



## Doctors Urge Prime Minister and Premiers to Take Action on Child and Youth Health

**Ottawa, October 10, 2007** – The Canadian Medical Association (CMA), the Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS) and The College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) today challenged governments and their leaders to make child and youth health a priority by formally adopting the objectives of Canada's new Child and Youth Health Charter.

The three organizations delivered the Charter to government leaders, along with a letter urging them to take action on a situation they say is growing increasingly alarming.

"Why is it that UNICEF recently ranked Canada 12<sup>th</sup> among OECD countries in terms of child well being?" said Dr. Ruth Collins-Nakai, Chair of the Child and Youth Health Initiative. "International research tells us that illness, injury, malnourishment and a variety of other issues are undermining the development of our greatest resource – our children."

The Charter provides a framework for improvement. It focuses on three key requirements for child health: a safe and secure environment, good health and development and access to a full range of health resources. Under these broad categories, 16 specific areas of action are identified, ranging from clean water, air and soil, to prenatal and maternal care and mental health programs for children and youth.

"This charter must be a standard against which we judge ourselves—as a nation and as communities, in our work and in our daily lives," said Dr. Gary Pekeles, President of the Canadian Paediatric Society. "We need to ask, is what we are doing enhancing the health and well-being of children, youth and families in Canada?"

The CMA, CPS and CFPC are urging every organization with an interest in child and youth health to formally endorse the charter and to increase their efforts to help achieve its objectives.

"We urge all organizations and consumer groups to join in endorsing this charter", said Dr Louise Nasmith, immediate past President of the College of Family Physicians of Canada. "We must unite in making children and youth health our collective priority, in learning more about what affects their health, and in making a plan to ensure that Canada's children and youth are among the healthiest in the world".

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The Charter was developed through broad consultation with organizations and individuals concerned with child and youth health as well as parents, youth and children. In April, the CMA, CPS and CFPC brought together leaders from across the country to take part in the country's first Child Health Summit, where the draft charter was unveiled and discussed. Further development occurred in the months that followed, and the document has now been finalized. It reflects a consensus on child and youth health priorities and is intended to serve as a rallying point for collaborative action that will benefit Canada's youngest citizens.

"We believe all Canadian children and youth must have access to a safe and secure environment; good health and development, and a full range of health resources," said the three organizations in their letter to the Prime Minister. "We urge your government to adopt the Charter and deliver on its vision that Canada's children and youth will be among the healthiest in the world."

The Charter can be found at [www.ourchildren.ca](http://www.ourchildren.ca).

- 30 -

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