

First Call's Weekly Announcements – April 8, 2010

Next ECD Roundtable: May 26

Next Coalition Meeting: April 14

The agenda for April 14 has been updated –
view the new version on our [web site](#).

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We welcome your comments, suggestions and any research or event information you wish to have shared with the First Call network. Please let us know what's going on in your community so we can help spread the word!

Please visit our web site at www.firstcallbc.org for further details on upcoming First Call meetings, events, new publications and more.

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Advocacy/Calls to Action

1. Rally Against Provincial Budget Cuts – Friday in Victoria and Saturday in Vancouver

Rally in Victoria at noon on April 9 at Blanshard and Pandora:

The \$6 billion Olympic party is over, but poverty in British Columbia is not. The Campbell government's legacy of severe cutbacks to vital health care and social services for vulnerable British Columbians continues. Join the Victoria Coalition Against Poverty (VCAP) on April 9th for a rally and street party and demand a stop to the cutbacks before there's nothing left to cut!

British Columbia has had the highest child poverty rates in the country for 6 years running, and this budget saw more cuts to services for young children and their families. From reducing dental care and birth control access for people with disabilities to ending funding for legal and tenancy advocacy programs, cuts tabled in the 2010 provincial budget worsen already unacceptable standards of social welfare in British Columbia and highlight the need for community solidarity and resistance.

We'll meet at the Ministry of Health at Blanshard and Pandora at 12pm and march to the Ministry of Housing and Social Development at Pandora and Quadra at 12:30 for a street party, live music, speakers, food, interactive art and more!

Come join us in demanding affordable housing, livable incomes, and accessible, quality health care! Stand up for dignity and justice!

The Victoria Coalition Against Poverty (VCAP) is a coalition of grassroots organizations that together are demanding an immediate end to poverty. Reach us at viccoalitionagainstpoverty@gmail.com.

Rally in Vancouver at noon on April 10 at the Art Gallery:

Join the Coalition to Build a Better BC on April 10 on the north side of the Vancouver Art Gallery at noon for a rally against provincial budget cuts. Download the poster [here](#). Members of this cross-sectoral coalition include:

Alliance for Arts and Culture
BC Association of Social Workers
BC Government and Service Employees' Union
B.C. Federation of Labour
BC Health Coalition
BC Persons with AIDS Society
BC Teachers Federation
Canadian Federation of Students
Check Your Head
Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
Council of Canadians
Council of Senior Citizens Organizations of BC
Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC
First Call
Hospital Employees Union
Sierra Club of BC
Union of BC Indian Chiefs

For a complete list of partners visit www.betterbc.ca.

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2. Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth Consultation on Child Poverty

As previously reported, the province's Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth has committed to holding a meeting with stakeholders on child poverty, in response to a request from the Representative for Children and Youth to begin taking action on that issue. The date for the meeting is yet to be announced, but the Committee is already receiving written submissions from interested parties that will be referenced in the consultation. First Call partners are encouraged to submit reports and recommendations relevant to child poverty to the Committee or indicate your interest in contributing to their information gathering.

In First Call's letter to the Committee we noted, "Many of our coalition partners have in-depth knowledge of the reasons so many children and families are living in poverty and of the impacts that poverty has on their lives. They are eager to participate in the Committee's inquiry."

Submissions and letters of interest can be sent to:

Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth
Office of the Clerk of Committees
Room 224, Parliament Buildings
Victoria V8V 1X4

Copies can also be sent to the Chair and Vice-Chair:

Joan McIntyre
MLA
East Annex, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Maurine Karagianis
MLA
Room 201, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

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3. Update on Success By 6 Funding Cuts

The Early Childhood Development Provincial Partnership (Success By 6) is working with the provincial government to "work towards a meaningful, long term and

sustainable model to support Success By 6 in its services to all children in the province.” The province announced at the end of March that it will provide half of its annual contribute to the ECDPP this year, and will pull out of the partnership next year. The money provided this year will support the current Success By 6 infrastructure while a series of meetings are held that will determine if the ECDPP and Success By 6 will continue.

Thanks to everyone who let the government know that we value and need these early years investment dollars in our communities!

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4. Provincial Budget – Let the Opposition Know How You’ve Been Impacted

Budget estimates will begin soon, giving the official opposition the chance to ask detailed questions about the budget of each provincial ministry. Opposition critics are open to hearing from people with questions and concerns about the budget to inform their questions in the legislature. Here are some key contacts:

Child care: Mable Elmore - mable.elmore.mla@leg.bc.ca

Ministry of Children and Family Development: Maurine Karagianis - maurine.karagianis.mla@leg.bc.ca

Ministry of Housing and Social Development: Shane Simpson – shane.simpson.mla@leg.bc.ca

Ministry of Education: Robin Austin – robin.austin.mla@leg.bc.ca

Mail can be sent to any opposition critic at:
Room 201, Parliament Buildings
Victoria BC V8V 1X4

A complete list of opposition critics is available [here](#).

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5. Response to Federal Budget from Child Rights Perspective

The Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children has analysed the federal budget and throne speech for equitability and fairness of the current government’s laws, policies and services for children. The document examines the government’s commitments and action/inaction in the throne speech and budget in relation to various facets of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: best interests of children; survival, health and development; protection; and governance for children. Read it [here](#).

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6. Kindergarten Expansion Means Space Shortages, Loss of Child Care Spaces

School districts are scrambling to prepare for the expansion of all-day kindergarten over the next two years. According to a Vancouver Sun article by Janet Steffenhagen, while many districts have empty classrooms they can make use of, some will require modular classrooms to accommodate the additional kindergarten students. In Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows, four child care centres will be losing their spaces in schools; one due to the kindergarten expansion, and two because of school closures. Vancouver and Richmond school districts are anticipating problems accommodating the increased number of students in 2011. [Read the article here](#), and let First Call know what's happening in your district.

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Research & Resources

1. The Role of Municipal Governments in Mending the Social Safety Net

A new report from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities identifies a destructive dynamic in which poverty, most prevalent among certain growing vulnerable groups, combines with shrinking federal and provincial support for social services to increase demands on limited municipal resources. This dynamic creates an urban environment where substantial numbers of people are disadvantaged, despite generally positive (until recently) economic conditions.

Social infrastructure with strong municipal involvement currently includes social housing, emergency shelters, public transit, child care, recreation and libraries. The report states:

Cities have stepped in to fill the gaps in the social safety net left by federal and provincial governments as they retreat from funding social programs. But even with these investments, long waiting lists for services, homelessness and working poor families suggest that demand is outpacing the municipal capacity to respond. This is because the funding model that forces cities to pay for social and physical infrastructure with revenue from the property tax is flawed.

In a blog posting on the [Vancouver Sun website](#), anti-poverty activist Jean Swanson summarizes the report's statistics about Vancouver compared to the 23 other cities included in the study:

Vancouver has the highest percent of population with low income; the highest percent of working poor families; and the largest and fastest growing income gap

between rich and poor. Welfare income was also very low in Vancouver, and Vancouver had the second highest number of households which paid more than 30% of their income for rent and/or lived in inadequate housing. Vancouver was also worst for "community affordability." That means that the combination of low income plus high cost of living makes the poorest fifth of Vancouver residents worse off than those in other cities.

Read the full report [here](#).

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2. McCreary Centre Society Report on Drug Use Among 16 to 18 Years Olds

A new report and bulletin from McCreary Centre Society use data from the adolescent health survey to examine substance use among young people. The report focuses on alcohol and marijuana use, and its key findings include:

- Those who start drinking or using marijuana at age 12 or younger have more problems than those who wait until 15 or older.
- However, even waiting a year or two makes a difference - those who first used at 13 or 14 had fewer problems than those who started at 11 or 12.
- Even among earliest users, getting them to stop using can have benefits; teens who started using at 12 or younger but did not drink or use marijuana in the past month had lower rates of risk behaviours and higher rates of health behaviours.

[Download the report.](#)

The bulletin looks at the use of drugs other than marijuana. 16% of 16-18 year olds said they had tried a drug other than marijuana, and students who first tried alcohol or marijuana at a younger age were more likely to have used other drugs. The study found that some youth were more vulnerable to using substances, including males with a physical disability and those with a long-term illness, youth who considered themselves over- or underweight, youth with a mental health or emotional condition, youth who had been in government care, and youth who reported going to bed hungry. [Download the bulletin.](#)

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3. Psychology Foundation of Canada Resources

There are a number of new resources available from the Psychology Foundation of Canada:

Kids Can Cope: Parenting Resilient Children at Home and at School

This booklet has been designed to help parents and caregivers understand what resiliency is, how it can be supported and enhanced, and what parents can do to help build resiliency in children. It will be available for ordering and posted online at www.psychologyfoundation.org in the near future.

Kids Have Stress Too!® Pre-School Program

Designed for Early Childhood Educators and other childcare providers who work with children ages 2½ to 5 years, this program provides participants with more information, tools and strategies to create an environment that reduces undue stress and supports children by helping them to begin to effectively cope with stress.

Parenting for Life - Parenting the School-Age Child 7-12 Years Old

This award-winning Canadian program promotes positive parenting skills and the well-being of families. A new and improved Facilitator's Guide is available for you to use in your efforts to support parents and caregivers. This Guide focuses on working with parents to help them understand developmental changes, different parenting styles, how to build independence and self-esteem and model effective problem solving.

Find out more at www.psychologyfoundation.org.

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4. Bursaries for Youth In and From Care

The Federation of Community Social Services' 2010 Bursary will assist young people in and from care with the financial costs of tuition, books, and supplies for post-secondary academic, technical or vocational training or academic upgrading that will lead them into a career in the Social Service, Health or Education sectors. This post-secondary bursary is now available to a maximum of \$2,000 per academic year (two semesters).

Bursary applications and more information are available [here](#). The deadline for applications is May 7, 2010.

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Announcements

1. Teacher Seeks Support for Journey Across Province

Tulani Ackerman is a teacher in the Prince Rupert School District who has founded Steps for Students, a movement to gain support for reform to BC's education system that will build and bridge collaborative input and relationships, reduce class sizes to meet the needs of teachers and students, and ensure appropriate funding for all curriculums.

On July 1, Tulani will leave Prince Rupert and travel on foot and bicycle to Victoria. She is hoping to hold events in the communities she travels through, and is seeking local support and contacts around the province. Contact stepsforstudents@gmail.com if you'd like to get involved. You can see Tulani's route [here](#), and find out more at www.stepsforstudents.ca.

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2. Rights Now! Youth Conference in Victoria

Do you know your rights? The Queen Alexandra Youth Advisory Council has been working hard to answer that question. On May 8th, 2010, prepare to attend a conference like no other. With interesting speakers, good food, and fun entertainment, Rights Now! is set to blow you away with rights you never probably knew you had.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a document outlining all the rights we as youth have. By signing the UNCRC, Canada also agreed to ensure that children and youth are aware of their rights, but the reality is most youth don't know that they have rights. So come, and bring a friend or two, to experience the UNCRC and educate, advocate and relate your rights!

Fantastic Keynote Speakers: Spencer West from "Me to We" and Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, BC Representative for Children and Youth.

\$25 or pay what you can (includes: shirt, lunch, dinner and entertainment). Rights Now! is a youth-led conference for youth ages 14 – 18. Adults who are accompanying and supporting youth participants are welcome to attend. Travel subsidies are available. The conference will take place from 9:30 AM – 9:30 PM at the University of Victoria Student Union Building.

Register at www.rights-now.com or rightsnow2010@live.com.

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