

Overture No 20
Re: Endorsing the Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth

From Acts and Proceedings 2018:

Endorsing the Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children (p. 334–35)

This overture contains a statement from the Truth and Reconciliation's Calls to Action No. 6 that calls upon the Government of Canada to repeal section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada. Section 43 states that the use of force by way of correction toward a pupil or child can be justified. The committee believes this would be a subject for the consideration of Justice Ministries. The overture also relates to the church's Leading with Care Policy which is part of the Canadian Ministries portfolio.¹ Not wanting to necessarily restrict the Life and Mission Agency to responding through these two departments, the committee makes the following recommendation.

Recommendation No. 11

That Overture No. 20 (p. 334–35) re endorsing the Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth be referred to the Life and Mission Agency.

NO. 20 – SESSION OF ST. DAVID AND ST. MARTIN, ONTARIO

Re: Endorsing the Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth

WHEREAS, the rights of children, protecting them from harm, are presented in the gospels as being equal to the rights of adults (Matthew 15:26, 18:2–6, 19:14, Mark 9:37, 10:14–16, Luke 18:16); and

WHEREAS, The Presbyterian Church in Canada has recognized its own historical insensitivity to the rights of Aboriginal children leading to adult Aboriginal peoples losing a secure sense of self (Confession of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1994, p. 5); and

WHEREAS, there is strong well-researched evidence that physical punishment places all children at risk for physical injury, poor mental health, impaired relationships with parents, weaker internalization of moral values, antisocial behaviour, poorer adult adjustment and tolerance for violence in adulthood (Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth, 2004); and

WHEREAS, there is no clear evidence of any benefit from the use of physical punishment on children (Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth, 2004); and

WHEREAS, parents are less likely to use physical punishment if there is no state support for physical punishment as a form of child discipline (Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth, 2004); and Unreferred Overtures (cont'd) – 2018 Page 335

WHEREAS, children raised with violent discipline are more likely to physically punish their own children in the absence of adequate education to its dangers and alternatives (Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth, 2004); and

WHEREAS, under section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada, children are denied the same legal protection from assault afforded to adults in Canada; and

WHEREAS, there are well-researched and tested ways to discipline children to be as God created them to become without using any kind of physical punishment; and

WHEREAS, there are well-developed mechanisms to educate the public and parents of the dangers of physical punishment and the benefits of alternative positive forms of discipline in raising children; and

WHEREAS, the authoritarian Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth, receiving broad support, is referenced by some worldwide non-government organizations and is formally endorsed by many (nearly 600, as of June 2017) well-respected Canadian social, educational, medical, faith groups and professional associations (cheo.on.ca/en/physicalpunishment); and

WHEREAS, the Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth, 2004, calls for social justice action comprising: 1) the delivery of public education, 2) the development of universal parenting education, and

¹ Leading with Care is not in the portfolio of Leading With Care. Discussions with the General Assembly Office have resulted in a new process by which overtures will be referred simply to the Life and Mission Agency, rather than to a department in order to allow us to assign the work correctly.

3) the provision of the same protection of children from assault as enjoyed by all Canadian adults;
THEREFORE, the Session of St. David and St. Martin Church, Ottawa, humbly overtures the Venerable, the 144th General Assembly to endorse the Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth (2004, Coalition of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, Child Welfare League of Canada, Family Service Canada, Canadian Child Care Federation, Canadian Institute of Child Health, Canadian Public Health Association and the Canadian Association for Young Children), or to do otherwise as the General Assembly, in its wisdom, deems best.

Transmitted with approval by the Presbytery of Ottawa.