



May 10, 2017

OPEN LETTER TO CANADIAN SENATORS ON BILL S-206, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (protection of children against standard child-rearing violence)

Dear Senators,

First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition is a non-partisan coalition of 100 provincial and regional organizations who have united their voices to put children and youth first in British Columbia through public education, community mobilization, and public policy advocacy.

Our Coalition supports Bill S-206 to repeal Section 43 of the Criminal Code and urges the Senate to pass the bill promptly. Over the past two decades, research evidence, professional practice, and public support have expanded in favour of protecting children against all forms of violence, including physical punishment. The *Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth*, a well-researched analysis of the issue, calls for repeal of Section 43, along with public education initiatives on effective forms of discipline that do not model violence. First Call Coalition members signed this statement over a decade ago.

Every child, as well as every adult, has a basic human right to not be hit by others. Currently Canada provides more protection for the rights of adults than for children in this regard. Passing Bill S-206 is essential for Canada to fulfill its duty to protect children from all forms of violence, as articulated in Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). First Call strongly supports implementation of the Convention in Canada and notes that Canada has been repeatedly urged by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to repeal Section 43 of the Criminal Code.

We call your attention to the following research evidence:

1. No evidence-based parent education program recommends physical punishment. There are many constructive, effective approaches to discipline that do not use violence. The research evidence clearly shows that even mild forms of physical punishment are harmful. Parental modelling of ways to resolve conflict without hitting teaches children important life skills.

putting children and youth first

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2. Fifty-two countries have now prohibited all physical punishment of children and 54 more have committed to doing so. In those countries where physical punishment has been prohibited and police and child welfare investigations are tracked, there has been no increase in criminal prosecutions or child welfare apprehensions for minor incidents.
3. In countries that have prohibited physical punishment and implemented public education, the use of physical punishment has declined more substantially than in countries that have only implemented public education. Public education in the context of laws that continue to legitimate hitting children has limited impact.

After a second review of Canada's compliance with its UNCRC obligations, Canada has still not enacted legislation prohibiting all forms of physical punishment and has taken no action to remove Section 43 of the Criminal Code, which allows physical punishment of children. This failure to act ignores our undertaking to Article 19 of the UNCRC that we **will put into place** "all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse."

Repeal of Section 43 will remove a barrier to Canada's implementation of a comprehensive strategy to end all forms of violence against children.

We call on you to stand up for Canada's children by supporting Bill S-206. Repeal of Section 43 would be a powerful symbol of Canada's commitment to children, in honour of the recent 25th anniversary of Canada's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Importantly, passage of the bill by both the Senate and the House of Commons would also fulfill one of the Calls to Action in the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Sincerely,



Adrienne Montani, Provincial Coordinator
First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition

Attachment: First Call Coalition membership list