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Attention Assignment Editors/Crime Reporters:

Partnership Keeps 3 Million Canadian School Children Safer from Internet Dangers

WINNIPEG, Feb. 12 /CNW/ - Nearly 3 million Canadian school children will be safer on the Internet thanks to a unique partnership between provincial governments and the Canadian Centre for Child Protection.

Today, in recognition of International Safer Internet Day, nearly 3 million Internet safety brochures to address specific issues for children ages 8-9, 10-12 and 13-15, will be distributed throughout school systems by provincial departments during the month of February. This effort will result in children, parents and caregivers becoming better educated and more aware of the risks that exist and the best ways to address them.

"We need to send a strong message to parents that they need to pay attention to the very serious threats their children face online," said Rosalind Prober, Co-Founder of Beyond Borders Inc, a volunteer organization which advances the rights of children to be free from abuse and exploitation and Canadian affiliate of ECPAT International. "The distribution of this type of information by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection plays an important role in the education of our kids, both at home and in school," said Prober.

"Through reports to Cybertip.ca from the public and our work with student advisory groups, we have learned that children as young as 8 years old are being exposed to sexually explicit material on the Internet," said Lianna McDonald, Executive Director of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection. "Partnering with various provincial governments and private sector partners allows us to reach millions of Canadian school age children and provide their parents with tools to help them manage these risks."

In addition to exposure to sexually explicit material, children are also at risk of being targeted through more sophisticated online techniques. For example, Cybertip.ca has received hundreds of reports relating to children 10-12 years old engaging in multi-player gaming. Adults use avatars to communicate with the children and establish relationships in these comfortable environments. This makes children more likely to provide information that increases their risk of being harmed.

The brochures that are being distributed as part of Safer Internet Day help parents to understand the specific risks for their child's age and provide relevant suggestions for keeping their child safe from victimization.

For more information, visit www.protectchildren.ca.

Background:

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection is a national, charitable organization dedicated to the personal safety of all children. With roots in community child protection for more than two decades, the Centre was established to provide national intervention and prevention activities. Key programs include Cybertip.ca, which has received nearly 25,000 reports from Canadians, and Kids in the Know, which is being delivered in schools across Canada. The Centre is proudly supported by the Government of Canada, Shaw, Honeywell, TELUS and Bell.

Each year Safer Internet Day is internationally recognized on the second Tuesday of February to promote Internet safety for children around the world. The primary purpose is to educate parents about their children's online interests and encourage them to speak about ways to stay safe. Approximately 50 countries participate in recognizing and promoting Safer Internet Day and dedicate time to raise awareness of online safety issues. This year Safer Internet Day is on February 12th.

For further information: Communications Coordinator,
communications@protectchildren.ca, (204) 945-1866

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR CHILD PROTECTION - More on this organization



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