

Dear Esteemed G7 Leaders,

June 15, 2025

As you gather in the beautiful surroundings of Kananaskis, Alberta, we invite you to pause and reflect—not only as global leaders, but as parents, grandparents, caregivers, mentors, and once, as children yourselves. Imagine the children and young people in your lives: your own children, those in your communities, or the child you once were.

The decisions you make this week—on global peace and security, economic stability and growth, technological innovation, and climate change, among others—will shape the world in which these young people live at present, and the one they will inherit in future. As noted by Nelson Mandela, "there can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." Children's lives are not abstract outcomes of your deliberations; they are at the very heart of them.

For this reason, we urge you to consider this: listen, talk with, and hear from, children and young people. Given that adult lives are entangled with them, meaningfully engage children and young people as you consider the decisions you will make on their behalf. This will lead to decisions that are not only more just, but they will also be more effective, more sustainable, and more deeply rooted in young people's lived realities.

We commend your efforts to drive meaningful change. Yet we caution that without attending to the perspectives, realities, and lived experiences of all young people - no matter their gender, race, class, age, sexuality, locality or ability - your vision may fall short of your goals. See and hear all young people as part of your process because excluding or ignoring their perspectives risks overlooking vital insights that could strengthen your decisions and broaden their impact. Children and young people are active citizens, not idly standing by, and their participation presents an opportunity to clear a concrete pathway to creating better, more efficient, change that resonates in social, cultural as well as economic and political ways.

We write to you as members of the Child Rights Academic Network, hosted by the Landon Pearson Centre since 2008. Our network includes researchers, advocates, government officials, policymakers, practitioners, students, legal and medical experts, and professionals across disciplines, all united by a commitment to advancing children's rights. For 17 years, the Centre has worked to foster a culture of respect for children and young people in all their diversity and who live their lives through structures of inequalities arising from the institutions adults create for them. Our work is grounded in the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, focuses on meaningful participation and enables young people to move beyond empty promises of empowerment to substantive change.

Through our child- and youth-led national initiative, *Shaking the Movers*, we have created a platform where all young people can share their lived experiences and insights on the most pressing issues of our time with the guarantee that adults will hear them and take their views into consideration when making decisions on their behalf. Their perspectives guide CRAN's research, shape our programs, and inform our members' advocacy. This rights-respecting approach was championed by our founder, the late Senator Landon Pearson, who dedicated her

life to ensuring that children's participation was not an afterthought, but a foundational principle of democratic decision-making.

Senator Pearson believed—and we echo her conviction—that hearing all young people in ways to inform action is both important and strategic. At a time when the world faces unprecedented challenges and where there is much at stake for both adults and young people, their perspectives as part of adult decision-making processes, are more essential than ever to making informed decisions and building responsive and dynamic actions.

This year, the young *Shaking the Movers* participants spoke to us about building communities of care. They reminded us that care is not only about safety in schools and sports, feelings of belonging with friends and peers, and support from teachers, doctors, coaches, and other adults in their lives—it is about the environments we all inhabit, the sustainability of our planet, and the justice we strive to uphold so that all children and young people can live their lives fully. We invite you to read the culminating reports from the Shaking the Movers workshops at the link below. You will see that the vision of the world they shared with us is bold, inclusive, urgent and hopeful.

We send this message on their behalf and ask that you follow Landon Pearson's example: to model leadership that listens and hears what young people have to say about matters that affect them, that includes their participation in a meaningful way, and that understands and values their lived experiences in a shared humanity.

You have an important opportunity at the G7 Kananaskis to let your decisions reflect not only the wisdom of your expertise but the clarity of children's and young people's insights and experience of their own worlds. We urge you to reach out to all citizens, including children and young people, whose perspectives can contribute to adult decision-making processes that require informed and complex responses in a complicated world.

Let this G7 event be remembered not only for its resolve to improve the conditions of our lives but for its openness to building reciprocal, respectful relationships with children and young people. After all, it is their presence among adult lives, as well as their futures, that are most at stake.

Thank you for your attention, your leadership, and your commitment to creating a more just, inclusive and caring world.

Sincerely,



Virginia Caputo, PhD

Director, Landon Pearson Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights

On behalf of members of the Child Rights Academic Network and the 2024-25 Shaking the Movers Workshop Series Participants

Shaking the Movers 2024-25 participant reports can be found here:

www.carleton.ca/landonpearsoncentre/shakingthemovers