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July 11, 2023

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister:

**RE: Government of Canada's Response to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's June 23, 2022 Concluding Observations on the Combined 5th and 6th Periodic Reports of Canada**

I write to you in my capacity as President of the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA) to call upon the Government of Canada to develop and make public a detailed Action Plan to effectively implement its many obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The CCCYA is an association of children's Advocates, Representatives and Ombudsman from across Canada who are independent officers of the legislatures in their respective jurisdictions with mandates to promote and protect children's human rights, make recommendations and provide advice to government, and elevate the voices of children and youth. CCCYA members work together to identify areas of mutual concern and address national issues.

The Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (the UN Committee) constitute a roadmap that could prove transformational in improving the lives of Canadian children. June 23, 2023 marked the one-year anniversary of the release of the UN Committee's Concluding Observations to Canada's Combined 5th and 6th Periodic Reports. Many of the recommendations made by the Committee in this document have been longstanding and were carried over from the Concluding Observations released in 2012 – over a decade ago.

For the first time, during this reporting cycle, the Committee identified a number of areas in which urgent measures are required. These include:

- the need for independent monitoring;
- eliminating discrimination of children in marginalized and disadvantaged situations;
- better protection of the right to life, survival, and development, and from abuse and neglect;
- the need for improvements to the circumstances of children deprived of a family environment; and,
- respect for the right of children to an adequate standard of living.

While steps have been taken and improvements have been achieved in several areas, Canada has yet to act in many others, or its progress in these other areas has been stalled.

The CCCYA is encouraged that the UNCRC and the UN Committee's Concluding Observations were on the agenda of the recent meeting of the Forum of Ministers Responsible for Human Rights (FMHR). Youth, as rights holders under the UNCRC, and other stakeholders including the CCCYA and civil society representatives met with federal, provincial, and territorial ministers in advance of the FMHR meeting, calling for action. However, a subsequent government press release described the only action item to come from this meeting on the matter of UNCRC implementation as an agreement by Ministers to "continue sharing best practices to strengthen children's rights in Canada." This is concerning, as the Government remains silent on any commitment to take meaningful action to fulfill, respect, and protect the rights of Canadian children and youth.

The meeting of the FMHR was an opportunity for federal, provincial, and territorial levels of government to make a concrete commitment and plan of action to break down any barriers there may be to full implementation of the UNCRC across jurisdictions. We are concerned that the opportunity to do so has been missed, and this is the core reason for my letter. As powerfully stated by a youth representative who spoke at the FMHR meeting with civil society, "*Too often, meetings lead to nothing. [...] Listening means nothing without action.*"

The Government of Canada, and all levels of government, have had since June 2022 to consider the recommendations of the UN Committee – and much longer for those recommendations carried over from 2012. As a State Party to the UNCRC, Canada is obligated to respect, protect and fulfill the rights of children codified within it. It is the position of the CCCYA that this obligation extends to provincial and territorial governments, not in the least due to the near universality of the UNCRC and the corresponding global recognition of the inherent nature of children's rights.

As the one-year anniversary has now passed since the release of the 2022 Concluding Observations, the CCCYA calls upon the Government of Canada, and all levels of

government, to follow the roadmap set out by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to achieve full implementation of the UNCRC. We call upon Canada to develop and make public a detailed Government Action Plan for doing so by the next National Child Day, November 20, 2023.

Canada could align the creation of this Action Plan with the UN Committee's Concluding Observation #8 to:

Adopt a national strategy that provides a comprehensive implementation framework for the federal, provincial, and territorial levels of government, [...] for the overall realization of the Convention and that will enable the provinces and territories to adopt accordingly their own specific plans and strategies. The Committee also recommends that the State party allocate adequate human, technical and financial resources for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the comprehensive strategy and related provincial and territorial plans.

Foundational work on a national children's strategy has already been conducted by the office of Senator Rosemary Moodie. Canada could engage with this work to inform such an Action Plan. The CCCYA provided a submission on this matter to Senator Moodie (attached) outlining the structural elements that ought to be considered within a national strategy for the implementation of children's rights.

I look forward to receiving your response to this call to action at your earliest convenience. The CCCYA welcomes any opportunity to meet with you or your officials to discuss how these goals can be best achieved for the benefit of all Canadian children and youth.

Sincerely,



Lisa Broda, PhD  
President - Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates  
Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth

cc. The Honourable Karina Gould, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development  
The Honourable Marci Ien, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth  
The Honourable Pablo Rodriguez, Minister of Canadian Heritage  
The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance