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**NEWS EDITORS - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**February 16, 2011**

## **LEADERSHIP CANDIDATES RESPOND TO CHILD AND YOUTH COALITION SURVEY**

On February 3, First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition sent a survey to the leadership candidates for both the BC Liberal Party and the BC New Democratic Party soliciting their responses to specific policy recommendations and public investment strategies that would benefit the province's children and youth. The survey was crafted with the input of the Coalition's partner organizations representing a wide range of child and youth issues.

Four NDP candidates responded to the Coalition's on-line survey by the deadline -- Nicholas Simons, Mike Farnworth, John Horgan and Adrian Dix. None of the Liberal candidates responded.

"The complete lack of response from the Liberal leadership candidates is very disappointing," said First Call Provincial Coordinator Adrienne Montani. "Each of these individuals aspires to be the next premier of British Columbia, and our coalition partners are genuinely interested in where they stand on crucial issues like child poverty and child labour protections."

The survey canvassed the candidates' positions on supports for early childhood development, for students with special needs in schools, and investments in youth employment services. It also asked where they stand on reducing child and family poverty and BC's child labour laws, among other topics.

The responses of the four NDP candidates all agreed the minimum wage needs to be raised, while differing on the immediate target rate. They were unanimous in their support for indexing the minimum wage and welfare rates in the future. They were also unanimous in their support of the need for additional legislative protections for young people at work.

"We hope that by asking these questions and publishing the responses received we have stimulated discussion among the leadership candidates, their supporters and the public about actions we can take to improve children's lives," said Montani.

A chart outlining the respondents' replies to the 20 survey questions accompanies this release, and includes a copy of their full responses. Candidates Simons and Farnworth completed the survey on-line. Horgan and Dix submitted letters outlining their positions. These materials can also be found on the First Call website at:

[www.firstcallbc.org/pdfs/currentissues/candidatesurvey.pdf](http://www.firstcallbc.org/pdfs/currentissues/candidatesurvey.pdf).

First Call is a non-partisan coalition of 90 provincial and regional organizations and hundreds of individuals committed to mobilizing British Columbians to work together to ensure children and youth have the rights, opportunities and resources required to achieve their full potential. They believe all children and youth in BC should have first call on society's resources.

- 30 -

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For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact the First Call office in Vancouver at 604-873-8437:

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