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UNTIL THE LAST CHILD

In an exclusive interview, Toronto businesswoman Faith Goodman vows to find permanent, loving homes for 30,000 Canadian kids by working alongside child welfare agencies

WRITTEN BY SIMONA PANETTA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN PACKMAN



Faith Goodman at her home in Toronto

Faith Goodman sits across from me in the living room of her York Mills family home, her honey-blond hair framing big brown and open eyes, her lips pursed together in a pensive smile. The Toronto businesswoman is classic and composed, her pearl necklace and smart orange silk dress coat layering an ivory blouse with gold buttons. But beneath the surface of an impeccable wardrobe and pedigree is a mother whose energy and determination for social reform are so fierce they are among the first things one notices about her. “She’s a dynamo,” says Glen Hodgson, senior vice-president and chief economist at the Conference Board of Canada. “When I first met her in Toronto and we started a conversation I quickly realized she was someone who had huge passion for business but also a passion for kids who are marginalized in our society.” Sitting at the edge of her gingham couch, radiating warmth and compassion, Goodman tells the story of an issue that has compelled her to aim high and join forces with individuals who share her concerns on the complex social issue of child welfare.

Fifteen years ago, Goodman took her first steps in philanthropy when she was asked to be a fundraising volunteer for a child welfare group in Toronto. At the time, she was employed as a vice-president of an energy firm, a position that demanded strong leadership and long hours. Having been raised in a loving, nurturing home — a support system she credits with who she is today — Goodman jumped at the opportunity to lend her business expertise. But it was only a matter of time before her deep corporate roots began to question why society looked at philanthropy and challenging social issues such as child welfare differently than how objectives are met in business. “What I really became aware of was that there’s a need to



Glen Hodgson, senior vice-president and chief economist at the Conference Board of Canada

the Last Child in 2009. Unprecedented and results-driven, UTLC aims to work alongside government-regulated child welfare agencies by funding innovation and providing business expertise to entities that generally rely on public sector resources alone.

Currently the Canadian system that manages child welfare issues is complex, costly and fragmented. A lack of action on the part of political and corporate Canada to prioritize child welfare, says Goodman, only adds to the frustration that comes from having no national tracking system and each province having its own model of legislation to monitor adoption and foster care. The idea that any child would grow up without the support of a loving, permanent home leaves Goodman “feeling broken.” She’s still haunted by the devastating death of Jeffrey Baldwin in 2002, a Canadian

five-year-old tragically placed in the care of abusive grandparents.

According to the Adoption Council of Ontario, an estimated 30,000 kids are waiting for a permanent home in Canada — an issue Gov. Gen. the Hon. David Johnston deemed an “adoption crisis” during his keynote speech at the Urgency Around Permanency Summit in late 2014. On top of that, millions of kids continue to experience sexual abuse, neglect and abandonment in silence, while thousands are at risk, in foster care, jumping from one temporary home to the next, and eventually “age out” of the system with limited or no support. UTLC’s vision, albeit optimistic and

ambitious, is to support child welfare in finding permanent, loving homes for every last child by 2020.

UTLC’s method to address the crisis consists of a four-pronged approach that implements world-class evidence-based research, funding and consulting expertise, rigorous evaluation and leveraging technology to address systemic barriers. So far it has proven successful. “In business we have metrics, very clear objectives, very clear outcomes

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— Glen Hodgson

tackle complex social issues through an efficiency and effectiveness lens to best address root cause. In the case of children who don’t have permanent, loving homes, how can business come alongside children’s aid societies and help? I saw that there was a gap,” says Goodman.

Determined to alleviate the issue, Goodman put together a board of directors, rallied corporate support and launched the charity organization Until

and a clear line of sight between what is the work we're doing and how does it lead to a specific outcome," says Goodman. "Sometimes less than five per cent of Canadian kids find permanent, loving homes. If a business CEO delivered a five per cent success rate, I don't think he or she would be in charge for very long."

In 2012, UTLC partnered with Family & Children's Services of Guelph to help improve outcomes for children and youth in or entering care. Before the two-year pilot project began, the Guelph location was averaging 10 to 15 per cent per year in finding homes for children in its care. FCSG implemented a best practice called the Family Finding model, which works by locating and engaging relatives to connect each child with a loving family. UTLC donors contributed just under half million dollars to fund salaries for two social workers and consulting advice from companies such as Deloitte, BCG and McKinsey & Company.

The result was an astounding 45 per cent of kids placed in permanent, loving homes deemed just right by the Guelph staff. A year later, that number jumped again, rising to 51 per cent.


"I have a lot of respect for [Goodman] as a person, as an individual who cares about the world outside of her own world," says Daniel Moore, executive director at Family & Children's Services of Guelph. "She's really engaged in a conversation that says, 'what are some things you would really love to do but you haven't been able to because of the funding? Tell me, convince me, that that's going to make a difference for kids.' And it's in that conversation that UTLC has been so committed to us." UTLC is currently entering Stage 2 of its organization, with child welfare agencies across Canada reaching out to implement innovative practices.

The idea of corporate coming alongside philanthropy to achieve defined goals and measurable outcomes is a concept that has sparked other bright minds. Business guru Don Tapscott once said that businesses cannot succeed in a world that is failing. Former U.S. president Bill Clinton is noted for his comment that capitalism would solve the world's greatest problems — not charity alone. "It's not just up to governments anymore to build bridges and highways and airports," points out Glen Hodgson,

a prominent economist whose team recently delivered a powerful report titled, *Investing in the Future of Canadian Children in Care*. His research poignantly called for governments, businesses and the general public to come together to combat high social costs and an economic burden of \$7.5 billion over 10 years stemming from the lack of support for those who "age out" of care. When compared to the average Canadian, the Conference Board of Canada's research indicates these youths are more likely to descend into a vicious cycle of crime, homelessness and poverty, and are less likely to graduate from high school, earning about \$326,000 less income over their lifespan.

It's hard to imagine a world where kids don't have a home. It's hard to imagine that that world includes Canada, a developed nation with an abundance of natural resources and a stable economy. "Sometimes society will move as a whole," says Hodgson, "but sometimes you need a champion, you need somebody that is actually prepared to stick their neck out, to show some leadership and build a bit of consensus around it, and I think Faith is doing that." www.untilthelastchild.com

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