

## **Petition – REDUCING THE RATE OF STILL BIRTHS IN CANADA**

Members are invited to review this information and are encouraged to sign this petition directed to the Government of Canada calling for efforts to address and reduce the rate of stillbirths in Canada. Please also share it among your networks.

Nadine Belzille created BabyKicks (<https://www.facebook.com/BabyKicks.ca>) in honour of her daughter, stillborn in September 2012 at 38 weeks of pregnancy. BabyKicks.ca's mission is to inform parents and health care professionals about the importance of a baby's movements during the 3rd trimester of pregnancy and therefore reduce the number of stillbirths in Canada. The current petition to the Government of Canada inscribes itself within that mission.

**An electronic petition to the Government of Canada has been authorized by Steven MacKinnon, Liberal MP (Gatineau) for Nadine Belzille and is open to all for signatures.**

<https://petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-2467>

*Upon signing (a straight forward process) you will receive an email asking you to confirm your participation.*

***The MCW has submitted an update on an NCWC policy calling on the government to establish a Canadian Child's Commissioner, -which would be in accordance with the UN declaration that Canada has signed. If in place, such a petition would not be so urgently needed.***

**Details of the petition:** The petition asks the Government of Canada to put in place:

- a national committee to study the issue of stillbirths in Canada as a public health concern in order to make recommendations to reduce stillbirths;
- a national awareness campaign, similar to the one against SIDS, to inform pregnant women of the risks of stillbirth and the significance of fetal movements in the 3rd trimester of pregnancy.

### **Facts About Stillbirths in Canada:**

- Every year in Canada, more than 3,000 babies die in their mother's womb. In many cases, the mother will have experienced a decrease in her baby's movements in the preceding days.
- Stillbirths are 16 times more prevalent than SIDS deaths (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome)
- Every day, there are 8.4 stillbirths in Canada.
- It is estimated that for each stillbirth, there are another 99 births that narrowly avoided ending in death.

### **Stillbirths Can Be Prevented:**

Recent international research demonstrates that up to 30% of stillbirths are preventable.

It is important to distinguish between preventable deaths caused by lack of oxygen before, during or just after birth, from those deaths that are not preventable caused, for example, by congenital abnormalities or great prematurity.

In Australia and Scotland, between 11% and 27% of stillbirths were due to congenital abnormalities.

The 2016 Report on Perinatal Mortality in New Zealand showed that 53% of deaths due to lack of oxygen were potentially preventable.

Canada's stillbirth rate of 3.1 per 1000 births has not significantly improved in over 20 years, countries such as the UK and the Netherlands have taken action and reduced the number of stillbirths in their country.

The UK's 'Saving Babies Lives' program, put in place by the equivalent of Health Canada, contributed to a 20% decrease of stillbirths in maternity units where it was deployed.

The 2011 Scottish Government's implementation of a 4-year program for maternity and neonatal care saw a 19.5% reduction in stillbirths between 2012 and 2015. A new 5-year plan is in effect since 2017.

· The Netherlands have reduced their stillbirth rate by 6.8% a year between 2000 and 2015 with the implementation of a program aimed at improving women's health and pregnancy care. Their stillbirth rate now stands at 1.8 per 1000 births.

In 2018, an Australian Senate Committee studied the issue of stillbirths and made numerous recommendations to the government in order to reduce the incidence of stillbirth in the country. The Government of Australia has since developed the 'Safer Baby Bundle', a package of education and awareness measures designed to reduce rates of stillbirth. In addition, the government is developing a National Stillbirth Action and Implementation Plan that covers strategies for reducing stillbirth and improving support for bereaved families.

According to the World Health Organization, the countries with the lowest stillbirth rates are Iceland (1.3), Denmark (1.7), Finland (1.8) and the Netherlands (1.8). Canada's stillbirth rate of 3.1 is higher than that of Australia (2.7), the United Kingdom (2.9) and the United States (3.0).

Maria Peluso, VP Government Affairs