

THE SENATE OF CANADA



LE SÉNAT DU CANADA

November 20, 2005

Dear Friends:

For children, “play” is a chance to be with others – to share, even in the most humble of settings, toys, games, outdoor gym equipment, a sandbox, a jump rope, or an abandoned cardboard box. For others, it is the fervent desire for the gift of time – twenty minutes, one-on-one with Mom or Dad specifically for play.

Enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the simple message that “*Children have the right to play.*” On the surface, *the right to play* seems obvious. However, as expectations for achievement *increase* and as available free time *decreases*, play time has become a right in need of protection.

I was delighted to learn that the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF) has chosen Article 31 – the right to play – as the theme of this year’s National Child Day celebrations. Many of you are already aware of the value of play in a child’s development. In fact, research has shown that play is how very young children learn best.

National Child Day – a day to celebrate children and Canada’s commitment to children’s human rights and freedoms – is the perfect occasion to raise awareness of this article and the Convention in general. By focusing on specific articles of the Convention in this and in future celebrations, we can breathe life into the words of the Convention. They need to be meaningful to the adults caring for children – and to the children themselves.

You can all take pride collectively in the leadership role the CCCF is playing in raising awareness of children’s rights and the Convention. And you can be proud of the great work you’re all doing individually to take a rights-based approach to your work with children.

This year’s celebration is particularly poignant for me. In November, I will retire as Senator, a position, over the past eleven years, that has allowed me to pursue many initiatives to improve the well-being and rights of children.

I encourage you all to celebrate National Child Day in your communities. Let the children in your lives know that they are valued and respected. Talk to them about Canada's commitment to children's rights. And be sure to take the time to **play!**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Landon Pearson". The signature is written in a cursive style. To the right of the signature is a vertical red line.

Senator Landon Pearson
Advisor on Children's Rights to
The Minister of Foreign Affairs