

NEWS EDITORS - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Child and Youth Coalition Supports Jordan's Principle, Urges BC to Take Action

First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition is calling on Premier Gordon Campbell to follow through on his commitment to supporting Jordan's Principle by implementing this important policy through legislation.

Jordan's Principle is a child-first approach guiding the resolution of jurisdictional disputes affecting the provision of services to First Nations children. Under this Principle the government ministry or department of first contact must pay for the services without delay or disruption. The paying government can then refer the matter to a jurisdictional dispute mechanism. The Principle has received support from Premier Campbell's government in the February 2008 Throne Speech, from the House of Commons in a resolution adopted in December 2007, and from over 1600 organizations who have signed a petition of support.

The government missed an opportunity to embed Jordan's Principle in legislation in the last session. The Legislature should sit in the fall so that Jordan's Principle can be legislated before the next election.

Adrienne Montani, Provincial Coordinator of First Call, said the additional step urged by our resolution would move the provincial commitment to implement Jordan's Principle from words to legislation, with timelines. "We appreciate that the Ministry of Children and Family Development's Operational Plan includes a commitment to develop and implement a cross-governmental plan on Jordan's Principle by spring of 2009. Having legislation in place would strengthen the authority of this plan and increase accountability for all provincial ministries."

According to Maurice Squires, President of Caring for First Nations Children Society, "There are hundreds of children like Jordan in BC and thousands in Canada who cannot come home because of the jurisdictional wrangling over dollars between two different levels of government. It is time to bring these children home through the implementation of Jordan's Principle."

The First Call Coalition passed the following resolution urging government to:

- *Bring a bill to the provincial legislature for a vote that confirms British Columbia's commitment to implementing a child first principle, based on Jordan's Principle, to resolve jurisdictional disputes involving the care of First Nations children without disrupting services to or negatively impacting the quality of life of First Nations children;*
- *Include in the proposed bill a commitment to immediate implementation of the principle when the dispute is between provincial ministries;*
- *Include in the proposed bill a timeline for concluding negotiations with the federal government on the implementation of the principle in the case of federal-provincial disputes;*
- *Work on an ongoing basis to ensure adequate support and care for First Nations children across ministries and jurisdictions.*

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