

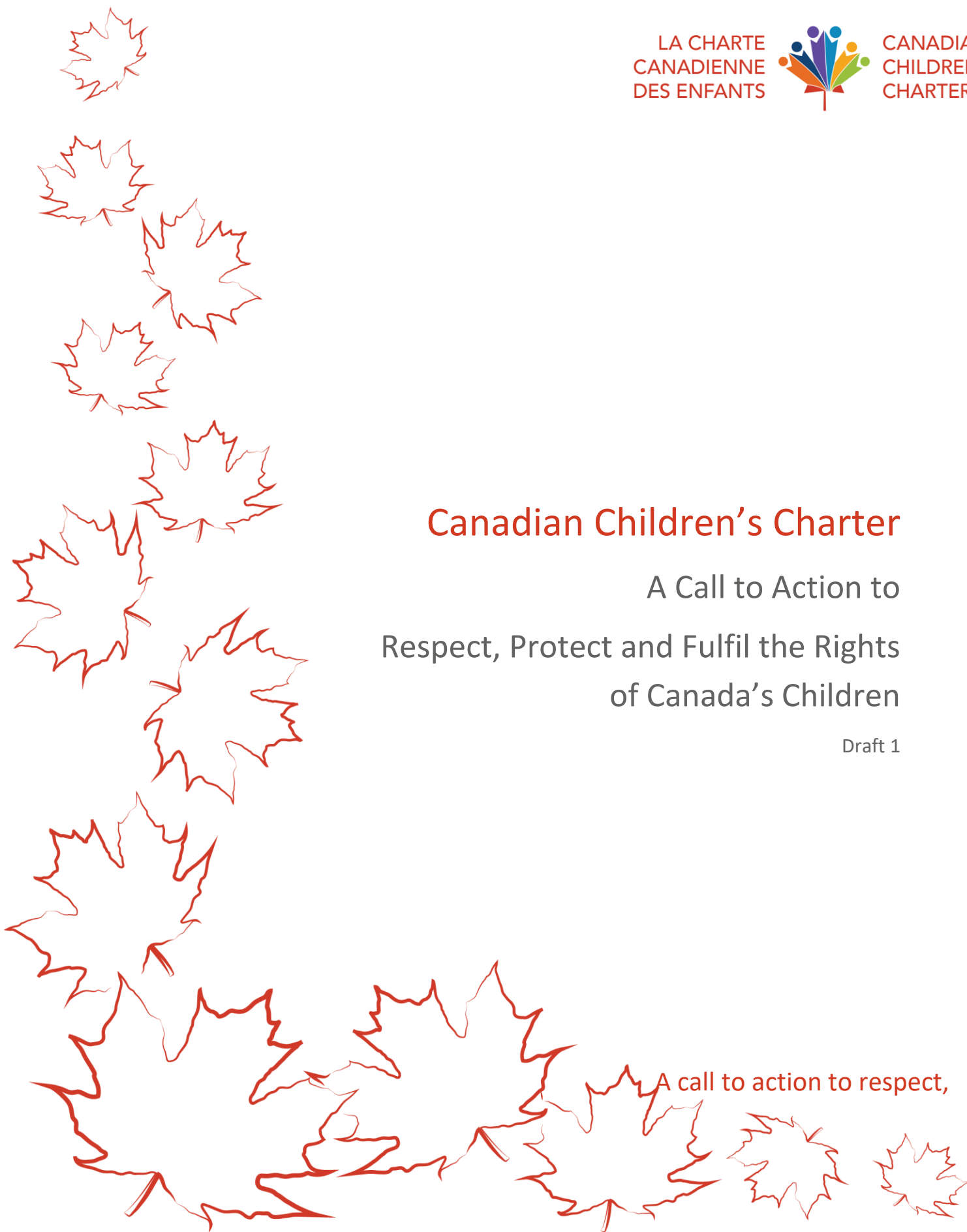


Canadian Children's Charter

A Call to Action to Respect, Protect and Fulfil the Rights of Canada's Children

Draft 1

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protect and fulfill the rights
of Canada's children

DRAFT

The Canadian Children's Charter was created with input from hundreds of children and youth from across the country who contributed their ideas through online forums and a survey, and drafted by the child/youth and adult participants in the National Summit that took place in Ottawa, November 20-22, 2017. A report on the outcomes of the online consultation and summit will be available by November 30th, 2017, at www.childrenfirstcanada.com

Further consultation on the draft will take place in the coming months, with a particular focus on consulting indigenous peoples and organizations and national child/youth serving organizations. The aim is to complete the Canadian Children's Charter prior to Canada's appearance before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in the summer of 2018.

THE VISION OF THE CANADIAN CHILDREN'S CHARTER

While Canada is one of the most prosperous and democratic countries in the world, the wellbeing of Canada's children lags far behind. Currently Canada is ranked 25th out of 41 affluent nations, according to UNICEF's child wellbeing report card. Canada's future begins with children, and we must take urgent action to invest in our youngest citizens.

The vision of the Canadian Children's Charter is to raise public awareness and mobilize action on the part of every Canadian to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of children. Together, we can make Canada the best place in the world for kids to grow up.

THE RIGHTS OF CANADA'S CHILDREN

Every child has rights, and every Canadian has a role to play in fulfilling the rights of children.

In 1991, Canada ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), binding our country under international law to respect, protect and fulfill the rights of children to survival, development, protection and participation. Canada must report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2018 on the status of Canada's children, and the efforts taken to fulfill its obligations under the CRC. This moment in time presents all Canadians with the unique opportunity to reflect on progress made towards the fulfillment of children's rights, to identify the gaps that remain, and to create a plan of action to ensure every child in Canada can achieve their full potential.

In addition to the duties enshrined in the CRC, Canada has also committed to the following laws and policies to protect the rights of children:

- Optional Protocols 1 and 2 (Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography)
- A Canada Fit for Children: a National Plan of Action
- Children: the Silenced Citizens – a Report by the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights
- Jordan's Principle
- House of Commons All-Party Resolution to End Child Poverty by the Year 2000

Canada has also ratified or acceded to specific treaties that recognize the unique rights of specific peoples:

- Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Persons
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees


There is no shortage of promises and legally binding duties towards Canada's children. What we need now is concrete, urgent action to fulfill Canada's obligations to respect, protect and fulfill the rights of children.


THE CASE FOR ACTION

In 2016, Children First Canada issued a landmark report, [The Kids Are Not Alright](#). In partnership with the Angus Reid Institute and several national charities, children's hospitals and research centres, we uncovered startling results.

The report painted an alarming picture about the state of childhood in Canada and busted several myths about what it is like to grow up in our country.

- **Nearly 1/5** Canadian children live in poverty
- **Nearly 1/5** teens seriously considered suicide in the past year
- **1/3** Canadians have experienced some form of child abuse
- **Over 1/3** people requiring food assistance are children
- **Over 1/3** Canadian children are obese or overweight
- **One** child dies every nine hours from preventable injuries.

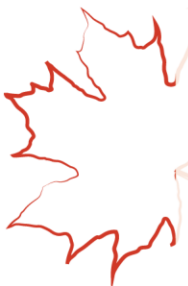
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- UNICEF ranks Canada as one of the most unequal places to raise a child, placing **26th out of 35** wealthy nations for “fairness for children”.




These statistics represent millions of children in Canada whose lives are diminished each day by problems we know how to solve. The time has come to move from making promises to children, to delivering with concrete action.

There are countless reports outlining the concrete steps that Canada must take to measurably improve the lives of children in our country. In particular, we wish to highlight the following:

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- [The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s Concluding Observations to Canada](#)
 - [A Canada Fit for Children \(2004, 2015\)](#)
 - [UNICEF Canada’s Report Cards on Child Wellbeing](#)
 - [Rights in Principle, Rights in Practice: Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
 - [Young Decision Makers Report](#)
 - [Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action](#)
 - [Canadian Human Rights Tribunal Decision and Non-Compliance Orders](#)
 - [Are We Doing Enough? A report by the Canadian Paediatric Society](#)
 - [Campaign 2000 Report Cards on Child Poverty in Canada](#)



Canadians strongly support action to improve the lives of all of our children. The results of the [Kids Are Not Alright](#) survey revealed that:

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- Three-quarters of Canadians (73 per cent of adults and 77 per cent of children) say that young people in Canada need more support to safeguard their wellbeing and fulfill their potential;
 - Children ranked bullying, mental health and better support for those living in poverty as their top concerns, and adults named mental health and prevention of child abuse as the two areas in most need of action.
 - Nearly 9 in 10 Canadians say that investing in children will pay off and save the need for additional expenditures in the future.



IT TAKES A NATION



Achieving the vision of the Canadian Children's Charter will require concerted effort on the part of all Canadians, at an individual and societal level, including: all levels of government; child and youth serving organizations such as charities, children's hospitals, and schools; the private sector; parents and other caregivers; and children themselves.



Efforts to improve the lives of children must occur within a nation-to-nation framework, respecting the rights of indigenous peoples to self-determination and the enjoyment of their unique rights as enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Several First Nations have already taken steps to create their own Children's Charters, and these plans must be considered as a part of a wider effort across Canada to improve the lives of children.

Together, all Canadians must all rise to the collective challenge to invest in Canada's children, and take urgent action to close the gaps.

A CALL TO ACTION

A Call to Action

We imagine a Canada where every child can achieve their full potential, and where the rights of every child are fully realized.

We call upon all Canadians to rise to the collective challenge to invest in Canada's children and take urgent action to close the gaps.


We need to be able to realize our full rights and all Canadians need to support children in advocating for their rights. Every adult can be an ally.

We note the following issues that require urgent action so that every child in Canada can thrive.

1. Child Participation & Youth Engagement

We envision a Canada where children's voices are empowered and children are valued as equal citizens, decision makers and leaders in Canadian society.

We call for the following:

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- Children have a clear voice and opportunity to lead in their schools, families, governments and communities
 - Governments at all levels have processes and structures in place to gather input from children of all ages
 - Communities to share responsibility for equitable involvement of all children and youth

2. High quality health care

We envision a Canada where children are able to access high quality health care no matter where they live or when they need it.

We call for the following:

- Children have access to the right health care providers where they live (in person or online) when they need it
- Health care is provided free from stigma and discrimination
- Children are able to access all recommended medical treatment regardless of cost and location

3. Accessible Mental Health Services

We envision a Canada where children are able to access the mental health education, services and treatment they need, when they need it, without facing stigma.

We call for the following:

- Health care providers, educators, parents and other supportive adults have access to training that improves their knowledge about mental health
- Mental health literacy is part of all school curriculum, starting in pre-school
- Mental health services and treatment are accessible to every child in Canada, whenever and wherever they need it, including in-person and online



4. End discrimination & exclusion

We envision a future where every child's differences are valued, accepted and respected, and every child is empowered to celebrate who they are.

We call for the following:

- Education in schools, health care and other systems that teaches an inclusive view of history, our current society, and the value of diversity in society
- Programs that teach children how to advocate for equality issues
- All systems in society foster and live the values of inclusion through processes, systems, resources, and infrastructure, to make inclusion sustainable
- Governments should identify measurable outcomes for inclusion and diversity, and report on them
- Create inclusive community forums that enable diverse communities to have conversations that create action to address discrimination and exclusion



5. A stable and secure future

We envision a Canada where every child has a clear and attainable future.

We call for the following:

- Address the social determinants of health and poverty that undermine many current efforts
- Families and communities where children are supported by and connected to many people in their lives
- The policies of government and the private sector affect children in all spheres of life, including social, economic, environmental, and financial. Consider children in all policy making and measure the impacts on children.
- Every action taken for the benefit of Canadians needs to consider the best interests of children
- Children have a right to participate in the decisions affecting them

6. Quality education

We envision an education system where schools are a truly safe space for all and offer quality education regardless of location.

We call for the following:

- Children should be able to go to school in their home community and receive a high quality education.
- More accessible support and resources in every school focusing on action regarding discrimination and exclusion
- Educators and students have access to support that lessens the stress and pressure young people feel related to education
- Better support for career and transition planning for young people
- Accessible education and post-secondary education with adequate financial support
- Access to French or English education no matter location
- Support for First Nations, Inuit and Metis schools and communities to provide instruction in the language of their community
- Create more community-based learning environments



- More inclusive approaches that support different learning styles

7. End Bullying

We envision a country where young people and adults know how to foster healthy relationships and how to address bullying when it happens.

We call for the following:

- Educators need further training and education to address bullying so that all schools provide consistent approaches
- All people involved in bullying receive support – bullies, victims and bystanders
- There needs to be adequate resources to support victims of bullying

8. End Violence & Abuse

We envision a country where children grow up free from all forms of violence and abuse, and are protected when needed.

We call for the following:

- Adults have access to education and training about parenting, violence and abuse and how to respond
- Young people have education and awareness about abuse to reduce stigma and to know how to find support
- Adults and organizations that support children need to fulfill their duty to protect children from violence and abuse, including but not limited to systems of education, child welfare, and health care.
- Youth have a right to having their voice in their care.
- All Canadians have access to ongoing education against all forms of violence, abuse and harassment



9. Respond to rapidly changing technology

We envision a Canada where we are ready for technology that will constantly and rapidly change throughout our lifetimes.

We call for the following:

- Broadband access for all so that we all benefit from education and employment opportunities
- Support for young people and adults to learn how to safely use social media and technology positively
- Responsive legal frameworks that protect young people online

10. Reduced substance use

We envision a Canada where substance use is lowered and stigma is reduced so children and families that need help will seek help.

We call for the following:

- Programs that address the social determinants of substance use and misuse
- Accessible and effective prevention and rehabilitation programs because prevention is better than enforcement
- Youth-led programming such as peer support
- A commitment to harm reduction in all substance use education and programs that contributes to ending stigma
- Better education for parents and educators about substance use so that children learn about it at school and at home and not through social media

11. Celebrate cultural & language diversity

We envision a Canada where children, their families and communities can express their culture and language in an accepting and inclusive environment.

We call for the following:

- Media that represents the diversity of Canadian people and communities
- Opportunities for experiential learning amongst cultures and communities

- Promotion of multiculturalism as a Canadian value

12. **Achieve Reconciliation with Canada's First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples**

We envision a Canada where everyone understands their role in reconciliation and takes action accordingly.

We call for the following:

- A true commitment to nation-to-nation relationships.
- Schools, communities, governments and systems all identify the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action for which they are responsible and undertake these.
- Increased education in schools, communities and systems about Indigenous history, language, culture and current treaties.
- Recognition that diverse First Nations, Metis and Inuit communities need equitable support and solutions as diverse as they are

