



Child Protection: New General Comment 13

Child protection means much more than apprehension of an abused child by child welfare authorities - if children's rights are taken seriously. This becomes clear in General Comment 13, recently released by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

General Comment 13 provides guidance for implementing Article 19 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and other articles related to child protection. It will help in shifting the focus to prevention of harm as well as responding to children who have been harmed. It also helps to explain the difference between a rights-based approach to protection and paternalistic protection, which often ignores or even infringes on children's rights.

Thanks and appreciation go to several Canadians who contributed to development of the General Comment. Now the focus will be using it to improve children protection practices in Canada and around the world.

The General Comment is available on CRIN, the Child Rights Information Network, at www.crin.org.

Children's Rights in Canada 2011: New and Useful Reports

We continue to add new chapters to our developing report on the state of children's rights in Canada in 2011. Check out reports on the following subjects on the monitoring page of our website: www.rightsofchildren.ca/monitoring.

Rights and Effectiveness in Youth Justice

This report is relevant for the current debate about Bill C-4 as well as on-going issues in youth justice. Paying attention to the rights of young people also leads to effective measures, based on evidence from Canada and other countries. This is important in relation to the current talk about getting tough on crime. If the government wants to be effective in preventing youth crime, it pays to take a rights-based approach.

Instead of going backwards with Bill C-4, this report recommends implementing more of the good practices included in the current *Youth Criminal Justice Act* and then reviewing after 10 years. Other steps include:

- shifting resources to effective crime prevention measures,
- prohibiting the use of tasers on young people until age-appropriate rules are in place,
- adopting guidelines for police forces in use-of-force with young people, and
- strengthening the role of children's advocates in relation to the justice system.

Right to Be Educated

The right to education means more than going to school. It also addresses what children learn and how they are treated in school. When the specific provisions of Articles 28 and 29 are taken seriously, there is room for significant improvement in Canada. One area for special attention is the right of children to learn about their rights.

This report proposes that the Council of Ministers of Education take a leading role to map what is being done in each province, to identify the best practices for children, and expand them across Canada to ensure all children can exercise their right to be educated.

Right to be Free from Sexual Exploitation

Are new punitive laws enough to stop sexual exploitation of children? Are the laws being enforced adequately? What else is needed to effectively protect children from sexual exploitation within Canada and across borders through sex tourism, trafficking, and internet-based exploitation? Check out what experts who work with young people say in a summary report and a detailed research report for Canada's first review of implementation of the optional protocol dealing with sexual exploitation.

Right to be Free from Poverty and Workplace Exploitation

Many Canadians think child labour is a problem for developing countries. Read about children working in Canada and concerns about workplace injuries and ability to achieve educational goals.

A focus on children's rights adds an important dimension to the current debate about poverty reduction strategies in Canada. Equitable treatment for children across Canada requires revision of existing policies and greater public accountability by both federal and provincial governments for use of public funds to support child development.

Right to Play

What does the right to play mean for children in Canada? Article 31 does not receive much attention in Canada and there is no comment in the governments' report – not good enough says this report, prepared by Canadian members of the International Play Association.

This report makes the case that the right to play is essential for healthy child development and needs to receive more attention, as an integral part of the Convention.

Children's Rights and International Development

Canada was a leader in the promotion of children's rights internationally. CIDA's new child and youth strategy is analyzed in this working document to provide an up-to-date view from the perspective of the Convention's call for international cooperation to realize the rights of children everywhere.