

N I A G A R A C H I L D R E N ' S C H A R T E R

Children, like other human beings, are entitled to fundamental rights and freedoms. Because of children's unique vulnerability, it is the responsibility of adults to ensure not only that children are safe from exploitation and neglect, but that they have access to a fair share of society's resources.

The preamble of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that "...the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community..."¹ While parents have the primary responsibility for their children's care and upbringing, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child makes it clear that governments have a duty to help families fulfill their responsibility and to protect the rights of children. Niagara's Children's Charter situates the provisions of the Convention in a local context.

This Charter is not intended to replace or pre-empt requirements under varying sources of legislation related to children. It constitutes a statement of principles rather than a legally binding document. The Children's Charter consolidates elements related to the fundamental rights of children from birth to eighteen years of age in one document.

When our children's fundamental needs are met, they are better able to meaningfully contribute towards creating a civic community. This Charter represents Niagara's commitment to our future. To this end, all measures undertaken by communities within Niagara will ensure the fundamental rights and freedoms of our children.

All Niagara's children should have:

- Healthy food, safe water, and clean air.
- Housing in dwellings that reflects the normal standard of our community.
- Healthy physical, intellectual, emotional and social development, well being and quality of life.
- Protection from physical, psychological and sexual abuse both in and out of the home.
- Time with their families and/or other nurturing and positive role models throughout their childhood.
- High quality early child development opportunities to meet their best interests.
- Resources to achieve the highest attainable level of health and the assurance that the resources necessary to ensure lifelong good health are provided.
- Primary and secondary education to enable them to reach their full potential.
- Recreational and leisure activities in the form of play, creative expression and skill development opportunities.
- Protection from racism and discrimination irrespective of the child's ethnic, cultural, spiritual, and/or religious identity.

October 2003



We as children believe that we should have the rights and freedoms as other human beings. Because children tend to be more naive, it is the adults' responsibility to make sure that we are not taken advantage of or ignored. It is also the adults' responsibility to make sure we have access to a fair share of our community's resources.

While parents must raise and care for their children, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child makes it clear that the government must also help the families to carry out their responsibility of protecting the child's rights and caring for him/her.

When a community decides to make this Charter one of their own, they will ensure the rights and freedoms of Niagara's children without discrimination.

All children of Niagara are entitled to:

- Have food, shelter and time with our friends so we can develop physically, emotionally and intellectually, while also developing our well-being and a good quality of life.
- Have the right to live in a good home.
- Proper health care so that we can remain strong and healthy.
- The right to feel safe and protected from physical, psychological and sexual abuse everywhere and anywhere we might go.
- Spend time with our family and have a proper role model present throughout our childhood.
- Take part in high quality child care and early school programs made to meet our best interests.
- Have a portion of the government's money spent towards us so we can live in a fun and safe community.
- Receive the schooling needed to reach our full capabilities.
- Have the opportunity to participate in extra curricular activities that allow us to be creative and express ourselves.
- The right to be who we are and believe what we want without being discriminated against.

— Victoria Krikorian and Chelsea Bolger, Denis Morris Catholic Secondary School, and Nicole Burnett, E. L. Crossley Secondary School
November 2002

Children should have basic rights and freedoms. Because children are young, adults have to look out for us and make sure we are safe. It is also the adults' responsibility to make sure the community's resources are available to us.

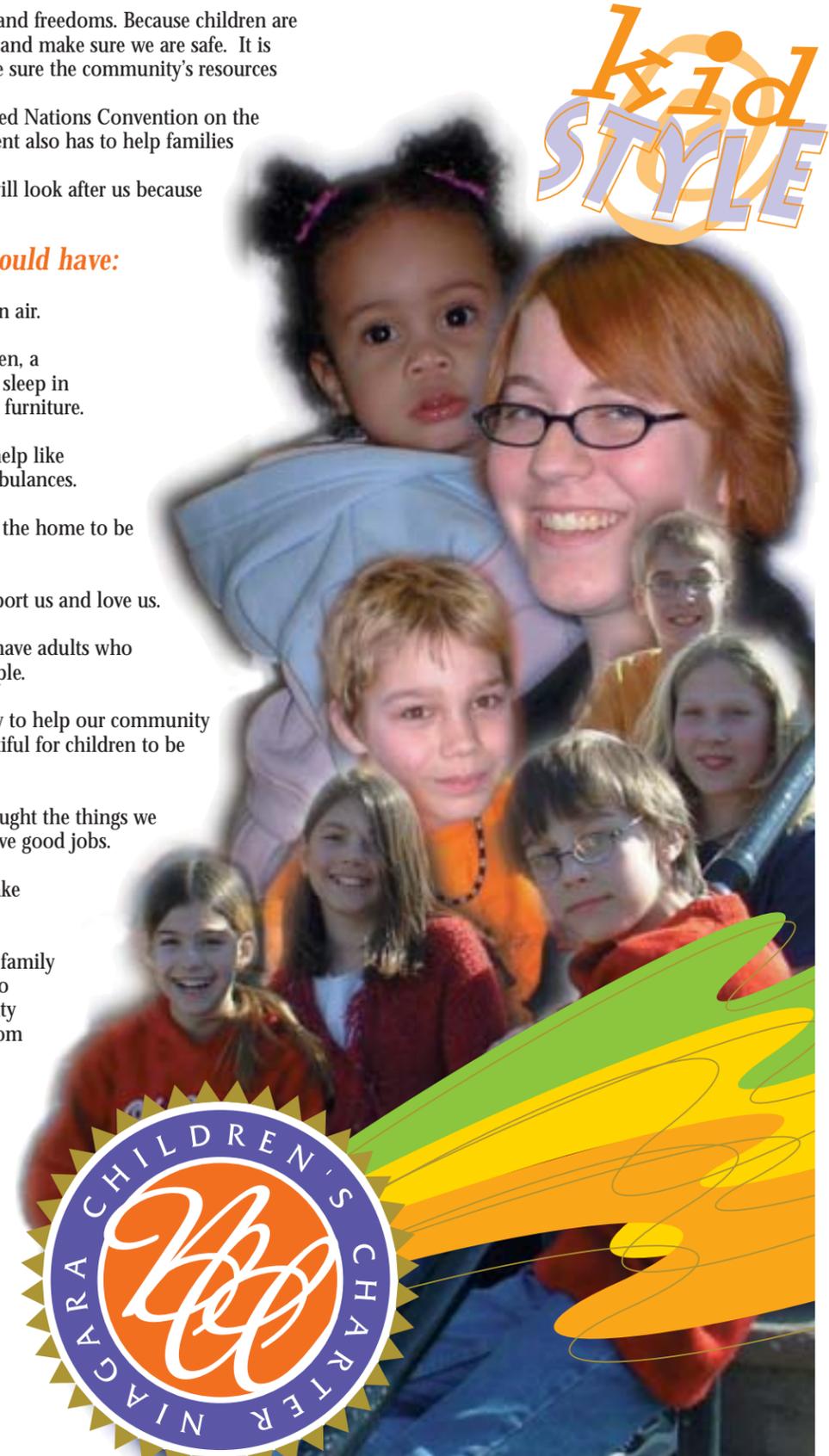
While parents care for us, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child says the government also has to help families protect the rights of their kids.

This Charter means that Niagara will look after us because we will be the leaders of the future.

We, the kids of Niagara, should have:

- Healthy food, clean water and clean air.
- A strongly built house with a kitchen, a bathroom, bedrooms with beds to sleep in and other rooms with comfortable furniture.
- A good doctor and good medical help like specialists, nurses, dentists and ambulances.
- The right both at home and out of the home to be protected from harm.
- A family to always care for us, support us and love us.
- Child care where we feel safe and have adults who encourage us and set a good example.
- A government that provides money to help our community be safe, clean, successful and beautiful for children to be our very best.
- The right to go to school and be taught the things we need to be good citizens and to have good jobs.
- The chance to play sports and to take lessons to develop good skills.
- The right to worship and keep our family traditions and never be forced to go against our beliefs and a community that lets children grow up in freedom and peace.

— Mrs. Scott's Grade 4 Class,
Vineland Public School
December 2002



¹ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, as adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, November 20, 1989, Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1991, page 1.



The following have endorsed the Niagara Children's Charter:

City of Niagara Falls
City of Port Colborne
City of St. Catharines
City of Thorold
City of Welland
Early Years Niagara
Niagara Regional Housing
The Regional Municipality of Niagara

Town of Fort Erie
Town of Grimsby
Town of Lincoln
Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake
Town of Pelham
Township of Wainfleet
Township of West Lincoln

Children from birth to eighteen years, like other human beings, have basic rights and freedoms. Adults and communities have a responsibility to our children to ensure that these rights and freedoms are respected.

The Children's Charter is modelled after the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. To ensure understanding by all of Niagara's citizens, the Charter has been written by young children, teens and adults.

Through this Charter, the communities of Niagara commit to our children, Niagara's future.

