



A decade on, the well-being of Canada's children still lags behind

Canadian children rank in bottom half for well-being when compared to other industrialized countries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TORONTO, Wednesday April 10, 2013 – A new report released by UNICEF today reveals the well-being ranking of Canadian children compared to other industrialized countries has not improved over the last decade.

Report Card 11 from UNICEF's Research Office reveals the overall ranking of Canadian children is 17th of 29 countries measured.

"This report provides one of the most comprehensive pictures of the lives of Canadian children available," says UNICEF Canada's President and CEO David Morley. "The fact that our children rank in the bottom half when compared to other industrialized nations simply isn't good enough. It is clear Canada can do better. Protecting and promoting the well-being of our children must become a national priority."

The new report measures children's well-being from the world's richest countries through five dimensions of a child's life. Overall Canada ranked 17th but ranked 11th in housing and environment, 14th in education, 15th in material well-being, 16th in behaviours and risks, and 27th of the 29 countries measured in health and safety.

Particularly concerning is that Canada's overall ranking drops 7 places to 24th when children's views of their own life satisfaction are measured. Only five Eastern European countries rank lower than Canada in this category.

"Listening to children's voices, even at the youngest ages, and knowing more about how they see and evaluate their own lives is critical to improving children's well-being," says Morley.

Other areas of concern with Canadian children's well-being include high rates of obesity (27th), high rates of bullying (21st), low rates of children aged 15 – 19 participating in further education (24th) and high rates of cannabis use (29th).

Areas where Canadian children rank well include low smoking rates (3rd) and high education achievements of children age 15 and under (2nd).

"Considering the size and general health of our economy when compared to the difficult recessions other countries in this report have experienced, it is clear Canada is not doing enough and needs to invest more in our children," says Morley.

How Canada can do better

There are a number of ways Canada can improve the well-being of its children.

To do so there needs to be a clearer picture of the investment being made in children. UNICEF Canada recommends governments at all levels provide more information on the amount of money being spent on children.

Ensuring that the rights of children are prioritized in policy decisions by the use of child's rights impact assessments is also critical. At the national level this would be greatly assisted by the establishment of a National Children's Commissioner and publishing a national, regular state-of-children report to identify progress and emerging concerns.

Visit www.unicef.ca/irc11 to read UNICEF's Report Card 11 and infographics comparing child well-being in Canada and other industrialized countries around the world. Join the conversation on Twitter by following UNICEF Canada (@UNICEFCanada) using the #RC11 and #childwellbeing hashtags.

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UNICEF's Report Card Series

In keeping with UNICEF's mandate to advocate for children in every country, UNICEF's Report Card series focuses on the well-being of children in industrialized countries. Each Report Card includes a league table ranking the countries of the OECD according to their record on the subject under discussion. The Report Cards are designed to appeal to a wide audience while maintaining academic rigour.

About UNICEF

UNICEF has saved more children's lives than any other humanitarian organization. We work tirelessly to help children and their families, doing whatever it takes to ensure children survive. We provide children with healthcare and immunization, clean water, nutrition and food security, education, emergency relief and more.

UNICEF is supported entirely by voluntary donations and helps children regardless of race, religion or politics. As part of the UN, we are active in over 190 countries – more than any other organization. Our determination and our reach are unparalleled. Because nowhere is too far to go to help a child survive.

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