



Statement

April 5, 2011

REPRESENTATIVE ACKNOWLEDGES NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION DAY

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child establishes the right of children and youth to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury, abuse, neglect, or exploitation. As the Representative for Children and Youth, the convention is the basis of my work towards helping children and youth live in safer communities and families, free from harm and injury.

In B.C., we still have a long way to go. My recent report, *Fragile Lives, Fragmented Systems*, a review of 21 infant deaths from across B.C., found that in 66 per cent of the cases we looked at, domestic violence was present. The report also found that neglect and maltreatment in childhood are known to be variables that can predict the likelihood of a parent mistreating their own child. This is a cycle we cannot allow to continue.

Wednesday, April 6th is National Child Abuse Prevention Day, and it is an important reminder that child abuse exists in every corner of our country, in wealthy and in struggling families, in all neighbourhoods and communities.

We all need to play an active role in protecting children and ensuring their safety. We must ask ourselves the following questions: “can we as a society do better for our children?” and “what can I personally do to help the children in my community?” If we witness bullying, abuse or neglect, we have a responsibility to take action and this can be done by calling the children’s helpline at 310-1234. We can also ask our children how their day was at school, talk to their friends when they visit our homes, read the newspaper and talk to our local politicians about initiatives to protect children’s safety. Childhood is very short – only 988 weeks - so we have to respond quickly if we want to shape a better future and to end the cycle of abuse.

In a contest my Office conducted to promote awareness about the rights of children and youth, 12-year-old Connor wrote “the right to be safe is to have good friends and other people to look out for you.” Let’s be that good friend.

I extend a special thank-you to all of the organizations and individuals who have opened their homes and hearts to children who have experienced abuse and neglect. Your actions and commitment make a profound difference to children and to society.

Sincerely,

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond

B.C.’s Representative for Children and Youth