

Thank you again for supporting the event on July 23, 2020 for the Young Canadians' Parliament (YCP) hosted by Children First Canada (CFC)!

There will be one digital forum each month until November 2020. The objectives of the digital forums are to educate children about their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), to educate them on their options to take action, advise on the impacts of COVID-19, and to provide a platform to exercise their rights, including having direct access to parliamentarians and decision makers to share their recommendations and perspective.

Each month, this program is co-designed with CFC Youth Ambassadors and Youth Advisory Council members to contribute to the vision and outcomes of the YCP:

- A coordinated response by federal government and civil society organizations that responds to the priorities of children and youth impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Public policies intended to improve the lives of children will be reflective of the interests and concerns of young Canadians.
- Improved outcomes for the health and wellbeing of all 8 million children in Canada.
- Increased political will to address the urgent threats to childhood.
- A coherent policy framework to improve children's wellbeing.

# RIGHT TO HEALTH, WATER, FOOD, AND CLEAN ENVIRONMENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS: WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUTH SAID

This topic relates to two rights under the UNCRC:

## Article 12: Respect for the Views of the Child

Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life.

## Article 24: Environment

Children have the right to the best health care possible, clean water to drink, healthy food and a clean and safe environment to live in. All adults and children should have information about how to stay safe and healthy.

We can see that there are many interlinkages between issues of equity, social justice and support, and the environment. We know that while we live in a public health crisis, this has also deepened the increased impacts of environmental challenges and equitable access to resources. We want policies and programs that can consider these issues in integrated and intersectional ways. Through our discussions, we want to amplify current government and community action. Below you will find an overview of what we said about both issues, including priority issues and recommendations to government.

### More than anything else, we want you to know:

- There are a lot of environmental issues that we are concerned about:
  - Climate change and increasing number of climate events, such as hurricanes, floods and tornadoes.
  - Ocean health and plastics in the ocean
  - Protection of habitats where animals live
  - Deforestation
  - Access to green technology and clean energy

## There have been some opportunities during COVID such as:

- We can change things quickly when we need to. We note that the Canadian response to the Covid-19 pandemic has proven that government can respond effectively to priority issues in short timeframes. It's a matter of priorities; it should not take so long to address something critical like climate change and the environment.

## How we would like decision makers to address our rights under Article 24:

- We know government continues fossil fuel subsidies, but we think we should focus on supporting renewable energy options, such as solar, hydro, tidal and wind energy.
- We need to encourage green technology.
- We need to support increased active and collective transportation. Government should also make regulations to create environmental change, such as banning plastic bags.
- We are concerned that in every single province, environmental law and regulations are being proposed or changed, but with a lack of public engagement and consultation during this pandemic period.
- The struggle for equity is intimately tied to addressing environmental issues:
  - We all need to address environmental racism, such as the Boat Harbour situation in Pictou Landing First Nation, Nova Scotia
  - Climate justice is social justice
  - Marginalized communities are most affected by climate change
- The current structure of administrative boards and councils does not represent youth or folks from marginalized communities. As gatekeepers, they do not necessarily reflect diverse perspectives or know them.
- We want climate education, racial justice and Indigenous history all included in what we learn in school.
- Protect habitats and endangered wildlife and fauna, while respecting Indigenous peoples and communities' right to access these resources.
- Address air pollution; sometimes we cannot safely go outside to play.
- Government should recognize the impact of environmental challenges and intersectional oppression on our mental health and provide universal coverage for mental health services for all of us.
- We want to be engaged. We need leadership opportunities and need to be heard in environmental decision-making. We want youth voices to be heard?
- In our communities, the impact of climate events is very stressful on our families. It can result in damages to homes and schools, disruptions to normal life, and enormous financial costs that create family stress.
- We want more support for local, sustainable and equitable access to food production, through measures like Community Supported Agriculture boxes and mobile fresh food buses.

# FOOD, CLOTHING, AND SAFE HOME BREAKOUT SESSIONS: WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUTH SAID

This topic relates to two rights under the UNCRC:

## Article 12: Respect for the Views of the Child

Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life.

## Article 27: Food, Clothing and Safe Home

Children have the right to food, clothing, a safe place to live and to have their basic needs met. They should not be disadvantaged so that they can't do many of the things other kids can do.

### More than anything else, we want you to know:

There are a lot of important supports that our friends, families and we need, including:

- Food banks
- Shelters
- Breakfast clubs at school

### There have been some opportunities during COVID such as:

- Communities have done a good job of coming together and supporting each other, such as teachers and school employees cooking for community members during the pandemic.

### How we would like decision makers to address our rights under Article 27:

- We do not always know what other children and families need, and we do not always know about our rights. Those of us who need the most help don't know our rights or that we might need help or supports.
- We want to be taught about our rights and human rights. Government can use traditional commercials, social media and posters, as well as curriculum to teach these rights to us.
- The effects of school closures and lack of collective activities has meant that many of us who are vulnerable have been made more vulnerable, and we are experiencing lack access to educational opportunities, food security and a safe home. Government should prioritize supporting those of us who

are most vulnerable in pandemic recovery and focus on providing quality early childhood education and care.

- We want government to support communities so that peers and other volunteers can support each other.
- We want to know what government thinks about establishing a universal basic income, beyond the Covid-19 period.
- We need the government to ensure families have economic opportunity through supports like CERB, child bonus and also through employment creation. Government also needs to support community organizations that provide services to families and communities in need, such as shelters, food banks, and special efforts to overcome current public health measures, such as social distancing.
- We all— parents and children - need support to access to education and so that we can return to or join the workforce better prepared and skilled.

## Conclusion

We live in a complex ecosystem and our environment at home is as important and linked to our broader environment. To be safe at home and have access to basic needs in food and other resources, we need to protect our environment. We have a lot to say about how to support our peers, families, and communities, and we want to be engaged.

# THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS



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**Gail O'Brien**



This event would not have been possible without the partnership of:



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