

Canadian Child & Youth Health Coalition endorses the Leitch report

Toronto, ON – April 1, 2008 -- Dr. Bob Armstrong and Ms. Marilyn Booth, Co-Chairs of the Canadian Child and Youth Health Coalition (CCYHC) welcomed the release last week of *Reaching for the Top: A Report by the Advisor on Healthy Children and Youth*. The report, prepared by Dr. K. Kellie Leitch, Advisor on Healthy Children and Youth to Federal Minister of Health Tony Clement, and based on extensive nation-wide consultation, provides five key recommendations to improve the health and wellness of Canada's children and youth. The report can be viewed on the Health Canada website.

The Coalition applauds the initiative of the federal government in taking an important leadership role in providing a platform for defining the pressing health issues facing Canada's children and youth and for identifying solutions to address key areas of concern. The Coalition welcomes the call for greater national collaboration contained in Dr. Leitch's report and strongly encourages the Minister to move forward on the specific recommendations put forward.

The health of our children and youth is a reflection of the health of our nation as a whole. Serious childhood conditions often track into adulthood and represent significant future impact on our health care system and on our overall success as a nation. Any investment in the health of Canada's children is a wise investment in the future of the country.

Dr. Leitch's recommendations focus on significant child and youth health issues such as injury prevention, childhood obesity and mental health services. In addition, Dr. Leitch has recommended a longitudinal study that will help us to understand the health status of Canada's children and environmental factors that impact their health. This information is critical to guide public policy and clinical practice.

The fifth key recommendation is focused on the creation of a National Office of Child and Youth Health with a permanent advisor. This recommendation would ensure that the Federal Minister of Health and the Government of Canada are well informed about the health of our youngest citizens and the steps that must be taken to continue to improve their health and wellbeing.

The report indicates that, despite our prosperity, Canada ranks 12th out of 21 wealthy countries in the United Nations' rankings of child well being. We clearly can do better and the Government of Canada has a central role to play in helping to ensure that we make real progress in improving child and youth health and that every child, no matter where they live in Canada, has access to these benefits.

Established in 2004, the Canadian Child & Youth Health Coalition is a collaboration of eight major national organizational and program members working together with a common vision to advance the cause of child and youth health and health care in Canada. By engaging a broad range of constituents and stakeholders across the continuum of child and youth health, the Coalition is addressing priority issues, bringing together the collective expertise required to formulate, facilitate, implement and evaluate national initiatives and programs.

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