



July 31, 2012

The following letter was sent to all BC Senators and Members of Parliament.

I am writing today to encourage you to take personal interest and support Bill C-420, *An Act to establish the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young Persons in Canada*. This private member's bill was introduced by Marc Garneau, M.P. on May 3, 2012.

In Canada today, there are children's advocates, independent officers appointed by the legislatures of nine provinces, and one territory. These individuals have slightly different titles, and the statutes vary from one jurisdiction to the next, but they have in common a responsibility to advocate for vulnerable children, and report to the public. Some have other responsibilities for review, investigation or oversight of government services for children and youth.

When it comes to national programs and responsibilities, or major issues that affect all Canadian children, there is currently no advocate, and there is no public reporting on issues and outcomes. In addition, we lack the coherent data fundamental to developing effective interventions, measuring progress, and spending public money wisely. These are serious gaps, particularly in light of the dire circumstances of First Nations children in Canada.

A Federal Children's Commissioner could also be instrumental in advancing Canada's implementation of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Canada was an early signatory, more than twenty years ago. Our efforts at meaningful implementation do not measure up to Canada's general record on the international stage. The federal government has overall responsibility for implementation, and shares responsibility with provinces and territories who deliver many of the programs to Canadian children and youth.

Achieving a brighter future and a more robust society for all Canadians depends in no small part on the opportunities and supports we provide our children, including our most vulnerable children. In that spirit, I urge you to support a non-partisan effort to advance the rights and opportunities of Canadian children by giving them a voice through establishing a Children's Commissioner for Canada.

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact John Greschner, Chief Investigator in my office, at 250-953-4678.

Sincerely,

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond
Representative for Children and Youth