

## **2026 International SpankOut Day**

Release Date: 27 April 2026

### **The Background**

Thirty-five years ago, Canada ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), stepping onto the world stage as a pathfinder for child advocacy. Today, there is a clear global consensus on ending the corporal punishment of children, with over 65 nations successfully implementing full bans.<sup>1</sup>

Here in Canada, the fight for children's rights to bodily autonomy has been championed by tireless advocates for decades. This movement stands on the shoulders of many scholars, advocates, families, and leaders who have spent decades insisting that children deserve safety and dignity. Their persistence has lit the path to repeal, and we honour their work with deep gratitude.

This ongoing work is deeply rooted in national milestones, such as the CHEO-led 2004 *Joint Statement on Physical Punishment*, which brought hundreds of health and child welfare organizations together to condemn this practice.<sup>2</sup> Equally critical is the unfulfilled mandate of the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Call to Action #6, which explicitly demanded the repeal of Section 43 of the Criminal Code, a legal defense for the use of physical force against children.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, despite this rich history of advocacy, Section 43 of the Criminal Code remains intact and corporal punishment is still happening. We do not know the full extent of this reality because we still operate in a fundamentally adult-centric society.<sup>4</sup> Violence against children often happens behind closed doors, and because children are frequently excluded from systemic conversations about their own welfare, their experiences remain hidden, marginalized, and dismissed.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children. (n.d.). *Countdown: States with full prohibition of corporal punishment*. End Violence Against Children. Retrieved from <https://endcorporalpunishment.org/countdown/>

<sup>2</sup> Coalition on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth. (2004). *Joint statement on physical punishment of children and youth*. [http://js-advocacy.ca/pdf/joint\\_statement\\_e.pdf](http://js-advocacy.ca/pdf/joint_statement_e.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*. Winnipeg, MB: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

<sup>4</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2009). *General Comment No. 12: The right of the child to be heard*. (CRC/C/GC/12). United Nations.

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF. (2014). *Hidden in plain sight: A statistical analysis of violence against children*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund.

## Our Stance: The Root Cause and the Evidence

The debate over whether corporal punishment is harmful is over. Decades of peer-reviewed pediatric and psychological research demonstrate conclusively that corporal punishment is detrimental to a child's development..

But the harm goes beyond the act. The root cause of corporal punishment is the **objectification of children**. It relies on treating them as passive recipients of adult control rather than active, capable rights-holders. The objectification reflects a protection-only approach, which actively ignores children's **evolving capacity** to understand boundaries and participate meaningfully in their own growth.

To raise a generation of responsible empathetic citizens, we must prioritize **empowerment over protection** — both within our families and at the policy level. We do this by establishing procedural justice in the home, which serves as a child's foundational experience with their fundamental **right to access justice**. Children, like adults, deserve fair, transparent boundaries where their voices are heard, and where consequences are logical and predictable, rather than arbitrary and hurtful.

## The Path Forward: Three Channels of Action

To dismantle the culture of punishment, We are calling for action across three vital channels:

### 1. Parent Education

- **The Current Gap:** The modern landscape is flooded with parenting trends, online advice, and guilt-inducing commentary, leaving caregivers confused and overwhelmed.<sup>6</sup>
- **Our Call to Action:** We must equip parents with rights-based approaches. By empowering parents with practical, evidence-based, and non-violent alternatives , we can help parents shift from ruling by fear to building trusting relationships.

### 2. Child Empowerment

- **The Current Gap:** Rights-based language is often locked in complex legal documents<sup>7</sup> and children are not aware of their rights to bodily autonomy.<sup>8</sup> Their experiences are not listened to on a systematic level.
- **Our Call to Action:** We must empower children directly by validating their experiences, teaching them that their bodies belong to them, and providing safe, realistic avenues for seeking help through trusted adults and resources.

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<sup>6</sup> Mertens, E., et al. (2023). Information overload and its effects on parental self-efficacy. *Frontiers in Psychology*.

<sup>7</sup> Lecic, N., & Zuker, M. A. (2019). *The Law is (Not) for Kids: A Legal Rights Guide for Canadian Children and Teens*. Athabasca University Press.

<sup>8</sup> Covell, K., & Howe, R. B. (2011). *Empowering Children: Children's Rights Education as a Pathway to Citizenship*. University of Toronto Press.

### 3. Laws to Protect and Empower

- **The Current Gap:** Section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada directly contradicts Article 19 of the UNCRC.
- **Our Call to Action:** The immediate, unequivocal repeal of Section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada with no amendments. True reconciliation and child welfare cannot coexist with a law that justifies violence.

### Equipping Our Communities for Change

To activate these channels of action, we are releasing two resources today. For caregivers, we have developed a practical booklet “Rights-Based Parents - Empowering the Next Generation” that discusses myths around spanking and discusses scenario-based alternatives to physical force. For children, we are publishing a booklet “My Body, My Wellbeing, My Rights!” that breaks down children’s rights to bodily autonomy into accessible language, validating children’s experiences and teaching them how to safely advocate for their safety.

It is time to build a future rooted in community, empathy, and respect. Peace must start in our homes.

In solidarity,

Kids Rights Canada

Canadian Coalition for the Rights of the Child



## **About Us**

### **Kids Rights Canada**

Kids Rights Canada advocates for the rights of children in Canada, grounded in the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Through education, advocacy, and community engagement, we empower children's voices so they are recognized, valued, and included in society's decision-making processes.

### **Canadian Coalition for the Rights of the Child**

The Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children (CCRC) is a network of Canadian organizations and individuals who promote respect for the rights of children. Its purpose is to exchange information; provide public education about the Convention on the Rights of the Child; monitor implementation of the Convention in Canada; and engage in dialogue with civil society and government officials on child rights issues.