

A Decade of Defending the Rights of 8 Million Children in Canada

Impact Report 2015–2025



Honouring Our Commitment to Truth and Reconciliation

Children First Canada is a national organization with staff, volunteers, and youth participants from coast to coast to coast. Our head office is located in Calgary, Alberta, on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut'ina, the Stoney Nakoda Nations (Chiniki, Bearspaw, Goodstoney), the Otipemisiwak Métis Government (Districts 5 and 6), and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta.

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge that we live, work, and play on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

We affirm the spirit that we are all Treaty people, honouring the sovereignty, self-determination, and enduring relationships of Indigenous Nations.

At Children First Canada, we believe that learning about the traditional territories of Indigenous peoples is just one step on the path toward reconciliation. An essential part of our mission is to engage children and youth in learning about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action, inspiring them to take meaningful, youth-led actions and encouraging them to hold our government accountable.

As a movement committed to making Canada the best place for children to grow up, we recognize the need for collective efforts to acknowledge and address the injustices – both past and present – that Indigenous peoples face. We thank you for joining us on this important journey of reconciliation, working together alongside children and youth to create a more just and equitable future for all.





Empowering Young People as the Leaders of Today and Tomorrow

There are 8 million kids in Canada, and they all share one thing in common - their rights. And all adults, including parents, educators, health care professionals, business leaders, and policymakers, have a duty to uphold those rights.

WHO WE ARE

Children First Canada (CFC) is a national charity with a bold vision: to create a country where every child can grow up free from the barriers that prevent them from achieving their full potential. We defend their most basic rights to childhood, while empowering them to lead and inspire change. As the only national charity uniquely focused on the rights of children in Canada, we conduct cutting-edge research, equip young Canadians as leaders and changemakers, and unite our country around a shared vision to make this the best place in the world for kids to grow up.

OUR VISION

Together, we can make Canada the best place in the world for kids to grow up.®



Stop. Listen. Act.

Ten years ago, we raised our hands for change – standing up for the rights of children and demanding that their voices be heard. A raised hand is the universal gesture to stop, listen, and act. And it's a powerful and emotive symbol that cannot be ignored.

It's the hand raised by a child, yearning to be seen and demanding attention for their needs, hopes, and dreams.

It's the hand raised to offer support – a lifeline to children facing injustice, hardship, or neglect.

It's the hand raised in solidarity with those who share the same struggles, knowing they are not alone.

For us at Children First Canada, the raised hand is a reminder of the work still ahead. And the change we continue to fight for, hand in hand with courageous children and youth. Every child deserves a chance to thrive, to be heard, and to have their rights defended.

When we raise our hands together, we can transform children's lives and create a country where their rights are realized.



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Message From Our Founder & CEO

As I reflect on the past decade, I am filled with a deep sense of pride and gratitude. When I founded Children First Canada in 2015, I was driven by a simple yet powerful vision – **to make Canada the best place in the world for kids to grow up**. Countless Canadians shared this vision, too. They cared deeply about the state of our nation's children, and they rallied together to launch a movement. Together, we created an organization to fight for children's rights, empower youth to become leaders, and ensure their voices are heard in every conversation that shapes their future.



We've confronted the threats facing kids head-on, making incredible strides through advocacy, youth engagement, and research. We've captured the hearts and minds of Canadians through campaigns like **Raising Canada** and **#codePINK**, raising awareness and mobilizing action. But I am most proud of our impact on youth leadership through our **Youth Advisory Council**, the **Young Canadians' Parliament**, and the **Being, Belonging, Becoming** program in schools.

CFC's journey, however, has not been without challenges. As a new national charity, we have faced the hurdles of establishing a movement – especially in the face of rising threats to children's lives, all while navigating the broader decline in charitable giving and volunteerism. But despite these challenges, we have persevered for one main reason: **every child deserves a champion**.

Thank you for being a part of this incredible journey. CFC's success is the result of the collective commitment of our supporters along the way. We have accomplished great things together, but the work is far from finished. The future starts now, and we need your support more than ever.

Join us as we begin the next chapter, and let's raise our hands together for the next 10 years.

With heartfelt thanks,

Sara Austin
Founder & CEO, Children First Canada

Message From Our Chair of the Board

As chair of the board of Children First Canada, it has been an incredible honour to be part of this movement from the very beginning. I played a key role in launching our first public campaign in 2016, with the *The Kids Are Not Alright* report and speaker series and have watched in awe as CFC has grown into a powerful voice for children and youth across the country.



Throughout this journey, I have been deeply passionate about amplifying the voices of children – ensuring that their needs, dreams, and ideas are not only heard but acted upon. Watching the transformation of young Canadians as they take charge and advocate for their future has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

This past year, it has been especially meaningful for me to share this journey with my son, who has actively participated in the Young Canadians' Parliament and advocated for a National School Food Program. He and I had the opportunity to join the prime minister as he announced a \$1 billion investment in nourishing students across Canada – an experience that was truly inspiring for both of us. It is a reminder of the powerful impact youth can have when they are given a platform to lead.

As we celebrate our 10th anniversary, I am filled with gratitude for Children First Canada; for Sara Austin, its founder and CEO, who works tirelessly to advocate for kids across this great country; and for the young people who have stood with us over the past decade as we try to make Canada a better place for kids to grow up.

I am also filled with excitement about the next chapter in our story. The movement we've built together is just getting started, and the future holds so much promise for the young people we serve. I look forward to continuing this important work, with each of you, as we push forward to build a Canada where every child can thrive.

With gratitude,

Andrea Chrysanthou

Chair of the Board, Children First Canada

Message From Our Youth Advisory Council

As the chair and vice-chair of the Youth Advisory Council, we are both incredibly proud to be part of Children First Canada's journey, celebrating its 10th anniversary and reflecting on the remarkable impact that children and youth have had over the years.



Roman: I joined Children First Canada at the age of 10, living in Calgary, as part of the team that helped create the Canadian Children's Charter, taking part in events in Ottawa, Toronto, and Calgary, involving thousands of kids from coast to coast to coast. Since then, I've had the privilege of contributing to many of CFC's programs and initiatives, including the Young Canadians' Parliament, National Child Day, and the Raising Canada research.



As I graduate from high school this year, I can't help but feel proud of what we've accomplished. Watching my peers and me grow from kids with big ideas into young leaders has been truly inspiring. We've created change, not just for us but for future generations of kids. But we also know there's much more to do. We won't stop until our vision is realized – Canada becomes the best place for kids to grow up.



Rayn: My journey with CFC began when I was eight years old, reporting as an election correspondent, where I had the chance to interview federal leaders and report on key announcements. Since then, I've been involved in so many amazing opportunities, from joining the Youth Advisory Council to taking part in the Future is NOW! Awards event committee and jury, and contributing to the Young Canadians' Parliament.



Now, at 12 years old, living in Toronto, I'm more passionate than ever about creating lasting change for children and youth in Canada. I see the power in young people – our voices, our ideas, and our ability to shape the future. I'm proud of what we've achieved, but I'm determined to see Canada do more to ensure every child has the opportunities they deserve.

Together, we've seen firsthand how youth can have an immense impact, but we also feel a deep sense of urgency to see our mission fulfilled. Canada can be a beacon of hope for children, but only if we continue to act and fight for the changes that matter most. We believe in a future where every child is empowered, heard, and given the tools to succeed. And we know, with your continued support, we can make this future a reality.

Thank you to everyone who has been a part of this incredible movement. The next chapter is just beginning, and we can't wait to see what more we can accomplish together.

With gratitude,

Roman Wolfli
Chair, Youth Advisory Council
Age 18, Calgary

Rayn Asaria
Vice-Chair, Youth Advisory Council
Age 12, Toronto

Our Impact

Over the past 10 years, Children First Canada has worked with inspiring children, youth, and partners to defend children's rights, empower young people, drive policy change, raise awareness about the issues facing 8 million kids in Canada, and call for urgent action.



DID YOU KNOW?

Over the past decade, **Children First Canada has become a go-to source for national media**, responding to numerous requests from major outlets like CBC, CTV, Global News, CP24, *The Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, and many others. Our expertise on a wide range of issues affecting children and youth has made us a trusted voice on critical topics impacting the well-being of young Canadians.

Through our media relations, CFC has helped bring critical conversations into the public eye, driving awareness and action on the pressing issues affecting children and youth in Canada.



Rising rates of **food insecurity**



The **impact of COVID-19** on children



The impact of **climate emergencies** on children



Youth **mental health** crisis



Talking to kids about **global crises**



RESEARCH, ADVOCACY, AND EMPOWERMENT BY THE NUMBERS

110,000
children and youth
have benefited from
our **National Child**
Day events.

7
Raising Canada
reports

a yearly resource that
provides **in-depth**
research and insights
about the state of
childhood in Canada.

Up to
300
members
join the **Young**
Canadians' Parliament
each year.

Over
5,000
youth
have engaged in our
Being, Belonging,
Becoming program.

\$1B
federal
commitment
to invest in a **National**
School Food Program,
a policy win driven by
youth advocacy with
CFC's support.

13
courageous youth
filed a **historic court challenge**
to lower the voting age in
Canada, with the support of
CFC and other partners.

74,366,269
media
impressions
from our **#codePINK**
campaign during the
COVID-19 pandemic.

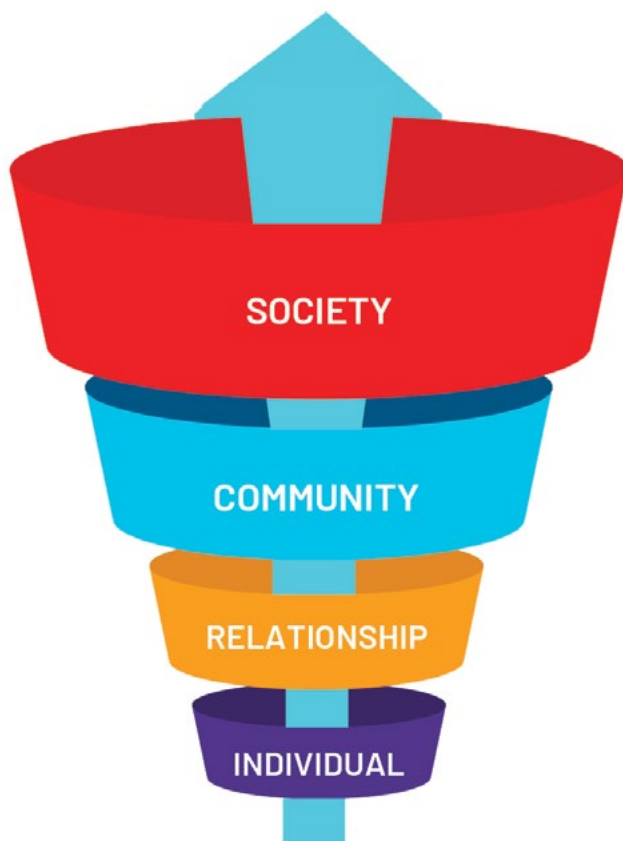
\$500M
invested
by the Government of Canada
in a new **Youth Mental Health**
Fund for community-based
needs across Canada – thanks
to advocacy by the Young
Canadians' Parliament and our
Council of Champions.

Our Theory of Change

At Children First Canada, we have a bold and ambitious vision to make Canada the best place in the world for children to grow up!

Through a powerful combination of **research**, **advocacy**, and **empowerment**, we are sparking meaningful change at every level – individuals, relationships, communities, and society at large.

Our holistic and proactive approach ensures that we catch children before they fall, equipping them with the confidence and agency to thrive. We are nurturing resilient, compassionate, and courageous youth who not only lead social change but also become engaged citizens committed to shaping a better future for all.



Society

Research, advocacy, and youth empowerment lead to systemic change. Using a collective impact approach, we engage youth and other experts in influencing policies, shaping public discourse, and creating a safer, more equitable, and prosperous society for all Canadians.

Community

Through their leadership, youth contribute to local initiatives that promote sustainability, inclusion, and thriving communities. Their actions strengthen civic engagement and encourage others to take part in creating positive change.

Relationship

Youth foster meaningful connections with peers, educators, and mentors. These relationships serve as a foundation for support, collaboration, and shared goals, enabling collective leadership and problem-solving.

Individual

Youth take leadership by building resilience, addressing critical needs, and engaging in practical civic actions. They are equipped with resources to drive change and take responsibility for shaping their futures.



“The question is not whether we can afford to invest in every child; it is whether we can afford not to.”

-Marian Wright Edelman

OUR JOURNEY

Celebrating a Decade of Impact

From its founding in 2015, Children First Canada was built on a bold vision to ensure every child in Canada can grow up free from the barriers that limit their potential. CFC's first decade has been defined by major advocacy efforts, strategic partnerships, and an unwavering commitment to children's rights.

2015

CFC is established with a bold vision: Together, we can make Canada the best place in the world for kids to grow up.®

2017

CFC consults thousands of young people to establish the **Canadian Children's Charter** – a plan by children and for children.

2019

CFC rallies Canadians to celebrate **National Child Day** and mark the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

2016

The Kids Are Not Alright, CFC's landmark report and event series, sheds light on shocking realities facing Canadian children.

2018

In partnership with the O'Brien Institute for Public Health, CFC releases the first ***Raising Canada*** report on the top 10 threats to Canadian children.

CFC launches its **Youth Advisory Council and Youth Engagement Strategy**.

2020

The **Young Canadians' Parliament** is established to empower children and youth to advocate for their rights at the highest levels of government.

CFC's Council of Champions and the ***Raising Canada*** report sound the alarm on the impact of COVID-19 and school closures on children's health, escalating the top 10 threats to children.



2021

CFC launches the **#codePINK campaign**, a coordinated national response to lift the burden of COVID-19 on children.

With the support of CFC and other partners, 13 young Canadians file a **court challenge to lower the federal voting age**.

The Government of Canada commits to CFC's vision of making Canada the best place for kids to grow up by placing it at the heart of the federal cabinet ministers' mandates.

2025

Champions for Children event series marks CFC's 10th anniversary and honours 10 iconic Canadians who continue to stand up for the rights of children.

The **SDG Accelerator Program** launches as a national initiative to engage youth in addressing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2023

The **Being, Belonging, Becoming program** expands to three major cities and impacts 3,300 youth.

2022

CFC partners with Mitacs and the University of Calgary to conduct in-depth research about the **top 10 threats** to children and youth in Canada and the inequitable impacts of COVID-19 on kids.

2024

CFC launches **The Future is NOW! Awards**, recognizing Canada's top 10 U18 changemakers.



2015

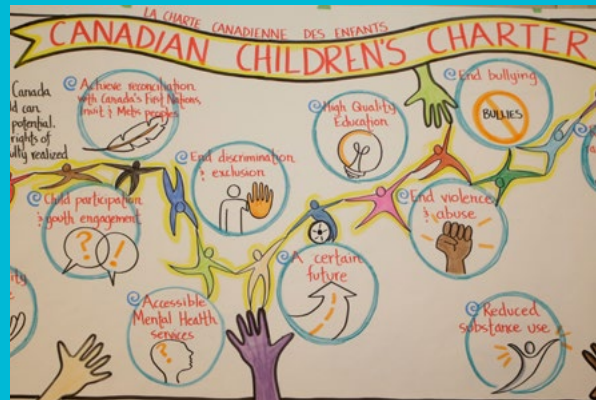
Children First Canada Launches!

In 2015, founder and CEO Sara Austin partnered with leading experts to establish CFC with a bold vision to make Canada the best place in the world for kids to grow up. CFC formed an advisory board and consulted with children's hospitals, charities, research institutes, and major corporations. One thing could not be ignored: children in Canada were suffering at an alarming rate. And Canadians needed to take action. CFC was created as a solution to the gap in advocacy for children and youth in Canada.

2016

The Kids Are Not Alright

CFC launched its first report and event series campaign, *The Kids Are Not Alright*, a year after its inception. The report revealed disturbing statistics to help bust the myths about childhood in Canada. In partnership with the Economic Club of Canada, the event series brought these issues to the forefront, fostering important discussions among youth ambassadors, policymakers, business leaders, and the public. This marked the beginning of a national movement to achieve CFC's vision and do better for children in Canada.



2017

Canadian Children's Charter

To mark Canada's 150th anniversary and in response to the urgent needs identified through consultations with children, CFC led the creation of the Canadian Children's Charter. This comprehensive plan – by children and for children – was designed to ensure children's voices are heard and their needs addressed. The charter received national support and became a foundational tool for child advocacy.



RAISING CANADA®



2018

Raising Canada

Launched in 2018, the *Raising Canada* report has become CFC's flagship research initiative that assesses the state of the nation's children. The annual report identifies the top 10 threats facing Canadian children, including mental health challenges, poverty, online harms, racism, and the impacts of climate change. It serves as a critical tool for raising awareness, influencing policy, and driving action to improve the lives of children. *Raising Canada* continues to be a cornerstone of CFC's advocacy work, providing essential data and insights to policymakers, community leaders, and the public to ensure that children's rights are prioritized in Canada.

Youth Advisory Council and Youth Engagement Strategy

The formation of CFC's Youth Advisory Council and Youth Engagement Strategy provided youth with a direct platform to voice their concerns, offer solutions, and actively shape CFC's work. This strategy laid the groundwork for youth leadership and ensured that CFC's initiatives reflected the perspectives and priorities of young people across Canada.

**NATIONAL
CHILD
DAY**



2019

National Child Day

In 2019, CFC worked with key leaders and partners to expand its National Child Day (NCD) celebrations and host a summit in the nation's capital. More than 200 young people and adults from across the country gathered in Ottawa to celebrate NCD and mark the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The following year, CFC launched a digital NCD campaign, #8MillionReasons, to promote the rights of every child during the pandemic. Today, the annual NCD celebrations mobilize up to 40,000 students from the early years to high school to stand up for their rights and hear from iconic Canadians like Raffi, Commander Chris Hadfield, and Simu Lui.



RAISING CANADA
2020



TOP 10

THREATS TO
CHILDHOOD
IN CANADA

AND THE IMPACT OF COVID-19



LES ENFANTS
D'ABORD
CANADA



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
O'Brien Institute for Public Health



Children's
HOSPITAL

2020

Young Canadians' Parliament

The Young Canadians' Parliament (YCP) was launched in 2020 to educate young people about their rights and Canada's democratic system. It also empowers children and youth to advocate for their rights and participate in policymaking. This innovative program enables youth from across Canada to engage directly with members of Parliament and the Senate, speak on issues affecting them, and influence national policies in real time. Members of the YCP have also gone on to secure prestigious internships with government ministers and even the prime minister.

Raising Canada Report on the Impact of COVID-19

With the support of CFC's Council of Champions, the *Raising Canada 2020* report sounded the alarm on the top 10 threats facing children in Canada and the effects of COVID-19. One-third of children in Canada did not enjoy a safe and healthy childhood – even though Canada is one of the richest countries in the world. And suicide had become the leading cause of death among children aged 10 to 14. The impact of COVID-19 and school closures on children's health made these harsh realities even worse. CFC urged the federal government to invest in the lives of children and called for Canadians to help raise awareness.



2021

The #codePINK Campaign

COVID-19 led to devastating effects on the mental and physical health of children across Canada. The pandemic put a spotlight on the challenges kids were already facing: Kids were – and still are – in crisis. In 2021, CFC launched the #codePINK campaign, which advocated for increased mental health resources, reopening schools, and investments in children's health care. Declaring “code pink”, a term used for pediatric emergencies, CFC and its partners urged government leaders to take immediate action to address the crisis facing kids. CFC also worked with Statistics Canada to create data tools and resources to measure the impacts of school closures and offer actionable insights to mitigate the negative effects on children's education and well-being.

Lowering the Voting Age

In 2021, a group of Canadian children and youth filed an application at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice to challenge the voting age in Canada. They argued that the *Canada Elections Act*, which prevents citizens under the age of 18 from voting in federal elections, is in violation of Sections 3 and 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and is therefore unconstitutional. CFC supported the 13 youth litigants in their historic court challenge, which included a member of CFC's Youth Advisory Council, Amelia Penney-Crocker.

Federal Commitments to Make Canada the Best Place to Grow Up!

During the height of the pandemic, the federal government released mandate letters for cabinet ministers that included significant commitments to improve the lives of children. Many of the commitments responded directly to the concerns highlighted in the *Raising Canada 2020* report about the top 10 threats to childhood in Canada and the impact of COVID-19. Notably, the mandate letters included CFC's call to ensure the voices and needs of children are represented in the government's agenda and working to make Canada the best place to grow up.



**BEING
BELONGING
BECOMING**

**CHILDREN FIRST
CANADA**



**TOP 10
THREATS
TO CHILDHOOD
IN CANADA**

2022

Research on the Top 10 Threats to Childhood in Canada

The top 10 threats to childhood in Canada, as identified in CFC's annual *Raising Canada* report, shed light on the harsh realities facing children and youth across the country. In 2022, CFC partnered with Mitacs and the University of Calgary to conduct further research about these negative impacts and to address them. The researchers aimed to better understand the top 10 threats and their implications, the inequitable impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to explore the recommendations of stakeholders, parents, and young people for policymakers and professionals moving forward.

2023

Being, Belonging, Becoming

Following a two-year pilot project with 500 students in Ottawa, CFC launched Being, Belonging, Becoming as an innovative leadership program to improve the mental health and resilience of youth and buffer them from adversity. In 2023/2024, the program expanded to include Calgary, Toronto, and Vancouver and engaged 3,300 youth - more than double the original target of 1,590. Empowering youth to lead community change and social justice advocacy, the program continues to expand across the country through a new virtual curriculum and learning hub.

2024

The Future is NOW! Awards

Organized by CFC, in consultation with the Youth Advisory Council, The Future is NOW! Awards held its inaugural ceremony in Toronto in 2024. The awards celebrate and amplify the impact of extraordinary young leaders across Canada. Ten inspirational youth are chosen for their leadership in defending children's rights and tackling urgent issues like mental health, racism and discrimination, climate change, reconciliation, and bullying. The winners are showcased at a national summit with other young changemakers and attend a star-studded ceremony. Along with their awards, the youth receive year-round mentorship, coaching, and funding to expand their social impact.



2025

Champions for Children Events

CFC marks its 10th anniversary with a series of events in Toronto, Calgary, and Ottawa. Through the Champions for Children Awards, CFC will honour 10 iconic Canadians who have made significant contributions to defending children's rights and improving the well-being of children and youth across the country. The awards and events highlight both individuals and organizations that have shown exceptional leadership, commitment, and support for CFC's mission over the past decade.

The SDG Accelerator Program

This dynamic, new national initiative empowers children and youth across Canada to tackle the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through hands-on action and leadership. This free program provides the knowledge, skills, and mentorship needed for youth to design and launch impactful community projects aligned with Canada's commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Through engaging workshops and real-world learning, participants are equipped to lead youth-driven initiatives that spark meaningful change and drive a better future for all.

Defending the Rights of Canada's Youngest Citizens

Canada's future – both socially and economically – depends on the investments we make in children and youth today. But upholding children's rights has been on a downward trend in Canada. And the future of children and youth is in jeopardy.

Canada is among the world's top 10 wealthiest countries, yet it ranks 66th on the global Kids Rights Index due to high rates of child poverty, abuse, and poor physical and mental health.

The statistics concerning Canadian children and youth are shocking:

- **1 in 5 children live in poverty** and go to school hungry, despite their right to nutritious food.
- **2 in 3 children will experience abuse** before their 15th birthday, even though they have the right to grow up free from violence.
- **Suicide is now the second leading cause of death** for children aged 10 to 14.

FEDERAL INVESTMENTS

The federal government's Budget 2024 made landmark commitments to invest in Canada's greatest national resource – children and youth. CFC led the government's nationwide consultations with a diverse group of young people, and members of the Young Canadians' Parliament engaged with cabinet ministers to help shape the federal budget commitments.

National School Food Program

Budget 2024 included a commitment of \$1 billion over five years for a new National School Food Program. This will help ensure that 400,000 more children receive healthy, nutritious meals each day.

Youth Mental Health Fund

Budget 2024 included \$500 million to establish a new Youth Mental Health Fund to help community organizations provide more care.

Big Wins for Kids in Canada

Over the past decade, we have partnered with children and youth from across the country to ensure their voices are heard at the highest levels of government. And our hard work – together – has paid off.

Today, we are celebrating big wins for children and youth in Canada. Although more needs to be done to ensure every child can thrive, new investments and bills tabled in Parliament highlight significant progress in improving the lives of young Canadians.



BILLS TABLED IN PARLIAMENT

CFC's Youth Advisory Council and the Young Canadians' Parliament play an active role in advocating for the rights of children and influencing national policies. Their efforts have already led to significant national investments and legislative changes on the youth mental health crisis, tackling child hunger, and combating online harms like cyberbullying.

The following child-focused bills exemplify the power of young voices and how they are helping to pave the way for a more prosperous and equitable future.

Child Protection Online

Online Harms Act (Bill C-63)

An Act to enact the Protection of Minors in the Digital Age Act and to amend the Criminal Code (Bill C-412)

These bills, tabled by the Government and the Opposition, aim to protect children from online harms, including cyberbullying, exploitation, and exposure to inappropriate content. They also ensure children have safe digital spaces for learning, socializing, and growing. Safeguarding children's rights to privacy and data protection, these bills provide stronger protections against online abuse and harmful practices.

Lowering the Voting Age

An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Regulation Adapting the Canada Elections Act for the Purposes of a Referendum (voting age) (Bill S-201)

An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (voting age) (Bill C-210)

By lowering the voting age to 16, these bills aim to empower youth to have a say in decisions that directly impact their lives. Countries like Austria, Scotland, Brazil, and Ecuador have already lowered the voting age to 16. In addition, all federal political parties in Canada already allow members as young as 14 to vote. Lowering the voting age in Canada would align with these policies and give young people a stronger voice in shaping the nation's future.

National Strategy for Children and Youth

An Act respecting a national strategy for children and youth in Canada (Bill S-282)

Canada does not have a clear vision or objectives for securing the well-being of children and youth. The last national strategy for children was written in 2004. This bill would establish a coordinated and comprehensive national approach to address the unique challenges that young Canadians face today.

Ending Corporal Punishment

An Act to amend the Criminal Code (Corinne's Quest and the protection of children) (Bill C-273)

An Act to repeal section 43 of the Criminal Code (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 6) (Bill S-251)

These bills seek to end all forms of violence against children in Canada by amending the *Criminal Code* and protecting children from physical punishment. The proposed laws align with international human rights standards and affirm that children deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, free from physical harm.

CHILDREN DESERVE TO THRIVE

As a new government forms following the 2025 federal election, CFC continues to urge parliamentarians to work together for the well-being of all 8 million children in Canada. Reintroducing these bills must be a top priority for the new session of Parliament. In times of crisis, strong leadership demands we protect those most vulnerable.

We cannot build a strong and sovereign nation while neglecting the rights of its youngest citizens.



10 Champions for Children

Children First Canada is proud to announce the recipients of the **Champions for Children Award** in celebration of our 10th anniversary.

The awards celebrate the dedication of these incredible individuals and organizations who have made a profound impact on children and youth in Canada through their leadership in philanthropy, social justice, business, and public service. Their collective commitment to our mission has created opportunities, driven change, and given a voice to millions of children.



**The Hon. Rona Ambrose,
Deputy Chairwoman, TD Securities**

"Thanks to Rona Ambrose, I've been able to grow as an advocate and find confidence in my voice. Seeing Rona champion children's rights at the highest levels has motivated me to aim higher in my own advocacy work. Her dedication to empowering young girls has created ripples that extend far beyond programs, creating a generation of confident young women who know their rights and their worth. Rona's work reminds me daily that when we invest in children, we invest in our future."

-Arielle, 23



**Dr. Cindy Blackstock,
Executive Director, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society**

"Thanks to Dr. Cindy Blackstock, I'm inspired to raise my voice and grow stronger as a young leader, working towards reconciliation, the protection of Indigenous language and culture, and saving our planet for future generations. Her work has made a huge difference, not only in my life, but in the lives of so many kids across Canada. From her courage, I found the strength to continue fighting for children's rights to make the world a better place for everyone."

-Addy, 12

Darren Entwistle, CEO, TELUS

"Thanks to Mr. Darren Entwistle for his involvement in promoting children's rights because in these times of instability around the world, people like Darren make us believe that there are still good people who are willing to make a lasting difference for people in general and for kids in particular."

-Zachary, 11



Mary Jo Haddad, Founding Chair of Children First Canada, Past President & CEO of SickKids, Corporate Director of TELUS, Chancellor of the University of Windsor

"I want to thank Mary Jo Haddad for everything she has done for kids and youth. She has been an amazing leader and has helped so many of us. Personally, she inspired me a lot in her role as the first chair of Children First Canada, along with being on the boards of TELUS and TD, and president of the Hospital for Sick Children, which is a place I really admire. Thank you, Mary Jo, for always standing up for children and making Canada a better country for all of us kids!"

-Rayn, 12



Wes Hall, Chairman and Founder of the BlackNorth Initiative and WeShall Investments Inc, Chancellor of the University of Toronto

"Wes Hall is a fearless champion for equity. His unwavering leadership continues to break barriers, uplift Black youth, and build a brighter, more inclusive future for generations to come."

-Tami, 18



Alex Munter, CEO, Canadian Medical Association, Past CEO of CHEO, Council of Champions of Children First Canada

"Thanks to Alex's work, young people everywhere have been able to access resources for all aspects of health – the children of today have felt changes that the children of tomorrow will see as the standard."

-Josephine, 16



Gail O'Brien, Founding Director and Past Chair of Children First Canada, Strategic Advisory Board of O'Brien Institute of Public Health, Director Emeritus of SickKids Foundation and the National Arts Centre

"Gail O'Brien has made a profound impact on children and youth across Canada, and her dedication to improving the lives of young people has inspired me to believe that creating a better country for children and youth is not only an achievable goal, but an imminent reality."

-Roman, 18



Katie Taylor, Chair, SickKids Board of Trustees, Chancellor of York University, Past Chair of RBC and SickKids Foundation

"Katie is an exceptional leader who centres children and youth's voices in her advocacy to improve children's mental and physical well-being."

-Hannah, 25



Benjie Thomas, CEO, KPMG Canada

"Mr. Thomas, thank you for proving that leadership is measured less by quarterly reports and more by generational outcomes. You've set a standard worth matching. Now, together, let's finish what we've started and help make Canada the best place in the world for kids to grow up."

-Toney, 25



Karen Young, CEO, United Way of Calgary and Area

"Because of Karen's support, youth are able to access resources and initiatives to prosper and thrive. Through her contributions, Karen has made the world a better place for many generations to come."

-Marigold, 15



In Memoriam:

The Hon. Landon Pearson, O.C., the "Children's Senator" and Founder of the Landon Pearson Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights, Carleton University

"Landon Pearson's unwavering commitment to children's rights has been a guiding light for many young Canadians. Her work paved the way for young people like me to create the Canadian Children's Charter, establish the Young Canadians' Parliament, go on to work on Parliament Hill, pursue a masters in human rights and dedicate my life to advocating for children. Landon's legacy lives on in every child's voice that is heard, and in the change we continue to build together."

-Reem, 25

The Next Chapter of Our Mission

Over the past decade, we have seen an exponential rise in the challenges facing children and youth in Canada. But we have also witnessed a relentless passion and courageous commitment among young leaders to stand up for the rights of all 8 million kids in Canada. They are launching initiatives, shaping policies, and urging companies to align more closely with their values.

In the next chapter of our mission, CFC is committed to finding bold and innovative ways to equip and empower youth to be the leaders of today and tomorrow. Our new strategic plan will include the exploration of two exciting initiatives: the Leaders Lab and the What Works for Kids Centre. These new opportunities deeply align with our core strengths in research, policy influence, public awareness, and youth empowerment. For CFC, they also represent a bold step towards our mission of making Canada the best place in the world for kids to grow up.

The Leaders Lab

A dynamic digital hub aimed at educating, inspiring, and empowering the next generation of leaders.

VISION:

Cultivate rugged and resilient youth who will drive social change, advocate for children's rights, and engage as responsible citizens.

The Leaders Lab platform will offer a practical civic curriculum for students that integrates social-emotional learning, leadership, resilience, innovation, and entrepreneurship – all grounded in children's rights. Rather than waiting for kids to be in crisis, the platform is designed to catch kids before they fall; it builds them up with a strong sense of agency over their lives and the world around them.

Through gamified, project-based learning, students and teachers will tackle real-world issues such as climate change, poverty, racism, bullying, and mental health. The curriculum also encourages them to take action in their communities through volunteerism, philanthropy, and civic engagement. If adopted nationwide, the Leaders Lab would create a unique opportunity to empower more than 5 million students in Canada.

What Works for Kids Centre

A national hub for research, innovation, and youth leadership that delivers evidence-based and scalable solutions to improve the lives of children in Canada.

VISION:

To identify, test, and promote policies and programs that will measurably improve the well-being of children across Canada.

The What Works for Kids Centre will serve as a hub for research, policy innovation, and collaboration. It will provide actionable insights, develop practical tools, and support the implementation of effective approaches to improve the well-being of kids in Canada. By funding and supporting innovative, evidence-based solutions, the centre can identify and scale breakthrough approaches that measurably improve children's lives.

The centre will take an inclusive and collaborative approach to creating solutions that directly improve the lives of children. By involving children and youth as co-creators of these solutions, this new initiative reflects a decade of CFC's impact – while advancing new approaches to address the challenges facing children today.

Investing in Children First Canada

At Children First Canada, we ensure every dollar donated makes the greatest possible impact. Our resources are focused on creating meaningful change and empowering the next generation.

Over the past 10 years, we have prioritized programs and research that directly benefit children and youth across Canada. The remaining budget is dedicated to organizational effectiveness, which includes necessary investments in areas such as audit and accounting, IT systems, and human resources. This structure allows us to operate efficiently, while maintaining the highest standards of accountability.

When you invest in Children First Canada, you are directly contributing to transformative programs and research that help build a brighter future for all children in Canada.



“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.”

-Nelson Mandela

THANK YOU!

Our generous sponsors, donors, and partners help make Canada the best place in the world for kids to grow up. Thanks to your support and commitment over the past decade, we are defending the rights of all 8 million kids in Canada.

CHILDREN FIRST CANADA

Cumulative donations over 10 years

\$1 Million +

Government of Canada
Gail O'Brien

\$500,000 - \$1 Million

TD
TELUS

\$100,000 - \$499,000

Canadian Red Cross
The Hospital for Sick Children
(SickKids)
Rogers Birdies for Kids, presented by
Altalink
TELUS Friendly Future Foundation
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Railway Association
Alana Riley
Sherry Schlussel
Andrea Stairs
Lee Stanfield
Truman Insurance
Stacia Vong-Hogeterp

*In-kind donation

Our Leadership

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Founder & CEO, Children First Canada
(ex officio Board Director)

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Owner & Principal, Amplify Communications
Chair, CFC's Board of Directors

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Partner, Gowling WLG (Canada) LLP

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Past Chair, CFC's Youth Advisory Council
Advisor, CFC's Board of Directors

Ayesha Sachedina

Partner, Deloitte

Stacia Vong-Hogeterp

Senior Director, Development and
Community Partnerships, Empowerment Squared

Roman Wolfli, 18

Chair, CFC's Youth Advisory Council
Advisor, CFC's Board of Directors

Youth Advisory Council

Roman Wolfli, 18, Calgary, Alta.

Chair, Youth Advisory Council

Rayn Asaria, 12, Toronto, Ont.

Krish Budhrani, 18, Calgary, Alta.

Lucy Diaz, 18, Port Coquitlam, B.C.

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Henry Stewart, 17, Calgary, Alta.

Lily YangLiu, 16, White Rock, B.C.

Council of Champions

The Council of Champions includes Canada's leading voices for children's rights and well-being. This diverse group of leaders from across the country speaks as a united voice for children in Canada, working together to urgently drive action through public awareness-raising, public policy influence, research, and public engagement. The council also provides guidance on the strategic direction and priorities for Children First Canada, and the members act as champions for specific projects and activities that promote the well-being of children in Canada.

Dr. Ronald Cohn

President & CEO,
The Hospital for Sick
Children (SickKids)

Irwin Elman

Former Ontario Child
Advocate, Global Strategic
Champion, Until The Last
Child

Dr. Vera Etches

President & CEO, Children's
Hospital of Eastern Ontario
(CHEO)

Debbie Field

Coordinator, Coalition for
Healthy School Food, and
Associate Member, Centre
for Studies in Food Security,
Toronto Metropolitan
University

Pamela Fuselli

MSc, President & CEO,
Parachute

Mary Jo Haddad

Founding Chair of Children
First Canada, Past President
& CEO of SickKids,
Corporate Director of
TELUS, Chancellor of the
University of Windsor

Julia Hanigsberg

CEO, Holland Bloorview
Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

Krista Jangaard

CEO, IWK Health Centre

Dr. Shimi Kang

Founder of Dolphin Kids:
Future-Ready Leaders,
CEO of Spark, and Host
of Mental Wealth with
Dr. Shimi Kang (YouTube)

Alex Munter

CEO, Canadian Medical
Association, Past CEO
of CHEO

Rhiannon Rosalind

CEO & Founder, Conscious
Economics

Dr. Holden Sheffield

Chief of Pediatrics and
General Pediatrician,
Qikiqtani General Hospital,
Iqaluit, Nunavut

Lori Spadorcia

Senior Vice-President,
Public Affairs, Partnerships
and Chief Strategy Officer,
CAMH

Bruce Squires

President, McMaster
Children's Hospital

Katie Taylor

Chair, SickKids Board
of Trustees, Chancellor
of York University, Past
Chair of RBC and SickKids
Foundation

Dr. Michael Ungar

Canada Research Chair
in Child, Family and
Community Resilience

Sommer Wedlock

CEO, Canadian Children's
Literacy Foundation

Leah Zille

Executive Director,
The Treehouse (Vancouver
Child and Youth Advocacy
Centre)

Take Action

Every child deserves to reach their full potential. By supporting programs like the **Young Canadians' Parliament** and **Being, Belonging, Becoming**, you help ensure young voices are heard and their leadership is recognized. Together, we can defend the rights of 8 million children in Canada and empower them to create a brighter future for us all.

Raise your hands. The next 10 years start now!

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

DONATE & SPONSOR

Your financial support enables us to expand our reach, maximize impact, and create meaningful change in the lives of children and youth across Canada.

VOLUNTEER

Give your time and skills to support our events or programs, either in person or virtually, and help us make a difference in the lives of young Canadians.


ADVOCATE

Raise your voice for children's rights and help us create lasting change by raising awareness of children's needs and advocating for municipal, provincial, and federal leaders to put children at the heart of their agendas and budgets.

HELP US REIMAGINE A CANADA
WHERE EVERY CHILD CAN THRIVE.

For more information, contact us at
info@childrenfirstcanada.com.









“Every child deserves a champion — an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be.”

-Rita Pierson





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1 (877) 837-2258

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