

10 Steps for Children: Speak Up for Children during the 2019 Election

Children are not allowed to vote. Everyone can ask questions about children's policies to ensure they are not ignored. The Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children (CCRC) invites you to ask candidates in your riding about any of the following **10 Steps for Children**. These were sent to all party leaders in June for consideration in their party platforms. (letter on CCRC website)

Introduction

2019 is the 30th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a time to reflect on progress for children in Canada and globally. Children are doing better in countries that implement the Convention. Canada lags behind comparable countries. Using the Convention to integrate policies for children would lead to better outcomes for children, which is important for Canada's future economic and social well-being, as well as for children's rights.

Question: What will you do to be a champion for children's rights in parliament?

10 Steps for Children in Canada

The following policies would support healthy development for all Canada's children:

- **Annual targets for reducing child poverty.**

Annual targets for reducing child poverty have been effective in other countries. The serious impacts of poverty during childhood warrant more ambitious and integrated actions that include both household income support and community services for children in need.

Question: Will you propose ambitious annual targets to reduce child poverty in Canada, as a next step in Canada's national poverty reduction strategy?

- **Equitable access to affordable early childhood programs and care**

Early childhood is a critical period for developing the full potential of children. Canada spends less on early childhood than other countries. Investing in equitable access to high quality child development programs during the early years will benefit families and the economy.

Question: What will your party invest in early childhood development and child care?

- **National plan of action to prevent all forms of violence against children.**

Continuing high rates of violence against girls and boys in Canada are not acceptable. The most effective approach is a coordinated plan to address all forms of violence.

Question: Will you advocate for a national plan of action to end all forms of violence against children in Canada?

- **Access to affordable, nutritious food for children.**

1.15 million, or 1 out of 6 children, grow up without adequate nutritious food. This should be a high priority for the emerging national food security plan.

Question: What will you do to make food security for children a top priority?

- **Access to community-based mental health and preventive health services**

Research shows the benefits of preventive health programs and early attention to mental health issues; yet they are low priorities in government health funding decisions.

Question: What will you do to increase the focus on preventive health policy and mental health support services for young people in health care spending?

Governing well for children requires changes in the way decisions are made:

- **Child Rights Impact Assessments (CRIAs) for every policy that affects children**

Knowing the impacts for children before adopting a policy leads to better policy decisions. CRIA is a tool to make better decisions for children.

Question: Will you insist on knowing impacts for children before making decisions?

- **Consider impacts for children in decisions about the environment**

Children will be the most impacted by current decisions on environmental protection but they have no voice in making those decisions. Children's right to a healthy environment needs to be a high priority in all decision-making processes for the environment.

Question: How will you ensure impacts for young people are given priority in decisions that affect the environment?

- **Equitable treatment of First Nations, Metis, Inuit and other vulnerable groups.**

Annual reporting and monitoring of children's rights draws attention to vulnerable groups early enough to prevent the destructive impacts of intended or unintended discrimination.

Question: Will you insist on annual reports on outcomes for children that include monitoring progress for vulnerable groups?

- **Children's Commission with an effective complaint process**

Outcome measures and a complaint process would make all levels of government work better for children and prevent children from falling through the cracks of fragmented public policies.

Question: Will you champion the establishment of an effective complaint process for children when their rights are violated?

- **All children learn about their rights through curricula and government websites.**

Research shows that children and parents who know about children's rights and how to exercise them are better able to support the healthy development of their children. 30 years after ratification, most children in Canada do not know about children's rights.

Question: What will you do to ensure all children in Canada learn about children's rights?