

Brief

# Request to increase Canadian Child Benefit for Widows/Widowers

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Rachel Brien-MacLeod  
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## Brief – Request to Increase Canadian Child Benefit for WIDOWS/WIDOWERS

My Brief:

Thank you for giving me the time to introduce myself and to submit in a brief in request for an increase on Canadian Child Benefit for Widows and Widowers.

My name is Rachel Brien-MacLeod and I am 40 years old with children to raise from my late husband, Charlie Gunner. He had passed away in a tragic hunting accident with his friends on April 1, 2015. It was devastating to everyone and the nation. Their death was covered by Canadian news such as CBC. Our home is based in Mistissini, Qc. Roughly, 9 hours from Montreal and 10 hours from Ottawa/Gatineau. I am First Nations from the Cree Nation of Mistissini. We have limited resources in my community and area. We must travel to take our children to see specialists; optometrist, orthodontist, etc.

I was left with 4 children to raise at the time, my oldest turned 18 shortly after, however, I still have 3 children under the age of 18. Since the passing of my husband, I have struggled, even to this day, struggling financially, because I do not have the help I need from a partner. I am a full-time employee, with monthly expenses, like everyone else has, however, even with my income, I cannot afford to buy things for my children such as;

- Prescription glasses/contacts for my children
- Clothing for all seasons
- Extra curricular activities – sports
- Braces
- Trips for their braces – our local dentist has a 2-year waiting list. My children's files are based in Gatineau/Aylmer
- Seasonal hunting trips to preserve our tradition and culture
- Renovating our old home (no funding in our community for renovations), this must come out of my own pocket
- Monthly expenses: hydro, phone bill, groceries (price of food went up since COVID), insurance (car and house), car payment, miscellaneous expenses (emergencies), gas, seasonal tires, etc.
- Buying new furniture
- Others

The list goes on. With these items mentioned, these were shared expenses with my late husband. We did not struggle together because our bills were covered by both our incomes. However, as a widow, you do not have additional help from anyone to help you with the bills. I cannot afford to buy glasses for my children, not even for myself. My late husband left us with nothing, instead we inherited his debt. This is common for a lot of widows/widowers.

This is the reason for an increase with the Canadian Child Benefit, so that we (widows/widowers) can afford what our children need.

I hope you will consider my request, for the sake of single income parents out there. Not only are we grieving over our losses, but we are also stressing over our finances. Wondering how we are going to manage this alone.

Please, consider my request. Not only has the price of food increase, but gas and lumber has increased. The cost of lumber doubled in our region. Because of COVID, everything increased but our salary. Our

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salary stays the same, while everything is too expensive to buy or even to keep up with our monthly bills. Hydro is always expensive up here, comparing the hydro down south. I lived in Gatineau for 3 years (went to college) and my hydro in Gatineau would be roughly \$85 every two months, whereas up here in the North, it is almost \$300 every month. Tell me, how can we keep up with our bills up here when everything is outrageous?

I thank you for giving me the time to submit in a brief. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

*Rachel B. MacLeod*

Rachel Brien-MacLeod  
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