



NEWS RELEASE

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FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF BILL C-4 SHOULD BE SUSPENDED

OTTAWA - The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA) today strongly recommended that Parliament should stay any further consideration of Bill C-4, the Act amending the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA).

In a submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, president of CCCYA and British Columbia's Representative for Children and Youth, and Sylvie Godin, vice-president of CCCYA and vice-president of the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, Quebec, presented seven recommendations regarding Bill C-4.

"We see no evidence that shows the proposed amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act will decrease youth crime or increase safety of the Canadian public," said Turpel-Lafond. "We understand that any incident of violent crime is egregious. It has devastating effects on families, communities and the public.

"However, despite our distress at such incidents, we must not respond by locking up more youth and handing out more adult sentences to youth."

The CCCYA's views are in agreement with the findings of the federal government's national stakeholder consultative process, which concluded that there is little support for changes to the Act at this time.

"Aboriginal youth are grossly over-represented in the youth criminal justice system," said Godin. "When policies and changes in criminal law move the system in the direction of more detention, we can expect a more negative effect on Aboriginal youth than on any other group in Canadian society and that is unacceptable."

The CCCYA also called on the federal government to find ways to stop the inappropriate criminalization of youth who have mental health issues or cognitive impairments through a national strategy that responds to their treatment needs rather than increasing incarceration.

It also recommends that the federal government adequately fund the non-custodial options provided for in the YCJA by ensuring that money is channelled to provincial and territorial governments who administer the Act.

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For a copy of the complete submission please go to www.rcybc.ca.

Media Contact:

Marg LeGuilloux Communications Director Representative for Children and Youth Cell: 250 893 8244

marg.leguilloux@rcybc.ca