

CHILD FRIENDLY EDMONTON STRATEGY



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Executive Summary

Developing the Strategy

In 2003, the Community Services Department began work on a Children's Services Framework. The purpose of the project was to help focus the Department's efforts, determine service priorities and integrate services provided to children. From the Department's perspective, it wanted a clearer understanding of the breadth and depth of services provided to children and youth, and to clarify its many roles in providing and supporting these services.

"Children and youth should be able to influence decisions about their city."

The Children's Services Framework Consultation Phase Final Report (September 2003) included responses from 118 individuals, representing City of Edmonton stakeholders (40% of respondents), children and youth (37%), and external agencies and community leaders (23%). The consultation identified the

unique role that the Community Services Department plays in providing critical facilities, programs and services that could not be fulfilled by any other agency, or community or business interest; and identified gaps, issues and opportunities. Within the Framework, goals were identified.

A City Council Special Initiative – 'Child Friendly Edmonton' - is encouraging action to make Edmonton a more child friendly place that recognizes and reflects the needs of children and young people. It is based on the International UNICEF supported 'Child Friendly' secretariat that identifies key indicators of child friendly cities. The UNICEF Initiative promotes the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child at the level where it has the greatest direct impact on children's lives: in the cities where they live. Child Friendly Cities define children and youth as persons under the age of 18 years, and includes all children regardless of economic status, ethnic origin, religion, disability, or gender.

Child Friendly Edmonton identifies three goals, and has broadened the scope of the work within the City of Edmonton to include all Departments and Civic Agencies. Councillors Michael Phair and Kim Krushell lead the Child Friendly Edmonton initiative, providing indispensable support and connections in the community.

"Children and youth should be able to express their opinion on the city they want."

Stakeholder Input

In 2006, the City of Edmonton conducted a series of interviews with stakeholders to test the values of UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative and their relevance for Edmonton. In June, 86 responses were collected from five school classes in Grades 4, 8 and 11.

The students, when reviewing the UNICEF values, were very supportive of them. Among the results, students provided input into what they believe makes up a Child Friendly City:

- Has clean, good quality parks and playgrounds;
- Has safe neighbourhoods, toys, and play equipment and a safe place to hang out;
- Is a place where kids can have fun; and
- Is a friendly place, where they receive respect from others, and people are nice to each other.

(source: Community Service, Strategic Services Branch, June 22, 2006)

The City of Edmonton received input from the Edmonton Youth Council. The Edmonton Youth Council provided the following comment: "The Youth Council was consulted in regards to the Child Friendly Edmonton Strategy in April 2006. After a review of its framework, vision, values and building blocks, the Youth Council felt that the strategy had a good direction, and had no changes to suggest to the Strategy."

"Children and youth should be able to drink safe water and have access to proper sanitation."

The City conducted individual interviews with key external stakeholders. Following are examples of the themes that emerged:

"Children and youth should be able to participate in family, community and social life."

- Giving voice to children was seen as a key idea, with the qualifier that one needs to include families and adults who work with children and youth. The challenge of reaching them and collecting the true ideas and opinions from younger children (0-6) without a parent's filter were identified.
- Partnership is seen as a key to improving accessibility for children and youth, especially with regard to resourcing, and the importance of being on the same page. On the other hand, some stakeholders mentioned that some partners are "partnered out", everyone is competing for the same funding and no one is coordinating.
- Improving the environment for children by providing green spaces to play in and more opportunities for children to choose what they want to do.

"Children and youth should be able to receive basic services such as health care and education."

During July-August 2006, the City of Edmonton surveyed children and their parent/guardians in the summer Green Shack program to help focus the priorities for implementation and set benchmarks for future evaluation.

Input from children, youth and stakeholders will continue to be a valued part of the implementation of the Child Friendly Edmonton Strategy.

Summary of Child Friendly Edmonton Strategy – Goals and Building Blocks

The Child Friendly Edmonton Strategy has foundational principles, three main goals, and several building blocks within each goal:

Foundational Principles: Partnerships and Collaboration	
Partnerships and collaboration permeate all goals and building blocks. Goals and building blocks are “what” is to be achieved; partnerships and collaboration are “how” it will be done. This commitment to working together will help ensure long term sustainability and will help ingrain Child Friendly principles into day-to-day operations.	
Goal: Advocacy & Awareness	Building Blocks
<i>Goal Statement: The City of Edmonton and its partners will ensure a greater voice for Edmonton’s children and youth and improve opportunities for their meaningful participation. The City and partners will also strive to build awareness on issues faced by children and youth so as to champion improvements and change.</i>	State of Edmonton’s Children Report
	A Voice for Edmonton’s Children
	Building Awareness
Goal: Accessibility	Building Blocks
<i>Goal Statement: The City of Edmonton and its partners will strive to improve accessibility for all children and youth so that they have the choice and opportunity to join in and participate freely.</i>	Addressing Barriers
	Pilot Projects
Goal: Services “Fit” for Children	Building Blocks
<i>Goal Statement: The City of Edmonton will strive to ensure that policies, services and programs provided meet the needs of children, youth and their families by striving for quality experiences that are child centered and take a holistic approach at best practices for child development.</i>	Child Friendly Lens
	Training & Development

The first goal is aimed at generating enhanced awareness and understanding of issues facing, and opportunities for, Edmonton’s children. With greater awareness, the community at large can embrace the principles of Child Friendly Edmonton, and implement changes wherever appropriate. The goal also promotes children’s active involvement in issues that affect them by listening to their views, considering them in the decision making processes, and empowering them to be self-advocates.

The second goal seeks to improve access to programs and services for all children and youth. Gender, ability, income, disability, transportation, equipment and other barriers can be reduced and removed so that all children and youth have equitable opportunities to participate. A key component of this goal is the creation of partnerships and collaborative opportunities.

“Children and youth should be able to participate in cultural and social events.”

The last goal focuses on providing quality experiences for children, in safe environments, provided by qualified staff and volunteers, to enrich their skills, knowledge and lives in general.

Together the goals for Child Friendly Edmonton provide direction and focus to efforts that meet the needs of children and youth. The building blocks provide tangible ways to initiate changes and monitor progress toward achieving the goals.

“Children and youth should be an equal citizen of their city with access to every service, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, income, gender, or disability.”

Child Friendly Edmonton Overview

A Child Friendly City welcomes and involves children and youth and promotes their well-being and safety. It fosters the rights of young people as contributing members of society who have a sense of ownership and a voice in their community.

“Children and youth should be protected from exploitation, violence and abuse.”

A variety of international movements have developed to improve the quality of life and make cities more livable and enjoyable for all. One of these movements is the UNICEF International Secretariat for Child Friendly Cities. This initiative promotes practical methods for making cities better places for children and youth. Child Friendly Cities define children and youth as persons under the age of 18 years.

The overarching concept guiding the City of Edmonton’s strategic management process is City Council’s vision for the future of this community. Through a Council Special Initiative, the City of Edmonton is taking action to make Edmonton a more child friendly place that recognizes and reflects the needs of children, young people and their families. The process of building a Child Friendly City demands political commitment and a local system of good governance devoted to fulfilling children’s rights. City Council is leading this initiative with the goal of improving the future of Edmonton’s children, youth and their families.

The Child Friendly Edmonton Strategy is based on the International UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative. This initiative provides a framework for defining and developing a Child Friendly City. It promotes the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child at the level where it has the greatest direct impact on children’s lives: in the cities where they live. The document outlines “building blocks” that include structures and activities for the City and its partners that are necessary to engage children’s active involvement, to ensure a children’s rights perspective in all relevant decision-making and equal rights of access to services.

“Children and youth should be able to walk safely in the streets on their own.”

A UNICEF Child Friendly City is actively engaged in fulfilling the right of every young citizen to influence decisions, express their opinions, and be equal citizens of their city

“Children and youth should be able to meet friends and play.”

with access to services, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or disability. A Child Friendly City is a place where children are protected from exploitation, violence, and abuse, and are able to walk safely in the streets of their community. It also ensures that children are provided with basic services such as health care, education and shelter. Child Friendly Cities create a healthy environment for children and youth to participate in family, community and social life where they meet friends, have fun, participate in cultural and social events and have access to green spaces.

The City of Edmonton cannot achieve the vision of a Child Friendly City by itself and recognizes the critical role that citizens, school boards, community-based organizations and other orders of government play. Child Friendly Edmonton, in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration, will work with citizens, school boards, community groups and orders of government to create the best possible results for children and their families.

Child Friendly Edmonton's Vision and Values

Child Friendly Edmonton's **Vision** Statement describes the desired outcomes of the strategy:

Child Friendly Edmonton is a welcoming city where young Edmontonians thrive because they live in a safe, accessible, well-designed community. Edmonton's children and youth are listened to, treated with respect, and valued for their individual contributions. Families are defined in broad terms, so that children and youth, and their parents/guardians; are welcomed and included.

The **Values** that guide Child Friendly Edmonton include a place where children and youth:

...have voice and influence...

...are protected from violence and abuse...

...feel safe ...

...play and have fun...

...join in and participate freely...

...create friendships and relationships...

...feel welcome and have a sense of belonging...

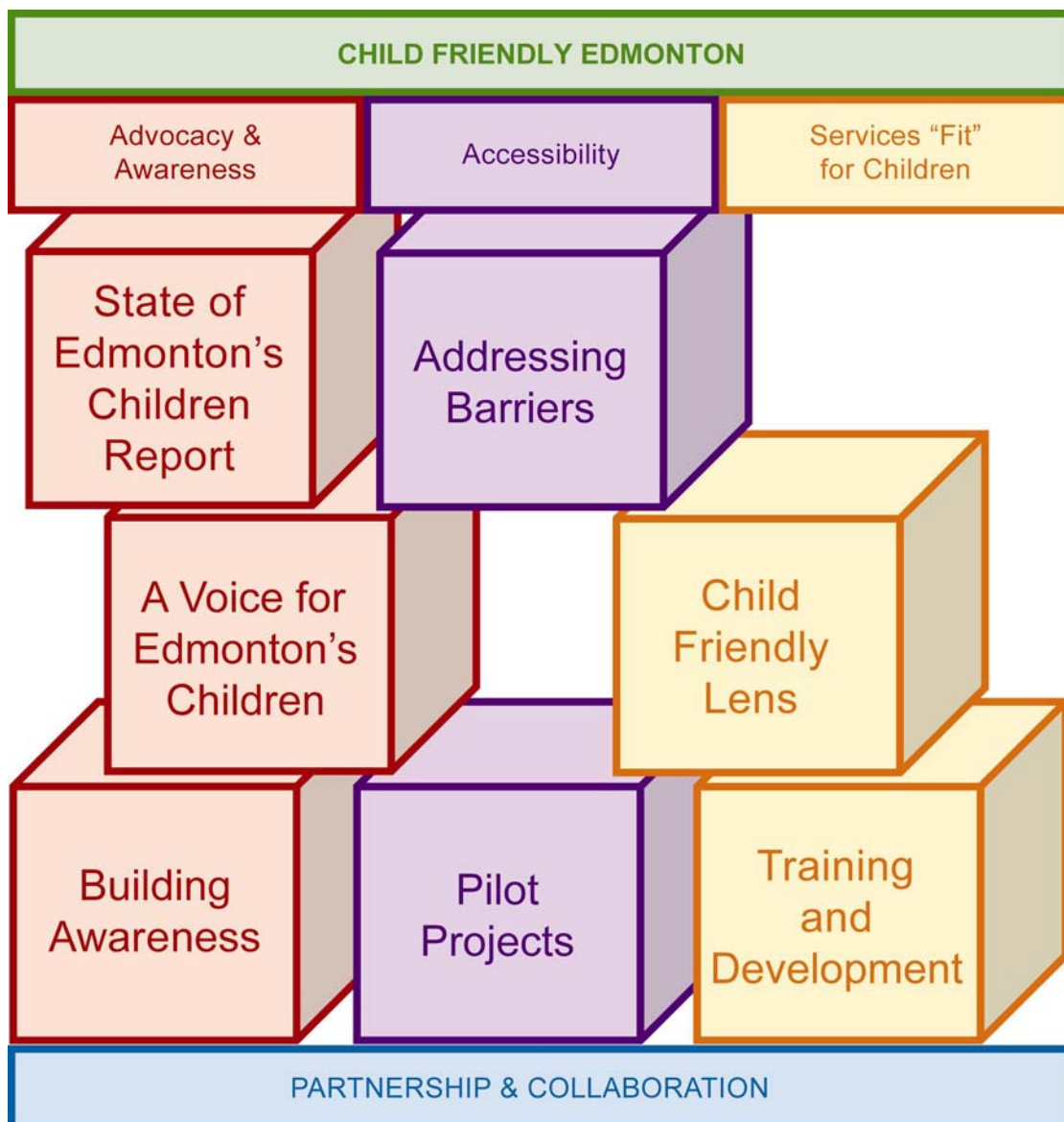
...have opportunity and choice for life-long learning and building skills...

...feel respected ...

...understand responsibility to themselves and others...

Child Friendly Edmonton Goals and Building Blocks

The Child Friendly Edmonton Strategy focuses on three key goals: **Advocacy and Awareness, Accessibility, and Services “Fit” for Children.** Within each goal are the building blocks or objectives that will lead to the realization of the goals. These building blocks do not stand-alone. They are all related and progress must be made on each one to achieve the intent of the strategy. A strong foundation for the Strategy is the principle of partnership and collaboration as the way to achieve the best possible outcomes.



Foundational Principles: Partnership and Collaboration

Effective partnerships and collaboration underpin the building blocks of the Child Friendly Edmonton Strategy. They are the foundational principles that permeate all of the building blocks of the strategy, and provide the best opportunities to meet the diverse and evolving needs of children and youth.

Child Friendly Cities establish links and partnerships with other orders of government and community organizations to create more opportunities for children and youth through the effective and efficient use of resources. Child Friendly Cities seek opportunities for children where they live, go to school and play.

*The City of Edmonton will participate in partnerships and collaborative opportunities to provide improved coordination and delivery of programs and services for children and youth. **This may include linkages and connections with other relevant Corporate and community initiatives.***

Advocacy and Awareness

Goal Statement: *The City of Edmonton and its partners will ensure a greater voice for Edmonton's children and youth and improve opportunities for their meaningful participation. The City and partners will also strive to build awareness on issues faced by children and youth so as to champion improvements and change.*

Building Blocks

Each building block describes the Child Friendly concept and then defines the objective for Edmonton. The building blocks to achieve the goal of advocacy and awareness include:



State of Edmonton's Children Report

Child Friendly Cities routinely check on the state of their children. A Children's Report systematically collects and analyzes a range of statistics and information on children, from birth to 18 years of age. This information helps to inform the community and supports child and youth centered policy development.

Building Block: The City of Edmonton will fund a Children's Report every two years that ensures sufficient monitoring and data collection on the state of Edmonton's children. This report looks at how well Edmonton is caring for and supporting its children by collecting statistical information on key indicators and evaluating the well being of children within these indicators. This report will be used to inform and support child and youth friendly policy, programs and services.

A Voice for Edmonton's Children

Child Friendly Cities promote children's active involvement in issues that affect them: listening to their views and taking them into consideration in the decision making process. This includes enabling children and youth to be speak for themselves.

Building Block: The City of Edmonton will promote a systematic child participation process that will seek to engage children in design, planning and delivery of municipal programs and services through the Corporate Involve Edmonton Initiative. The City and its partners will support opportunities for children to be listened to and involved in decisions that impact their lives by providing a safe and caring environment where respect, trust, open communication and the ability to express oneself freely is promoted.

Building Awareness

Child Friendly Cities promote the concept of child and youth friendly communities on a broad scale, through a variety of media, such as, news coverage, circulation of print materials, conferences, newsletters, municipal events, etc.

Building Block: The City of Edmonton and its partners will commit to keeping Edmonton's children and the successes and challenges faced by them in the public forefront. A media campaign will keep Edmontonians informed about children's issues, needs and rights through the use of various mediums that are clear, understandable and impart relevant information. The City and its partners will use public education activities to engage citizens to create a more child friendly community.

Accessibility

Goal Statement: *The City of Edmonton and its partners will strive to improve accessibility for all children and youth so that they have the choice and opportunity to join in and participate freely.*

Building Blocks

Each building block describes the Child Friendly concept and then defines the objective for Edmonton. The building blocks to achieve the goal of improving accessibility include:

Addressing Barriers

Child Friendly Cities work to address barriers that impact the ability of children and youth to participate in positive aspects of city life as they might choose. A Child Friendly City is inclusive for all children.

Building Block: The City of Edmonton and its partners will review their programs, services and facilities that involve children to identify barriers and take a systematic approach to address them. Increasing access may include changes or new corporate policies, practices, programs and services or development of new partnerships.

Pilot Projects

Child Friendly Cities work with other partners to develop and pilot a range of innovative programs, services and opportunities, with a focus on increasing and maintaining access for all children and youth.

Building Block: The City and its partners will develop and implement pilot projects where the focus is innovative, child and youth led, and in the community. All projects will ensure children and youth are involved in the design, implementation and evaluation. Shared learnings with children and youth, partners and the community will be a component of each project and the successes will be infused into practice.

Pilot Projects for 2006:
Teen Gamers Palace at
Edmonton Public
Libraries & New ETS
Service to Snow Valley

Services “Fit” for Children

Goal Statement: *The City of Edmonton will strive to ensure that policies, services and programs provided meet the needs of children, youth and their families by striving for quality experiences that are child centered and take a holistic approach at best practices for child development.*

Building Blocks

Each building block describes the Child Friendly concept and then defines the objective for Edmonton. The building blocks to achieve the goal of providing services “fit” for children include:

Child Friendly Lens

Child Friendly Cities ensure that there is a systematic process to assess the impact of policy and practice on children – in advance, during and after implementation. This tool will strengthen support for young people through changes in policy, programs and services.

Building Block: The City of Edmonton will implement the use of a decision-making filter that assesses the child friendliness of corporate programs, services, facilities, bylaws and policies. This tool may identify areas for change and assists with identifying what can be done to make every decision more positive for children and youth. An inventory of all programs and services provided to children and youth by the City of Edmonton will be created to assist this process.

Training and Development

Child Friendly Cities ensure the concepts of Child Friendly are shared within the organization and with the community and youth. Tools are developed and training provided to support the implementation of a Child Friendly City.

Building Block: The City of Edmonton will provide training to staff across the corporation on Child Friendly concepts as well as the specific Strategy and how to apply elements of

the strategy in their work. City Council, city staff, volunteers and partners will share learnings through a series of workshops and networking opportunities.

How will we know we are making a difference in the lives of Children and Youth?

The Child Friendly Edmonton Strategy is created to achieve the desired outcomes identified in the vision statement and values.

Through the three goals of the Strategy: Advocacy and Awareness, Accessibility and Services “Fit” for Children, the following outcomes will be monitored and measured to ensure Child Friendly Edmonton is making a difference in the lives of children and youth so that they:

- feel safe;
- are treated with respect;
- learn something new and gain skills;
- have opportunities to join in and participate;
- are involved in decision-making and planning that impact them; and
- have fun.

Understanding and Defining Roles and Responsibilities

It is important that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined for effective implementation of the strategy. City Council, the Youth Council, the City of Edmonton and its Departments, and Partners support Child Friendly Edmonton. A Terms of Reference for the Child Friendly Committee will be developed and reviewed annually. The Committee terms of reference will define its purpose, key responsibilities, composition, decision-making process, resources and reporting requirements.

City Council

City Council has agreed to lead specific projects as identified in City Council's Special Initiatives. Councillors Michael Phair and Kim Krushell lead the Child Friendly Edmonton initiative. City Council's support of Child Friendly Edmonton demonstrates its ongoing commitment to making Edmonton a child friendly city.

Child Friendly Edmonton Champion

Community Services, Social and Recreation Services Branch Manager will champion Child Friendly Edmonton within the Corporation and with the community.

Child Friendly Edmonton Coordinator

This position will coordinate the implementation of the strategy and support the Champion and Committee. The Coordinator will be the steward for the Child Friendly Edmonton Strategy and bring representatives from the Corporation and partners together regularly to ensure communication, action, and implementation of the Strategy.

Child Friendly Corporate Committee Members

Each City of Edmonton Department will appoint a committee member who will act as an information link between the Child Friendly Edmonton Coordinator and their respective Department. They will assist in identifying emerging opportunities within the corporation related to the goals and building blocks of the Child Friendly Edmonton Strategy. They will also provide information and advice from their diverse perspectives and facilitate actions within their Department to make their areas more child friendly.

The Youth Council

As a committee of Council, The City of Edmonton Youth Council (CEYC) advises Council on issues that affect youth in Edmonton. The CEYC ensures that there is a youth voice advocating for the well-being of youth, youth services, and opportunities available to youth. The Youth Council's General Assembly of Youth is a forum that supports public involvement of youth in issues and decisions that affect them. The Youth Council will have representation on the Child Friendly Committee.

Community Partners and Other Levels of Government

The City of Edmonton cannot achieve the vision of a Child Friendly City by itself and recognizes the critical role that community-based organizations, orders of government, and School Boards play. Therefore, in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration, community partners, orders of government and School Boards will be invited to be Child Friendly Edmonton Committee members. These members will provide a community perspective, support the goals and building blocks of the Child Friendly Edmonton Strategy, and work toward achieving a common approach. They will provide information and advice from their diverse perspectives and facilitate actions to make Edmonton more child friendly.

Child Friendly Edmonton Network

A network will be established to engage the community at large, either individually or as representatives of an association or organization. This network could include parents, parent groups or councils, schools, associations, citizens, businesses, coaches, youth group leaders, community leagues and others. The network can be involved in Child Friendly Edmonton activities when and where appropriate.

Directions for Moving Forward

Implementation Objectives

The implementation objectives of the Strategy are to:

- Implement the Child Friendly Edmonton goals and building blocks that support change at the City of Edmonton and in the community;
- Annually identify specific actions and budget requirements to advance the Child Friendly Edmonton Strategy as part of the business planning cycle;
- Measure the effectiveness of the Strategy through a performance measurement system; and
- Monitor and update the Strategy as required.

Monitoring, Measuring and Evaluating Performance

The effectiveness of the Child Friendly Edmonton Strategy will be monitored over time. Monitoring and evaluation is necessary in order to track progress and make adjustments where the desired outcomes are not being realized.

Success of the Child Friendly Edmonton Strategy will be measured through the use of two vehicles:

- State of Edmonton's Children Report

The State of Edmonton's Children Report, produced every two years, will provide an overview of the condition of well-being or quality of life of Edmonton's children. This report and its indicators provide a basis for understanding the end results or outcomes for children that the Strategy is trying to influence but does not have direct control over. The report looks at how well Edmonton is caring for and supporting its children by collecting statistical information on key indicators and evaluating the well being of children with these indicators.

- Performance Measures

Performance measures are quantifiable measure of outcomes, outputs, efficiencies and effectiveness. These measures are connected with Child Friendly Edmonton's Vision and Values and assess progress towards these outcomes. Through the three goals of the Strategy: Advocacy and Awareness, Accessibility and Services "Fit" for Children, and supported by partnership and collaboration, the following outcomes will be measured, from the child's perception, the degree to which they:

- feel safe;
- are treated with respect;
- learn something new and gain skills;
- have opportunities to join in and participate;

- are involved in decision making and planning that impact them; and
- have fun.

Performance will also be measured on a few key outputs of the Strategy including:

- Number of training opportunities provided on Child Friendly Edmonton; and
- Number of times City of Edmonton staff use the Child Friendly Lens.

These measures will indicate the outcomes of the Child Friendly Edmonton Strategy and whether results are being achieved. The outcomes are collected through surveys administered to children who have used City services or programs through the Community Services Department performance measures. The outputs are collected through ongoing record keeping that monitors the number of training opportunities and use of the Child Friendly Lens. Information from both the Performance Measurements and the State of Edmonton's Children Report will be provided to City Council every two years.

Revisions to the Child Friendly Edmonton Strategy

The Child Friendly Edmonton Strategy will be reviewed regularly and amended, as necessary, to ensure that the goals and building blocks of the strategy remain sound and that the document continues to reflect the trends, needs and issues of children, youth and their families. The Strategy shall be reviewed as required or in a three-year cycle in conjunction with newly elected City Councils.

Conclusion

Child Friendly Cities are developing all over the world. Examples include: London, England, Christchurch, New Zealand, Calgary, Alberta, Rome, Italy, and West Vancouver, British Columbia to name a few. They speak to the commitment of governments and communities that are devoted to respecting and exercising children's rights. Through building blocks that include necessary structures and activities, Child Friendly Cities engage children's active involvement, ensure a children's rights perspective in all relevant decision-making and actively promotes equal rights of access to services.

Canada is very much involved in the "child friendly movement." The emphasis may differ from province to province, however the common denominator is to make cities, communities and neighbourhoods better for children, youth and their families.

The City of Edmonton, through a Council Special Initiative, is taking action in Edmonton to make our city a more child friendly place that recognizes and reflects the needs of children and young people. The process of building a Child Friendly City demands political commitment and a local system of good governance devoted to fulfilling children's rights. City Council is leading this initiative with the goal of improving the future of Edmonton's children and youth.

Edmonton's Strategy is intended to be a framework and guiding tool to give life to the creation of a Child Friendly City here in our own community.

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