

# A Voice for Canada's Children

**T**here are more than nine million families with children in Canada. CICH's mandate includes ensuring each of those children has a voice, and that it is heard at all levels of government, by industry, by health care professionals, and by all those who care about the health and well-being of Canada's children. CICH is a coherent voice for our children, working to focus attention and resources on the health care issues that matter most.

## Challenge

More than one million of Canada's children live in poverty. That means more than 20 per cent of children come from families living on less than \$20,000 annually. Children who live in poverty encounter more hurdles to healthy development and are, as a result, at higher risk for a wide range of negative health outcomes. In fact, years of fiscal restraint have resulted in inadequate social and physical environments that are having a negative impact on healthy child development across all income groups. Families and children thrive in neighbourhoods, workplaces, schools and communities where their needs are met. Urgent universal action is needed to improve the situation.

## CICH action and impact

Since its inception, the Institute has been a leader on issues concerning the health and well-being of Canada's children and youth. CICH has initiated and led several coalitions focused on improving the health of our children. Through meetings with senior elected and government representatives at the federal and provincial levels, we strive to ensure the concerns of children's health are a national priority and their voices are heard when policies are formed and decisions are made.

CICH's efforts have led to the creation and enhancement of child-centred legislation, policy and funding. CICH is presently working towards formalizing The Rights of the Child in the Health Care System, a set of best-practice guidelines based on the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child.

CICH translates research into information for parents, caregivers and health professionals on a range of child health issues. The Institute has produced definitive guides on topics from conception through adolescence, ranging from health in pregnancy and breastfeeding to sexual abuse prevention, children's health data, environmental hazards and injury prevention.

As part of our mandate to address the broader determinants of health, CICH partnered with government and other agencies to advocate for the National Longitudinal Study on Children and Youth. This 25-year project monitors the health and well-being of children in Canada, providing a foundation for evidence-based programs. The results have already led to the development of hundreds of community access programs that support socially or economically disadvantaged parents. The Institute also advocated for the National Child Benefit, a taxation



program that supports low-income families by increasing the resources they have for their children. CICH's advocacy efforts have contributed to numerous initiatives that support healthy child development. Results of these efforts are far-reaching, including the extension of parental leave to one year, which encourages parent-child attachment during the critical early years by enabling new parents to remain at home longer, and the Early Child Development Initiative, which led to the creation of community-based child development projects, such as nutrition and parenting programs.