

# When you vote, keep our children in mind <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

In a few days, Canadians will choose a new federal government. Please take time before you cast your ballot to learn more about where the candidates and parties stand on child and youth issues.

More than seven million Canadian children are counting on us to take their interests into account when we vote. They are our future.

Yet Canada's major parties all have consistently poor records on addressing the problems of poverty, inadequate services and heartbreaking social disparities that affect far too many of our country's youngest citizens.

Do you know where your candidates or their parties stand on these issues?

Canada's most prominent child and youth advocacy organizations have put together excellent information packages for the 2011 federal election to help you make the right decision on May 2.

Visit the websites of the National Alliance for Children and Youth, UNICEF Canada and B.C.'s First Call for more information on the parties' positions.

That Canada needs to do better is a given. Our country ranks a shameful 37th out of 38 among developed nations in its spending on child care and early-childhood development.

Our country ranks 32nd in the benefits it provides to families. One out of six Canadian children lives in poverty; here in B.C., almost one in three arrive for their first day kindergarten already lagging behind their classmates developmentally.

It's a shocking situation to be dealing with in one of the wealthiest countries in the world. More than 20 years have passed since Canada signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and yet we are still failing to live up to that commitment.

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Look to individual party websites for their positions on children and families, and make it a reason for deciding who will get your vote.

Please vote wisely for those who can't.

Jennifer Charlesworth is executive director of the Federation of Community Social Services of B.C.

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**Region:** Canada <sup>[2]</sup>

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