senator Rosemary Moodie to discuss the UN Committee’s longstanding recommendation for Canada to establish a national children’s strategy. Despite the rights of children being relevant to, and impacted by, nearly every decision at every level of government, there is no overarching strategy that will consistently review, assess, and monitor issues affecting all children and youth in Canada. Nor is there a way to determine how these issues would best be addressed, or whether any actions taken to address them are working. “It is for these reasons that a national children’s strategy is needed. We cannot continue to be satisfied, as a first world country, that the efforts made to put children at the centre have been adequate,” said Dr. Broda.

On National Child Day, Nov. 20, and every day – speak out to ensure the children’s rights committed to by Canada in 1991 are respected and upheld.

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The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates is an association of children's Advocates, Representatives, and Ombudspersons from across Canada who are independent officers of the legislatures in their respective jurisdictions, with legislated mandates to promote and protect children’s human rights through complaint resolution, advice to government, amplification of child and youth voices, and public education functions.

For more information go to [www.cccya.ca](http://www.cccya.ca)

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