



## **10 Steps for Children:** Children's Policy in Election Platforms

The Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children (CCRC) sent the following letter to each of the leaders of federal political parties for consideration in their platforms for the upcoming election.

June 10, 2019

Re: Children's Policy in Your Election Platform

Decisions by the next parliament will have significant impacts on the ability of children to develop their full potential. The Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children (CCRC), which promotes children's rights across Canada, would like to know what policies for children will be included in your party platform for the next election.

2019 is the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a time to reflect on progress for children in Canada and globally. Implementation of the Convention in Canada lags behind comparable countries; children are doing better in countries who implement the Convention more consistently. Research in Canada also shows that a more integrated and comprehensive approach to children's policy, using the Convention as a framework, 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.

We look forward to hearing what you propose for Canada's children and we would welcome an opportunity for further discussion on how children's rights can be realized more effectively in Canada. To foster discussion, we have identified 10 practical steps that Canada could take to strengthen specific policies and make systemic improvements for Canada's children.

### **10 Steps for Children in Canada**

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

- **Annual targets for reducing child poverty.**  
The Federal Poverty Reduction Strategy provides a useful framework. 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.
- **Equitable access to affordable early childhood programs and care**  
Early childhood is a critical period for developing the full potential of children, which should be at the center of public policy. Canada spends less on early childhood than other

countries. Investing in equitable access to high quality child development programs during the early years, within the Multilateral Framework for Early Learning and Child Care, will benefit families, communities, and Canada's economy.

- **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. Rights-based tools, such as regular monitoring and youth participation ensure better results for tax dollars.
- **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.
- **Access to community-based mental health and preventive health services**  
Research shows the benefits of preventive health programs for children and early attention to mental health issues; yet they are low priorities in government health funding decisions. Health investments based on evidence and outcome indicators would produce better results for the resources that all levels of government spend on children's health.

Governing well for children requires change 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 integrate policies across departments and jurisdictions, identify gaps, and maximize results.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.



- **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, all children in Canada need to know their rights.

Thank you for giving this your consideration. We look forward to hearing from you with regard to what policies for children you will be including in your party platform. We would be happy to provide more information or engage in more detailed discussion of ways that implementing children's rights could make Canada work better for children.

Sincerely,

Kathy Vandergrift, Chair of the Board  
Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children