



News Release

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SUPPORT FOR JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE A SIGNIFICANT FIRST STEP

VICTORIA - Vulnerable First Nations children with special needs will benefit from an announcement from Premier Gordon Campbell pledging support for Jordan's Principle, BC's Representative for Children and Youth said today.

"I applaud the Premier for making British Columbia the first province in Canada to back Jordan's Principle," said Mary-Ellen Turpel-Lafond. "I urge government to move quickly to implement the policy and put the best interests of Aboriginal children first."

Jordan's Principle is named for a First Nations child with complex medical needs born in 1999 on the Norway House Cree Nation reserve in northern Manitoba. After two years of medical treatment in Winnipeg, his caregivers decided he was ready to be discharged home. However, the federal and provincial governments couldn't agree on who was financially responsible for Jordan's at-home care. Sadly, the jurisdictional dispute continued for over two years and Jordan passed away far from home.

Turpel-Lafond said the fact the federal government is responsible for children living on reserves, while the province has jurisdiction over children living off-reserve has resulted in bureaucratic turf wars that have torn First Nations families apart. Jordan's Principle states governments must help the child first and sort out who pays the bills later. In December, the House of Commons unanimously passed a private member's bill endorsing the principle.

"Sadly we know Jordan is not alone and there are children in our province whose families are either forced to move from their reserves to get the support they need or into the child welfare system," Turpel-Lafond said. "Government must now take immediate steps to bring Jordan's Principle to life and ensure First Nations children and families get the care and support they deserve."

In the Representative's 2007 Progress Report on the Implementation of the BC Children and Youth Review (Hughes Review), Turpel-Lafond described the inadequate support, assistance and care for the well-being of Aboriginal children as a "blight on our national conscience and international reputation".

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