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# Government of Canada: Engaging Children and Youth in Canada

Presentation for the 22<sup>nd</sup> Pan-American Child Congress

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PROTECTING AND EMPOWERING CANADIANS  
TO IMPROVE THEIR HEALTH



# Context

- Presentation on Canada's engagement and consultation with children and youth over the past 30 years
  - Representative from the Government of Canada
  - Representative of a youth-led, youth driven non-governmental organization, the Students Commission of Canada
- The Government of Canada's presentation will focus on the history and some actions of our child/youth engagement since signing and ratifying the UNCRC.
- The Students' Commission of Canada's presentation will focus on the work they undertake with children and youth in Canada.

# Children's Rights 1990-2019

- In 1990, Canada signed onto the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and then ratified it on December 13, 1991.
  - In order to highlight the importance of this document on the lives of children and youth, when the Government of Canada ratified the Convention they invited children and youth from across the country to come and witness this historic occasion.
- In 2019, Canada submitted its 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> report on its implementation of the UNCRC to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.
  - This report contains an annex with the views and opinions of Canadian children and youth.
  - This children and youth led/organized project involved virtual discussions, surveys and in person events with children and youth from coast to coast to coast and remote areas of Canada.

# Engagement with Children and Youth

- Listening to the voices and opinions of vulnerable populations is important and is a vital part of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- In Canada, we have been moving towards a more systematic approach of taking the views and opinions of children and youth into consideration in the development and implementation of policies, programs and products.
- Over the past 30 years, Canada's engagement with children and youth has taken various forms on the international and national stage, as well as within the federal government.

## International Engagement with Children and Youth

- Since 2017, Canada has had four representatives on IIN's Child and Adolescents Correspondents Network.
- In 2018, Canadian children and youth representatives joined other children and youth from around the world at the United Nations Day of General Discussion on Protecting and Empowering Children as Human Rights Defenders.
- In 2018, at the 93<sup>rd</sup> Directing Council meeting Canadian children and youth representatives presented videos of their experiences at the Day of General Discussion and messages to the Member States of the IIN.
- In 2019, Canada again has two CORIA representatives. Joshua is representing Canadian children and youth here at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Child Forum.

## National Engagement with Children and Youth (1990-2000)

- In 1992, the Government of Canada developed the “Brighter Futures” action plan.
- In 1993, the Government of Canada launched the Community Action Plan for Children (CAPC), in response to the Brighter Futures action plan, which promotes the health and development of young children and their families facing challenging life circumstances.
- In 1999, the Government of Canada formed the Youth Advisory Committee (later the Youth Action Committee) to give advice about anti-tobacco programs targeted at youth and provide ways to reach a young audience.
- In 2004, the Government of Canada developed a National Plan of Action “A Canada Fit for Children”. The development of this Plan included the voices of Canadian children and youth collected through a number of cross country roundtable discussions.

# National Engagement with Children and Youth (2000-2019)

- In 2016, the Government of Canada launched an open call to recruit Canadian youth for the Prime Minister's Youth Council to provide non-partisan advice on issues of importance to them and to all Canadians.
- Since 2016, a number of federal departments have been creating youth advisory councils to provide input and opinions on a issues related to the Department's mandate.
- In 2019, the Government of Canada organized a Youth Summit with youth participants from across the country. Youth provided input on six priorities areas that they had chosen.
- At the Summit the Government of Canada launched the first National Youth Policy which commits the Government to release a State of Youth Report every four years.

## Conclusion

- In Canada, children and youth voices are getting stronger and are being heard by all parts of society including us in the Federal Government.
- The Government of Canada is taking steps to further advance the concept of engagement with children and youth by:
  - creating youth advisory committees to inform their work
  - observing and implementing best practises from youth serving organizations
  - empowering youth through micro-grants to give them a chance to participate locally in projects in that impact their peers and communities
- The Government of Canada is also studying how to best leverage new technologies to stay current and relatable to youth and children as most of this groups' interaction is done virtually.
- The Government of Canada continues to be committed to engaging children and youth through ways that are meaningful and effective