



April 23, 2026

Subject: Call for Action for Healthy, Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Outdoor Learning and Play Settings for All Children in Canada

Dear Prime Minister and Members of Federal Cabinet:

Dear Premiers and Members of Provincial/Territorial Cabinets:

Today, on [Healthy Environments for Learning Day](#) (HELD), the Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment (CPCHE) and its partners and collaborators, together representing over 50 organizations from across Canada, are issuing a [Collective Call for Action for Healthy, Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Outdoor Learning and Play Settings for All Children in Canada](#). In the context of shrinking green space, widespread use of artificial surfacing, escalating climate change, youth eco-anxiety, and legacies of environmental injustice, we are calling upon all levels of government to take urgent action to ensure that every child in Canada has the opportunity to learn and play in health-promoting, health-protective, and climate resilient outdoor spaces in their schools and child care programs. These actions include establishing evidence-informed guidelines and investing in designing, building/retrofitting, and maintaining healthy outdoor learning and play spaces that protect children's health and ability to learn.

The current trajectory of outdoor learning spaces in schools and child care centres across Canada remains inconsistent with what we know about the remarkable benefits to children of time spent in natural outdoor spaces. Access to nature can benefit every facet of children's well-being, including their physical and mental health, social interactions, and ability to learn. Yet despite these well-evidenced benefits, the outdoor spaces at schools and child care facilities have become over-reliant on pavement and synthetic surfacing such as artificial turf, with many settings lacking adequate shade trees and other natural vegetation. Artificial surfacing exposes children to toxic chemicals and microplastics, threatens ecological health, and puts children at greater risk of climate-related health effects associated with flooding and extreme heat. Trees, vegetation, and natural surfaces, by contrast, offer cooling benefits, protective shade, and improved water absorption, among other climate-resiliency and health protection benefits.

All levels of government have a role in changing this trajectory. The federal government can demonstrate leadership by establishing evidence-informed guidelines and leveraging existing climate adaptation programs to increase children's access to natural settings. Provincial and territorial governments, given their responsibility for public health, education, child care, and land-use regulations and their role in working with municipalities, have multiple and interlinked opportunities to advance policy and investment to ensure that all schools and child care programs provide children with access to health-promoting outdoor spaces. The current Canada-wide early learning and child care expansion initiative presents an especially timely and fortuitous opportunity to invest in the well-being of children by investing in natural and climate-resilient outdoor spaces in which children can learn, play and thrive.

Every child deserves to learn and play in settings that promote their health and well-being and maximize their ability to learn. This Healthy Environments for Learning Day, we urge you to take immediate action to ensure access to healthy, sustainable and climate-resilient outdoor learning and play settings in schools and child care programs across Canada.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erica W. Phipps". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Erica Phipps, MPH, PhD
Executive Director

Note: This Call for Action has been disseminated to federal and provincial/territorial ministers responsible for education, early learning and child care, health, environment, climate change, and infrastructure.