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Canadian Government faces allegations of discrimination towards First Nations Children at Canadian Human Rights Tribunal

OTTAWA, Feb. 22, 2013 /CNW/ - On February 25, 2013, the Government of Canada will appear before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal to face 14 weeks of hearings to determine if its flawed and inequitable First Nations child and family services program is discriminatory. The federal government controls and funds child and family services on reserves where as the provinces and territories do so for other children. The Auditor General of Canada and other expert reports confirm that the federal government's funding and program approaches to child and family services, including the more recent enhanced funding approach, are flawed and inequitable.

There is clear evidence linking the inequality in services to hardship among First Nations families and to the growing numbers of First Nations children in care. Dr. Blackstock said, "This generation of First Nations children deserve an equal chance to grow up safely at home - something the Federal Government deprived many of their parents and grandparents of during the residential school era."

The complaint was filed with the Canadian Human Rights Commission in 2007 by the Assembly of First Nations and First Nations Child and Family Caring Society after the Government of Canada failed to implement two evidence informed solutions to address the problem. Since then the Government of Canada has spent over 3 million dollars in its numerous unsuccessful efforts to get the case dismissed.

Alex Neve, Secretary General of Amnesty International Canada, said, "This case is important for everyone concerned about human rights. The outcome will affect both the quality of vitally important services available to First Nations children as well as the integrity of human rights protection in Canada."

Nathalie Des Rosiers, General Counsel for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) says "It is very important that this case move forward, and that issues of discrimination be promptly addressed. What is at stake in this case is the integrity of our human rights regime and its ability to respond meaningfully to allegations of discrimination."

SOURCE: FNCFCFS

For further information:

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Cindy Blackstock, PhD: cblackst@fncaringsociety.com or 613 230-5885 (only available for interviews until 9:00 a.m. on Monday, February 25, 2013)

After that time please contact Paul Champ, legal counsel for the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society at pchamp@champlaw.ca

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