



Suzanne Schroeter

# Scrapbook

## Year of the Child

For the next twelve months here in Canada and around the world, children and youth are going to occupy center stage. It's about time.

With single-parent families on the rise, divorce rates increasing, and with 1 1/2 million Canadian children living in poverty, the status of the child in today's society demands attention and reform.

A major issue during International Year of the Child will be children's rights. In November, the Canadian Council on Children and Youth published a three-year study entitled "Admittance Restricted: The Child as Citizen in Canada", which claimed Canadians have come to view children as "exotic pets."

Children and youths (under 18) comprise one-third of our population, yet have no rights. When you stop to think of it, children have no legal rights to education or medical care (inoculation against childhood diseases); no right to be present during divorce or custody proceedings, and with corporal punishment being condoned by some school boards, children are even denied the right to be free of physical threat or violence.

Recently, MP James McGrath (PC-St. John's East) tabled a proposal for a Bill of Rights for children before the House of Commons and received moderate support. It is now up to local

organizations and groups to press their demands for social changes on behalf of the needs of children in the major areas of economic support, health care, protection and education. Such decisions should not be left to professionals alone.

Children in Canada have good chances for a healthy life during their early months (Canada's infant mortality rate ranks 7th out of 16 developed countries) but we are still faced with rising statistics of child abuse, delinquency and teenage suicide. How can we emphasize the positive while at the same time make a worthwhile contribution towards a better future for our offspring?

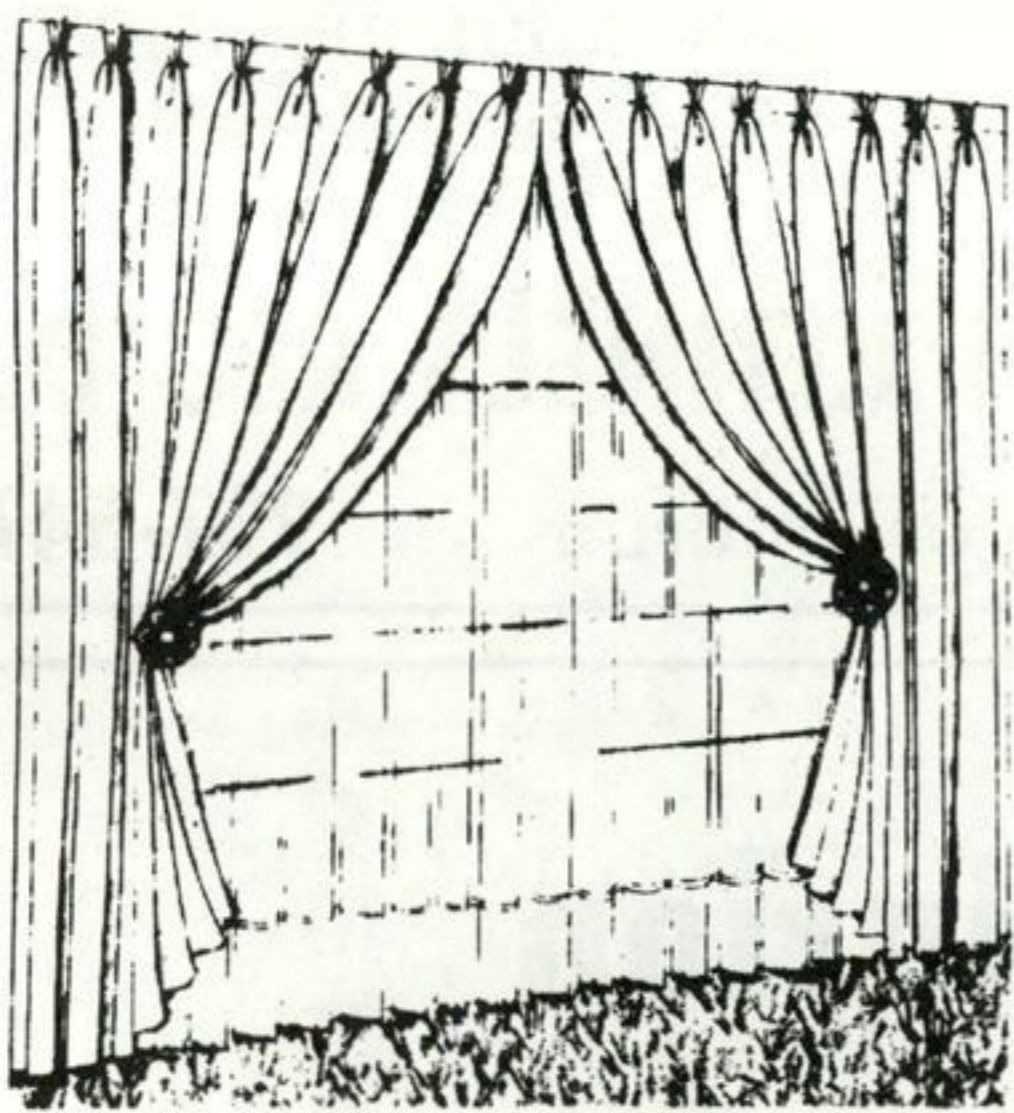
Here in the Castor area there are numerous visible ways in which the community has shown its love and concern for children. Hallowe'en and Christmas parties, minor hockey organizations, figure skating clubs, Brownies, Scouts, library and arena summer programs and our new co-operative pre-school in Metcalfe are just a few exciting events where we as adults and parents have expressed our feelings for children.

In 1979 we can all do more. A few local organizations are in the planning stages of their International Year of the Child projects. What can you do to acknowledge and contribute to the needs of children in our

communities? Let me know. Write or call your group's planned project for IYC and I'd be delighted to publish it in my column in the coming months.



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