



A Voice for Youth

News release

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National Child Day- A Commitment to a New Generation

Saskatoon...November 20, 2007 is National Child Day. Proclaimed by the Government of Canada in 1993, it celebrates two historic events for children - the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1959 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 20, 1989.

"This year, National Child Day has special significance." Marvin Bernstein, Saskatchewan Children's Advocate stated. "Today, the *Convention* turns eighteen. Consequently, Saskatchewan and Canadian youth reaching the age of eighteen today are the first generation of children born with universal rights under the *Convention*." he said.

The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* was ratified by the Canadian Government on December 11, 1991 and likewise, the Saskatchewan Legislature confirmed its own support to the *Convention* that same day. The *Convention* specifies, and UNICEF expresses, that children everywhere have basic human rights: the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life.

"While Saskatchewan and indeed Canada have made some progress in protecting the rights and promoting the well-being of this first generation, to a great extent, the entitlements under the *Convention* have not been sufficiently achieved." Bernstein said.

“As a new second generation of children will have rights under the *Convention* today, we must collectively begin to take the necessary steps and make a stronger commitment to these children. I believe that all of us either individually, as a community or as a province, have a duty to ensure that the universal rights for children and youth under the *Convention* are given sufficient priority.

In this regard, as a province, we must now begin a process that will integrate the rights, as defined in the *Convention*, within government legislation, policy and practice. As a community, we must become even more vigilant and ensure that we keep our children and youth safe and protected from physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and allow them to practically access and exercise their rights. As individuals – whether a parent, family member, teacher, caregiver, or professional –we need to become effective advocates for children and youth and find practical ways in which we can help them on a day-to-day basis. This includes providing safe, healthy and nurturing living and learning environments and an opportunity for children and youth to freely converse, be heard, and respected.

On the occasion of this special National Child Day in 2007, let us commit to seek the opportunities that will make a tangible difference in the lives of all Saskatchewan children and youth not only today- but everyday. By doing so, we will go a great distance towards transforming the ‘paper rights’ of the *Convention* into actual ‘lived rights’ for all our children.” Bernstein concluded.

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Enquires may be directed to:

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The Saskatchewan Children’s Advocate Office was established in 1994 as an independent Office under the Ombudsman and Children’s Advocate Act.

