



Children and the 2011 Federal Election

Canadians under 18 cannot vote, but federal policies affect their lives. They represent one quarter of Canada's population. There is a lot of talk about families in this election, but not all family policies have the same impact for children. The Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children hopes you will use your voice and vote to support the rights of children in Canada. Consider the following facts and ask about the impact of proposed policies for all children in Canada.

Treat all children fairly

- After taxes, children in higher income households benefit more from the Child Tax Credit and the Universal Child Care Benefit than children in low-income households.
- 70% of the funds under the children's fitness tax credit went to taxpayers earning over \$50,000. Funding for community recreation programs for all children is reduced.
- In 2009 Canada's Chief Public Health Officer named the widening gap in living conditions between children in high-income households and children in low-income households as a top priority public health issue.

Question: *What specific steps will you take to ensure equitable treatment for all children?*

Give children living in poverty a chance

- About 600,000 children live in poverty. 38% of foodbank users are children. Foodbank use reached its highest level in 2010, indicating that the economic recovery is not benefiting all children in Canada.
- Governments that set targets to reduce child poverty make gains, compared to little progress in Canada in 20 years.
- All parties on a House of Commons committee recommended a national poverty reduction strategy; the government response to the committee report indicated that current policies are adequate.

Question: *Will you give top priority to a poverty reduction strategy that sets measurable targets and specific steps to reduce child poverty in Canada?*

End discrimination that leaves some children behind

- The Auditor General documented that funding for Aboriginal child welfare is less than funding for non-Aboriginal children in similar circumstances. Instead of resolving the issue, federal government lawyers blocked a complaint by Aboriginal child-serving agencies to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on technical grounds.
- Children on some reserves have no school and lack access to clean water.
- Only 10% of Aboriginal children off-reserve have access to Aboriginal Head Start programming.
- In 2003 Canada was asked by the UN Committee on the Rights of Children to end discrimination in education, health care, and other essential services for children with disabilities, children in recent immigrant families, aboriginal children, and children in remote locations. Canada's official report in 2009 does not respond to this 2003 recommendation or a similar 2007 Senate report recommendation (See CCRC website for reports).

Question: *What specific steps will you take to end discrimination that leaves some children behind in Canada?*

Take effective steps to stop violence and prevent youth crime

- More young people are victims of violence than perpetrators of it. Youth crime rates are down.
- Canada still has one of the highest rates of youth in prison. Proposed changes in Bill C-4 would increase the use of detention and imprisonment for young people.
- A national roundtable on youth justice identified what works to reduce youth crime and recommended expansion of effective youth programs, rather than changing the law. Mental health services are a high priority.

Question: Will you make helping young people in trouble a priority instead of jailing them? Will you support a national strategy to prevent violence against young people?

Give all young children a good start in life

- Canada spends less than comparable countries on early childhood in general (OECD report) and less on early childhood care and education (OECD and UNICEF reports).
- Over 70% of mothers of young children are in the labour force. There are only child care spaces for 20%. High fees make quality care and preschool education unaffordable for many families.

Question: What will you do to ensure there are realistic options for the development of every young child?

Be accountable to children

- A Senate report and UN reports document big gaps in fulfillment of children's rights in Canada.
- The people we elect on May 2 will negotiate a new Social Union Agreement, which includes funding for children's services, as well as health care. The impact for children needs careful attention.

Question: Will you support making the Convention on the Rights of Children part of Canadian law and appointing a National Advocate for Children to promote and protect children's rights in Canada?

Prepared by the **Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children**
www.rightsofchildren.ca

