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Media Release

Recognize National Child Day with Our Kids Network

Protecting and celebrating children's rights, now more than ever

Halton Region, Ontario – Every November 20th, Canadians celebrate National Child Day to recognize the rights of children and their important role in families and communities, here at home and around the world.

In Halton, Our Kids Network uses the occasion to remind people to think about every child's basic rights, such as the right to education and healthcare, the right to be protected from abuse and neglect, and the right to participate in matters affecting them.

"As we approach National Child Day, it's especially clear that this year is like no other," said Elena DiBattista, executive director with Our Kids Network. "All children and youth are navigating the challenges caused by the pandemic, and the adults in their lives are essential to protecting their physical and mental health. Young people's lives have changed quickly and dramatically – there has never been a better time to respect and encourage their right to be heard."

A worldwide day of recognition

National Child Day in Canada marks Canada's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1959, and the UN adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989.

In 2018, The Canadian Children's Charter: A Call to Action to Respect, Protect and Fulfil the Rights of Canada's Children, was developed by Children First Canada, with participation from children and youth, community leaders, the private sector, and government. The final version was released on National Child Day in 2018, supported by Prime Minister Trudeau and other parliamentarians.

The charter provides perspective on the state of children's rights in Canada, to help us understand what needs attention and how to take action to improve the lives of children, youth, and families. It lists nine urgent issues, including these three:

- Child participation and youth engagement: children need the opportunity to be heard, be valued as citizens, make decisions, and lead
- Reduced substance use: we need to focus on prevention through education, and reducing related stigma so families comfortably seek professional help
- End discrimination, exclusion, and bullying: empathy and respectful behavior must be taught and encouraged from preschool onwards; support must be available for those affected by bullying; and schools need to teach about a variety of cultures

The Canadian Children's Charter's Call to Action warns that too many Canadian children do not enjoy protection of their rights and asks all Canadians to act to eliminate inequities and close the gaps. As the Charter notes, "Every child can be an advocate. Every adult can be an ally."

"At Our Kids Network, this is a familiar message," DiBattista said. "Our network's vision is to see all children and youth thrive. Our partners know very well how important it is for adults across the community to support, lift up, and protect our young people."

All Canadian adults and children can participate

In an Our Kids Network blog post about National Child Day, people can learn about ways to take part in this year's celebration, such as reading the research on the status of children in Halton or attending the National Child Day interactive digital event – for children and adults alike – on November 20 at 1 p.m. Children and youth and their advocates will discuss what it means to be #SeenAndHeard. Everyone can use this hashtag when participating in social media conversations about National Child Day and children's rights.

UNICEF Canada also provides resources at unicef.ca, including a poster that lists the rights outlined in the UN Convention in child-friendly language.

Our Kids Network is a Halton-wide partnership of organizations and agencies serving children and youth. For more information, visit ourkidsnetwork.ca.

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