

Date

Name

MP (Riding)

Dear _____,

Approximately 40 per cent of the Aboriginal population in Canada is under the age of 16 – a growing proportion of the child population. They fall far behind other Canadian children on almost every indicator of health and well-being. Infant mortality rates are two to three times higher in First Nations and Inuit communities, and immunization rates are lower than among other children in Canada. Aboriginal children are at a higher risk for unintentional injuries, diabetes, teenage pregnancy and suicide.

But instead of accessing the health and protection services routinely provided to other Canadian children, jurisdictional disputes between government departments deny or delay such services for an unacceptable number of First Nations children, with nearly 400 occurring in 12 sample First Nations child and family service agencies in one year alone. Moreover, Métis children are uniquely vulnerable to compounding health and social disparities because they lack access to the services the federal government provides status First Nations and Inuit children through Health Canada's Non-Insured Health Benefits Program.

Funding formulas and jurisdictional impasses must never become impediments to the rights of Canadian children to survive, develop and be protected. The needs of children must come first. **Jordan's Principle** - passed unanimously in the House of Commons on December 12, 2007- is a child-first principle to resolve inter-governmental jurisdictional disputes affecting the lives and health of Aboriginal children. All provinces and territories have adopted Jordan's Principle, yet none has put an implementation plan in place.

As a Canadian, I am proud that Canada has made progress on many fronts relating to children's health and well-being. But I am dismayed that childhood is such an inequitable experience across our country.

I urge you to lend your support to transform Jordan's Principle from a principle to a matter of policy in the provision of essential services for First Nations children, and to make the Health Canada Non-Insured Health Benefits Program accessible for Métis children. I hope you believe as I do that best interests of *all* our children come first.

For more information please visit www.unicef.ca/leavingnochildbehind (English) and www.unicef.ca/pourtouslesenfants (French).