



News Release

**For Immediate Release
June 26, 2008**

Champions for Children and Youth 2008 BC Summit To Celebrate Excellence

VICTORIA – Keynote speakers Roméo Dallaire and Stephen Lewis head up an international gathering of child advocates and experts in children’s well-being, to explore excellence and wisdom in caring for vulnerable children, B.C.’s Representative for Children and Youth announced today.

“The Champions for Children and Youth 2008 BC Summit will challenge our views on caring for children, and inspire all British Columbians to act on our collective responsibility to remove barriers and improve the lives of our children and youth,” said Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond.

“One mandate of my independent office is to examine child services in the province with a critical and protective eye. The Summit is a positive opportunity for all of us - - parents, guardians, business leaders, communities and governments -- to closely look at our roles, to open our hearts and minds, and to inspire the ripple effects of change,” she said. Turpel-Lafond said she is pleased that the business community, as an important agent of change, is expressing significant interest in participating in the event.

The Champions for Children and Youth Summit includes two days of panel discussions on rights and safety, preventative practices, mental health, education, and international success stories. There will also be a panel focused on Aboriginal perspectives, and discussions led by youth who have been or are presently living in care.

Other prominent speakers include:

- Nigel Fisher, President and CEO of UNICEF Canada
- Paul Gillespie, President and CEO, Kids' Internet Safety Alliance, Ontario
- Harriet Ward, Director, Centre for Child and Family Research, England
- Kathleen Marshall, Commissioner for Children and Young People, Scotland
- Dr. Eileen Munro, London School of Economics, England
- Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President, Union of BC Indian Chiefs
- Dr. Nico Trocmé, McGill Centre for Research on Children and Families, Montréal
- Evelyn Wotherspoon, Calgary Health Region, Calgary

The first-ever Representative's Awards of Excellence will also be presented during the Summit. They will recognize leadership and action that improve the lives of vulnerable children and youth. "It's important that those making a difference every day are honoured and that they be encouraged to continue their good work," Turpel-Lafond said.

"Through the Champions for Children and Youth Summit, we'll look at practical ways to move towards a future guided by safe and healthy development for children," Turpel-Lafond said. "By seeking out and celebrating excellence, we not only begin to build a better path for our young people, we take their hands and walk it with them."

The Champions for Children and Youth 2008 BC Summit will be held from October 20-21 at the Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre in Vancouver, BC. Complete Summit and awards information can be found at www.rcybc.ca.

Media Contact:
Marg LeGuilloux
Communications Director
Cell: 250.893.8244