



**Convention on the
Rights of the Child**

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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Thirty-fourth session

**CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION**

Concluding observations: Canada

1. The Committee considered the second periodic report of Canada (CRC/C/83/Add.6) at its 894th and 895th meetings (see CRC/C/SR.894 and 895), held on 17 September 2003, and adopted at the 918th meeting, held on 3 October 2003 (see CRC/C/SR.918), the following concluding observations.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the State party's second periodic report and the detailed written replies to its list of issues (CRC/C/Q/CAN/2), which give updated information on the situation of children in the State party. However, the submission of a synthesis report based on both federal and provincial reports would have provided the Committee with a comparative analysis of the implementation of the Convention and a more coordinated and comprehensive picture of the valuable measures adopted by Canada to implement the Convention. It notes with appreciation the high-level delegation sent by the State party and welcomes the positive reactions to the suggestions and recommendations made during the discussion.

B. Follow-up measures undertaken and progress achieved by the State party

3. The Committee is encouraged by numerous initiatives undertaken by the State party and it looks forward to the completion of the National Plan of Action for Children which will further structure such initiatives and ensure their effective implementation. In particular, the Committee would like to note the following actions and programmes:

- The National Children Agenda;
- National Child Benefit;
- The establishment of the Secretary of State for Children and Youth;
- The Federal-Provincial-Territorial Council of Ministers on Social Policy Renewal;
- The Social Union Framework Agreement;
- Enactment of Bill C-27 amending the Criminal Code;
- Canada School Net;
- Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan;
- The constructive role played by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to assist developing countries in fulfilling the rights of their children and the declaration by the head of the delegation that Canada will double its international aid by 2010.

C. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

1. General measures of implementation

The Committee's previous recommendations

4. The Committee, while noting the implementation of some of the recommendations (CRC/C/15/Add.37 of 20 June 1995) it made upon consideration of the State party's initial report (CRC/C/11/Add.3), regrets that the rest have not been, or have been insufficiently, addressed, particularly those contained in: paragraph 18, referring to the possibility of withdrawing reservations; paragraph 20, with respect to data collection; paragraph 23, relating to ensuring that the general principles are reflected in domestic law; paragraph 24, relating to implementation of article 22; paragraph 25, suggesting a review of the penal legislation that allows corporal punishment. The Committee notes that those concerns and recommendations are reiterated in the present document.

5. **The Committee urges the State party to make every effort to address those recommendations contained in the concluding observations on the initial report that have not yet been implemented and to provide effective follow-up to the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations on the second periodic report.**

Reservations and declarations

6. The Committee notes the efforts of the Government towards the removal of the reservation to article 37 (c) of the Convention, but regrets the rather slow process and regrets even more the statement made by the delegation that the State party does not intend to withdraw its reservation to article 21. The Committee reiterates its concern with respect to the reservations maintained by the State party to articles 21 and 37 (c).

7. In light of the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the Committee urges the State party to reconsider and expedite the withdrawal of the reservations made to the Convention. The Committee invites the State party to continue its dialogue with the Aboriginals with a view to the withdrawal of the reservation to article 21 of the Convention.

Legislation and implementation

8. The Committee notes that the application of a considerable part of the Convention falls within the competence of the provinces and territories, and is concerned that this may lead, in some instances, to situations where the minimum standards of the Convention are not applied to all children owing to differences at the provincial and territorial level.

9. The Committee urges the Federal Government to ensure that the provinces and territories are aware of their obligations under the Convention and that the rights in the Convention have to be implemented in all the provinces and territories through legislation and policy and other appropriate measures.

Coordination, monitoring

10. The Committee notes with satisfaction the launching in 1997 of the “National Children’s Agenda” multisectoral initiative and the creation of the position of Secretary of State for Children and Youth. However, the Committee remains concerned that neither the Continuing Committee of Officials on Human Rights nor the Secretary of State for Children and Youth is specifically entrusted with coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Convention.

11. The Committee encourages the State party to strengthen effective coordination and monitoring, in particular between the federal, provincial and territorial authorities, in the implementation of policies for the promotion and protection of the child, as it previously recommended (CRC/C/15/Add.37, para. 20), with a view to decreasing and eliminating any possibility of disparity or discrimination in the implementation of the Convention.

National plan of action

12. The Committee notes the introduction in January 1998 of the “Gathering Strength: Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan” and is encouraged by the preparation of a national plan of action in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the final outcome document of United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children, (“A World Fit For Children”). It is also encouraged by Canada’s conviction that actions in this respect must be in conformity with the Convention.

13. **The Committee encourages the State party to ensure that a coherent and comprehensive rights-based national plan of action is adopted, targeting all children, especially the most vulnerable groups including Aboriginal, migrant and refugee children; with a division of responsibilities, clear priorities, a timetable and a preliminary allocation of necessary resources in conformity with the Convention at the federal, provincial, territorial and local levels in cooperation with civil society. It also urges the Government to designate a systematic monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the national plan of action.**

Independent monitoring

14. The Committee notes that eight Canadian provinces have an Ombudsman for Children but is concerned that not all of them are adequately empowered to exercise their tasks as fully independent national human rights institutions in accordance with the Principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles, General Assembly resolution 48/134 of 20 December 1993, annex). Furthermore, the Committee regrets that such an institution at the federal level has not been established.

15. **The Committee recommends that the State party establish at the federal level an ombudsman's office responsible for children's rights and ensure appropriate funding for its effective functioning. It recommends that such offices be established in the provinces that have not done so, as well as in the three territories where a high proportion of vulnerable children live. In this respect, the Committee recommends that the State party take fully into account the Paris Principles and the Committee's general comment No. 2 on the role of national human rights institutions.**

Allocation of resources

16. The Committee welcomes the information provided in the report relating to the Government's contribution to the fulfilment of the rights of the child through allocating resources to a number of initiatives and programmes, notably the National Child Benefit (NCB) system aimed at improving the well-being of Canadian children living at risk by reducing and preventing child poverty. However, the Committee reiterates concerns expressed by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/C.12/1/Add.31, para. 22) and the Human Rights Committee (CCPR/C/79/Add.105, paras. 18, 20) relating to modalities of implementing NCB in some provinces.

17. **The Committee invites the State party to use its regular evaluation of the impact of the National Child Benefit system and its implementation in the provinces and territories to review the system with a view to eliminating any negative or discriminatory effects it may have on certain groups of children.**

18. **The Committee recommends that the State party pay particular attention to the full implementation of article 4 of the Convention by prioritizing budgetary allocations so as to ensure implementation of the economic, social and cultural rights of children, in particular those belonging to marginalized and economically disadvantaged groups, "to the maximum extent of ... available resources". The Committee further encourages the State party to state clearly every year its priorities with respect to child rights issues and to identify the**

amount and proportion of the budget spent on children, especially on marginalized groups, at the federal, provincial and territorial levels in order to be able to evaluate the impact of the expenditures on children and their effective utilization. The Committee encourages the State party to continue to take measures to prevent children from being disproportionately affected by future economic changes and to continue its support to non-governmental organizations working on the dissemination of the Convention.

Data collection

19. The Committee values the wealth of statistical data provided in the annex to the report and in the appendices to the written replies to the list of issues and welcomes the intention of the State party to establish a statistics institute for Aboriginal people. Nevertheless, it is of the opinion that the information is not sufficiently developed, disaggregated and well synthesized for all areas covered by the Convention, and that all persons under 18 years are not systematically included in the data collection relevant to children. The Committee would like to recall its previous concern and recommendation relating to information gathering (CRC/C/15/Add.37, para. 20), maintaining that it has not been addressed sufficiently.

20. **The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen and centralize its mechanism to compile and analyse systematically disaggregated data on all children under 18 for all areas covered by the Convention, with special emphasis on the most vulnerable groups (i.e. Aboriginal children, children with disabilities, abused and neglected children, street children, children within the justice system, refugee and asylum-seeking children). The Committee urges the State party to use the indicators developed and the data collected effectively for the formulation and evaluation of legislation, policies and programmes for resource allocation and for the implementation and monitoring of the Convention.**

2. General principles

Non-discrimination

21. The Committee notes positive developments with respect to measures to promote and protect cultural diversity and specific legislative measures regarding discrimination, including the Multiculturalism Act, in particular as it bears upon the residential school system, the Employment Equity Act, and the amendment to the Criminal Code introducing racial discrimination as an aggravating circumstance (see also the 2002 annual report of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) (A/57/18), paras. 315-343). However, the Committee joins CERD in its concerns, in particular as they relate to children, such as those relating to the Indian Act, to the extent of violence against and deaths in custody of Aboriginals and people of African and Asian descent, to existing patterns of discrimination and expressions of prejudice in the media and to the exclusion from the school system of children of migrants with no status, and remains concerned at the persistence of de facto discrimination against certain groups of children (see also *ibid.*, paras. 332, 333, 335 and 337).

22. **The Committee recommends that the State party continue to strengthen its legislative efforts to fully integrate the right to non-discrimination (article 2 of the Convention) in all relevant legislation concerning children, and that this right be effectively**

applied in all political, judicial and administrative decisions and in projects, programmes and services that have an impact on all children, in particular children belonging to minority and other vulnerable groups such as children with disabilities and Aboriginal children. The Committee further recommends that the State party continue to carry out comprehensive public education campaigns and undertake all necessary proactive measures to prevent and combat negative societal attitudes and practices. The Committee requests the State party to provide further information in its next report on its efforts to promote cultural diversity, taking into account the general principles of the Convention.

23. **The Committee, while noting reservations expressed by Canada on the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, recommends that specific information be included in the next periodic report on the measures and programmes relevant to the Convention on the Rights of the Child undertaken by the State party to follow up on the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and taking account of general comment No. 1 on article 29, paragraph 1, of the Convention (aims of education).**

Best interests of the child

24. The Committee values the fact that the State party holds the principle of the best interests of the child to be of vital importance in the development of all legislation, programmes and policies concerning children and is aware of the progress made in this respect. However, the Committee remains concerned that the principle that primary consideration should be given to the best interests of the child is still not adequately defined and reflected in some legislation, court decisions and policies affecting certain children, especially those facing situations of divorce, custody and deportation, as well as Aboriginal children. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned that there is insufficient research and training for professionals in this respect.

25. **The Committee recommends that the principle of “best interests of the child” contained in article 3 be appropriately analysed and objectively implemented with regard to individual and groups of children in various situations (e.g. Aboriginal children) and integrated in all reviews of legislation concerning children, legal procedures in courts, as well as in judicial and administrative decisions and in projects, programmes and services that have an impact on children. The Committee encourages the State party to ensure that research and educational programmes for professionals dealing with children are reinforced and that article 3 of the Convention is fully understood, and that this principle is effectively implemented.**

3. Civil rights and freedoms

Right to an identity

26. The Committee is encouraged by the adoption of the new Citizenship of Canada Act facilitating the acquisition of citizenship for children adopted abroad by Canadian citizens. It is equally encouraged by the establishment of the First Nations Child and Family Service providing culturally sensitive services to Aboriginal children and families within their communities.

27. **The Committee recommends that the State party take further measures in accordance with article 7 of the Convention, including measures to ensure birth registration and to facilitate applications for citizenship, so as to resolve the situation of stateless children. The Committee also suggests that the State party ratify the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons of 1954.**

4. Family environment and alternative care

Illicit transfer and non-return

28. The Committee notes with satisfaction that Canada is a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction of 1980 and notes the concern of the State party that parental abductions of children are a growing problem.

29. **The Committee recommends that the State party apply the Hague Convention to all children abducted to Canada, encourage States that are not yet party to the Hague Convention to ratify or accede to this treaty and, if necessary, conclude bilateral agreements to deal adequately with international child abduction. It further recommends that maximum assistance be provided through diplomatic and consular channels in order to resolve cases of illicit transfer and non-return in the best interests of the children involved.**

Adoption

30. The Committee is encouraged by the priority accorded by the State party to promoting the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption of 1993 in Canada and abroad. However, the Committee notes that while adoption falls within the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories, the ratification of the Hague Convention has not been followed up by legal and other appropriate measures in all provinces. The Committee is also concerned that certain provinces do not recognize the right of an adopted child to know, as far as possible, her/his biological parents (art. 7).

31. **The Committee recommends that the State party consider amending its legislation to ensure that information about the date and place of birth of adopted children and their biological parents are preserved and made available to these children. Furthermore, the Committee recommends that the Federal Government ensure the full implementation of The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption of 1993 throughout its territory.**

Abuse and neglect

32. The Committee welcomes the efforts being made by the State party to discourage corporal punishment by promoting research on alternatives to corporal punishment of children, supporting studies on the incidence of abuse, promoting healthy parenting and improving understanding about child abuse and its consequences. However, the Committee is deeply concerned that the State party has not enacted legislation explicitly prohibiting all forms of corporal punishment and has taken no action to remove section 43 of the Criminal Code, which allows corporal punishment.

33. The Committee recommends that the State party adopt legislation to remove the existing authorization of the use of “reasonable force” in disciplining children and explicitly prohibit all forms of violence against children, however light, within the family, in schools and in other institutions where children may be placed.

5. Basic health and welfare

Health and health services

34. The Committee is encouraged by the commitment of the Government to strengthening health care for Canadians by, inter alia, increasing the budget and focusing on Aboriginal health programmes. However, the Committee is concerned at the fact, acknowledged by the State party, that the relatively high standard of health is not shared equally by all Canadians. It notes that equal provincial and territorial compliance is a matter of concern, in particular as regards universality and accessibility in rural and northern communities and for children in Aboriginal communities. The Committee is particularly concerned at the disproportionately high prevalence of sudden infant death syndrome and foetal alcohol syndrome disorder among Aboriginal children.

35. The Committee recommends that the State party undertake measures to ensure that all children enjoy equally the same quality of health services, with special attention to indigenous children and children in rural and remote areas.

Adolescent health

36. The Committee is encouraged by the average decline in infant mortality rates in the State party, but is deeply concerned at the high mortality rate among the Aboriginal population and the high rate of suicide and substance abuse among youth belonging to this group.

37. The Committee suggests that the State party continue to give priority to studying possible causes of youth suicide and the characteristics of those who appear to be most at risk, and take steps as soon as practicable to put in place additional support, prevention and intervention programmes, e.g. in the fields of mental health, education and employment, that could reduce the occurrence of this tragic phenomenon.

Social security and childcare services and facilities

38. The Committee welcomes measures taken by the Government to provide assistance to families through expanded parental leave, increased tax deductions, child benefits and specific programmes for Aboriginal people. The Committee is nevertheless concerned at reports relating to the high cost of childcare, scarcity of places and lack of national standards.

39. The Committee encourages the State party to undertake a comparative analysis at the provincial and territorial levels with a view to identifying variations in childcare provisions and their impact on children and to devise a coordinated approach to ensuring that quality childcare is available to all children, regardless of their economic status or place of residence.

Standard of living

40. The Committee is encouraged to learn that homelessness was made a research priority by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, as the sources of data are limited. However, the Committee shares the concerns of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/C.12/1/Add.31, paras. 24, 46) which noted that the mayors of Canada's 10 largest cities have declared homelessness to be a national disaster and urged the Government to implement a national strategy for the reduction of homelessness and poverty.

41. The Committee reiterates its previous concern relating to the emerging problem of child poverty and shares the concerns expressed by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) relating to economic and structural changes and deepening poverty among women, which particularly affects single mothers and other vulnerable groups, and the ensuing impact this may have on children.

42. The Committee recommends that further research be carried out to identify the causes of the spread of homelessness, particularly among children, and any links between homelessness and child abuse, child prostitution, child pornography and trafficking in children. The Committee encourages the State party to further strengthen the support services it provides to homeless children while taking measures to reduce and prevent the occurrence of this phenomenon.

43. **The Committee recommends that the State party continue to address the factors responsible for the increasing number of children living in poverty and that it develop programmes and policies to ensure that all families have adequate resources and facilities, paying due attention to the situation of single mothers, as suggested by CEDAW (A/52/38/Rev.1, para. 336), and other vulnerable groups.**

6. Education, leisure and cultural activities

44. The Committee values the exemplary literacy rates and high level of basic education in the State party and welcomes the numerous initiatives to promote quality education, both in Canada and at the international level. The Committee is in particular encouraged by initiatives to raise the standard of education of Aboriginals living on reserves. It further notes the steps taken to address the concern of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/C.12/1/Add.31, para. 49) relating to addressing financial obstacles to post-secondary education for low-income students. The Committee nevertheless reiterates the concern of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (A/57/18, para. 337) about allegations that children of migrants with no status are being excluded from school in some provinces. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned about the reduction in education spending, increasing student-teacher ratios, the reduction of the number of school boards, the high dropout rate of Aboriginal children and the availability of instruction in both official languages only "where numbers warrant".

45. The Committee recommends that the State party further improve the quality of education throughout the State party in order to achieve the goals of article 29, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general comment No. 1 on the aims of education by, inter alia:

(a) **Ensuring that free quality primary education that is sensitive to the cultural identity of every child is available and accessible to all children, with particular attention to children in rural communities, Aboriginal children and refugees or asylum-seekers, as well as children from other disadvantaged groups and those who need special attention, including in their own language;**

(b) **Ensuring that human rights education, including in children's rights, is incorporated into the school curricula in the different languages of instruction, where applicable, and that teachers have the necessary training;**

(c) **Ratifying the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Convention against Discrimination in Education of 1960;**

(d) **Adopting appropriate legislative measures to forbid the use of any form of corporal punishment in schools and encouraging child participation in discussions about disciplinary measures.**

7. Special protection measures

Refugee children

46. The Committee welcomes the incorporation of the principle of the best interests of the child in the new Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (2002) and the efforts being made to address the concerns of children in the immigration process, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and non-governmental organizations. However, the Committee notes that some of the concerns previously expressed have not been adequately addressed, in particular, in cases of family reunification, deportation and deprivation of liberty, priority is not accorded to those in greatest need of help. The Committee is especially concerned at the absence of:

(a) A national policy on unaccompanied asylum-seeking children;

(b) Standard procedures for the appointment of legal guardians for these children;

(c) A definition of "separated child" and a lack of reliable data on asylum-seeking children;

(d) Adequate training and a consistent approach by the federal authorities in referring vulnerable children to welfare authorities.

47. **In accordance with the principles and provisions of the Convention, especially articles 2, 3, 22 and 37, and with respect to children, whether seeking asylum or not, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt and implement a national policy on separated children seeking asylum in Canada;**

(b) **Implement a process for the appointment of guardians, clearly defining the nature and scope of such guardianship;**

(c) **Refrain, as a matter of policy, from detaining unaccompanied minors and clarify the legislative intent of such detention as a measure of “last resort”, ensuring the right to speedily challenge the legality of the detention in compliance with article 37 of the Convention;**

(d) **Develop better policy and operational guidelines covering the return of separated children who are not in need of international protection to their country of origin;**

(e) **Ensure that refugee and asylum-seeking children have access to basic services such as education and health and that there is no discrimination in benefit entitlements for asylum-seeking families that could affect children;**

(f) **Ensure that family reunification is dealt with in an expeditious manner.**

Protection of children affected by armed conflict

48. The Committee notes that Canada has made a declaration with regard to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict upon ratification, permitting voluntary recruitment into the armed forces at the age of 16 years.

49. **The Committee recommends that the State party, in its report on this Optional Protocol, expected next year, provide information on the measures taken to give priority in the process of voluntary recruitment to those who are the oldest, in light of article 38, paragraph 3, of the Convention, and on its efforts to limit recruitment to persons of 18 years and older (and to review legislation accordingly).**

Economic exploitation

50. The Committee greatly appreciates the fact that Canada has committed resources to work towards the ending of economic exploitation of children on the international level. However, the Committee regrets the lack of information in the State party report relating to the situation in Canada. Furthermore, it is concerned that Canada has not ratified International Labour Organization Convention No. 138 concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and is concerned at the involvement of children under 13 years old in economic activity.

51. **The Committee recommends that the State party ratify International Labour Organization Convention No. 138 concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and take the necessary measures for its effective implementation. The Committee further encourages the State party to conduct nationwide research to fully assess the extent to which children work, in order to take, when necessary, effective measures to prevent the exploitative employment of children in Canada.**

Sexual exploitation and trafficking

52. The Committee is encouraged by the role Canada has played nationally and internationally in promoting awareness of sexual exploitation and working towards its reduction, including by adopting amendments to the Criminal Code in 1997 (Bill C-27) and the

introduction in 2002 of Bill C-15A, facilitating the apprehension and prosecution of persons seeking the services of child victims of sexual exploitation and allowing for the prosecution in Canada of all acts of child sexual exploitation committed by Canadians abroad. The Committee notes, however, concerns relating to the vulnerability of street children and, in particular, Aboriginal children who, in disproportionate numbers, end up in the sex trade as a means of survival. The Committee is also concerned about the increase of foreign children and women trafficked into Canada.

53. The Committee recommends that the State party further increase the protection and assistance provided to victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking, including prevention measures, social reintegration, access to health care and psychological assistance, in a culturally appropriate and coordinated manner, including by enhancing cooperation with non-governmental organizations and the countries of origin.

Street children

54. The Committee regrets the lack of information on street children in the State party's report, although a certain number of children are living in the street. Its concern is accentuated by statistics from major urban centres indicating that children represent a substantial portion of Canada's homeless population, that Aboriginal children are highly overrepresented in this group, and that the causes of this phenomenon include poverty, abusive family situations and neglectful parents.

55. The Committee recommends that the State party undertake a study to assess the scope and the causes of the phenomenon of homeless children and consider establishing a comprehensive strategy to address their needs, paying particular attention to the most vulnerable groups, with the aim of preventing and reducing this phenomenon in the best interest of these children and with their participation.

Juvenile justice

56. The Committee is encouraged by the enactment of new legislation in April 2003. The Committee welcomes crime prevention initiatives and alternatives to judicial procedures. However, the Committee is concerned at the expanded use of adult sentences for children as young as 14; that the number of youths in custody is among the highest in the industrialized world; that keeping juvenile and adult offenders together in detention facilities continues to be legal; that public access to juvenile records is permitted and that the identity of young offenders can be made public. In addition, the public perceptions about youth crime are said to be inaccurate and based on media stereotypes.

57. The Committee recommends that the State party continue its efforts to establish a system of juvenile justice that fully integrates into its legislation, policies and practice the provisions and principles of the Convention, in particular articles 3, 37, 40 and 39, and other relevant international standards in this area, such as the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules), the

United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines), the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty and the Vienna Guidelines for Action on Children in the Criminal Justice System. In particular, the Committee urges the State party:

- (a) **To ensure that no person under 18 is tried as an adult, irrespective of the circumstances or the gravity of his/her offence;**
- (b) **To ensure that the views of the children concerned are adequately heard and respected in all court cases;**
- (c) **To ensure that the privacy of all children in conflict with the law is fully protected in line with article 40, paragraph 2 (b) (vii) of the Convention;**
- (d) **To take the necessary measures (e.g. non-custodial alternatives and conditional release) to reduce considerably the number of children in detention and ensure that detention is only used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time, and that children are always separated from adults in detention.**

Children belonging to a minority or indigenous group

58. The Committee welcomes the Statement of Reconciliation made by the Federal Government expressing Canada's profound regret for historic injustices committed against Aboriginal people, in particular within the residential school system. It also notes the priority accorded by the Government to improving the lives of Aboriginal people across Canada and by the numerous initiatives, provided for in the federal budget, that have been embarked upon since the consideration of the initial report. However, the Committee is concerned that Aboriginal children continue to experience many problems, including discrimination in several areas, with much greater frequency and severity than their non-Aboriginal peers.

59. **The Committee urges the Government to pursue its efforts to address the gap in life chances between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children. In this regard, it reiterates in particular the observations and recommendations with respect to land and resource allocation made by United Nations human rights treaty bodies, such as the Human Rights Committee (CCPR/C/79/Add.105, para. 8), the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (A/57/18, para. 330) and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/C.12/1/Add.31, para. 18). The Committee equally notes the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and encourages the State party to ensure appropriate follow-up.**

8. Ratification of the Optional Protocols

60. **The Committee welcomes the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on children in armed conflict and the signature in November 2001 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The Committee urges the State party to consider early ratification of the latter.**

9. Dissemination of documentation

61. In light of article 44, paragraph 6, of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the second periodic report and the written replies submitted by the State party be made widely available to the public at large and that the publication of the report be considered, along with the relevant summary records and the concluding observations adopted by the Committee. Such a document should be widely distributed in order to generate debate and awareness of the Convention and its implementation and monitoring within all levels of administration of the State party and the general public, including concerned non-governmental organizations.

10. Next report

62. The Committee underlines the importance of a reporting practice that is in full compliance with the provisions of article 44 of the Convention. An important aspect of States' responsibilities to children under the Convention includes ensuring that the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has regular opportunities to examine the progress made in the Convention's implementation. In this regard, regular and timely reporting by State parties is crucial. The Committee recognizes that some State parties experience difficulties in reporting in a timely and regular manner. As an exceptional measure, in order to help the State party catch up with its reporting obligations so as to be in full compliance with the Convention, the Committee invites the State party to submit its third and fourth periodic reports by 11 January 2009, due date of the fourth periodic report. The consolidated report should not exceed 120 pages (see CRC/C/118).
