Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates | Conseil Canadien des Défenseurs des Enfants et des Jeunes

Alberta
Child & Youth Advocate
Ph: 1 (780) 422-6056
Email: ca.information@ocya.alberta.ca

British Columbia
Representative for Children & Youth
Toll-Free: 1 (800) 476-3933
Email: rcy@rcybc.ca

Manitoba
Advocate for Children & Youth
Ph: 1 (204) 988-7440
Email: info@manitobaadvocate.ca

New Brunswick
Child & Youth Advocate
Ph: 1 (506) 453-8653
Email: advocate-defenseur@gnb.ca

Newfoundland and Labrador
Child & Youth Advocate
Ph: 1 (709) 753-3888
Email: office@ocya.nl.ca

Nova Scotia
Office of the Ombudsman
Youth Services
Ph: 1 (902) 424-6780
Email: ombudsman@novascotia.ca

Nunavut
Representative for Children & Youth
Ph: 1 (867) 975-5090
Email: contact@rcynu.ca

Ontario
Office of the Ombudsman
Children & Youth Unit
Ph: 1 (416) 325-5669
Email: cy-ej@ombudsman.on.ca

Prince Edward Island
Child & Youth Advocate
Ph: 1 (902) 368-5630
Email: voiceforchildren@ocyapei.ca

Québec
Commissaire au bien-être et aux droits des enfants
Tél: 1(888) 944-4455
Email: accueil@enfants.quebec

Saskatchewan
Advocate for Children & Youth
Ph: 1 (306) 933-6700
Email: contact@saskadvocate.ca

Yukon
Child & Youth Advocate
Ph: 1 (867) 456-5575
Email: info@ycao.ca

MEDIA STATEMENT
November 20, 2026

Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates Recognizes 35 Years Since the Ratification of Children's Rights in Canada

SASKATOON – Today we celebrate the 35th year since the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

November 20th is National Child Day - a day to celebrate children and youth, and a reminder of Canada's commitment to children's rights. In 1991, Canada ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), a legally-binding international human rights instrument.

The UNCRC outlines 54 articles that cover a range of special rights and protections for children by setting standards in health care, education, and legal, civil, and social services. Canada has much to be proud of - but there is much more work to do. Thirty-five years later, children and youth continue to face barriers in having their basic needs met and their full potential realized, and their adult allies continue to fight to have their rights upheld - especially by governments.

On June 9, 2022, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UN Committee) released its Concluding Observations to Canada as the last step in that reporting cycle (found here). These include observations on Canada's progress in implementing children's rights under the UNCRC, as well as recommendations for how we can do better. While some work has been done, Canada has still not acted on several long-standing recommendations of the UN Committee, such as the establishment of a National Commissioner for Children or a National Child Strategy.

Children need these mechanisms to hold our country to account for recognizing their rights. "While we take this day to celebrate children, we also know that the level at which many children experience safety, protection, and overall well-being is not satisfactory in the provinces and territories, or in Canada," said Dr. Lisa Broda, President of the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA) and the Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth.

For instance, the most recent report card on child well-being by UNICEF, released in May 2026, reports that Canada ranks 22nd out of 37 peer countries, indicating that Canada's performance on child well-being is not improving. In 2016, Canada was ranked 30th of 38 countries on the same measures.

"It is difficult to reconcile that children continue to fall behind in a developed country such as Canada. This is certainly represented when examining child poverty," said Broda. Child poverty is at an all-time high in Canada, having nearly doubled since 2020. Today, one in five children live in poverty according to Statistics Canada. "Poverty contributes to or exacerbates other rights violations. As a developed country, why is Canada not a leader in upholding the rights of children at the highest level?" Broda stated.

Canada must do better for children. As we celebrate young people on this especially important day – and every day – we must also continue to advocate for their right to the best possible life. We cannot continue to allow our children to fall even further behind. Canada must step up and implement all recommendations made by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. It is time. Our young people are our future and deserve nothing less.

The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates is an association of Advocates, Representatives, Ombuds, and Commissioners for children from across Canada who hold legislated independent mandates in their respective provincial and territorial jurisdictions. These legislated, independent offices promote and protect children's rights through advocacy, independent recommendations to government, amplification of child and youth voices, and public education. The members of the Council work together to identify areas of mutual concern nationally.

Website: www.cccya.ca

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Contact:
Leeann Palmer
lpalmer@saskadvocate.ca