

## **First Call's Weekly Announcements – January 9, 2009**

**Next ECD Roundtable: January 21**  
Visit our [web site](#) for more information.

### **Next Coalition Meeting: January 14**

The coalition meeting will feature platform presentations and discussion with Jane Sterk of the Green Party and Nicholas Simons of the NDP.

The Liberal Party has confirmed their non-attendance and stated that they are still in the process of formulating their policy platform for the election.

The full agenda for this meeting is available [here](#).

#### **A. Advocacy/Calls to Action**

1. [Premier Says Children Are his Top Political Priority](#)
2. [Child Poverty Report Card – Press Conference Notes and Letter to PM](#)
3. [Calls for Reinstating Prison Parenting Program](#)
4. [Canadian Paediatric Society Calls for a National Child Care Program](#)

#### **B. Research & Resources**

1. [HRSDC Releases New Report Using Market Basket Measure of Poverty](#)
2. [The Case for Business Action on the Socio-Economic Determinants of Health](#)

#### **C. Announcements**

1. [Economics for Everyone Public Forum and Conference](#)
2. [Strengths-Based Capacity-Building Presentation from HELP](#)
3. [Statistics Canada Conference on Immigration and Diversity](#)

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](http://www.firstcallbc.org) for further details on upcoming First Call meetings, conferences, media backgrounders, events and more.

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## Advocacy/Calls to Action

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### 1. Premier Says Children Are his Top Political Priority

A Canadian Press article featuring an end of the year interview with Premier Campbell highlights his government's long-term commitment to children:

*"First of all, literally all of what I've tried to do in public life is about children," said Campbell. "We just don't give it that name. **When I say let's balance our budget, that's about children. That's about not laying off costs into the future for our kids to pay that they will get no benefit from.**"*

Read the entire article [here](#).

**First Call has asked to meet with the Premier to discuss public policy changes that could have an immediate impact on the well-being of children and youth.** Read our letter [here](#).

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### 2. Child Poverty Report Card – Press Conference Notes and Letter to PM

Two sets of speaking notes from First Call's 2008 Child Poverty Report Card press conference on November 21 are now available online:

- [Rebecca Siggner](#) of SPARC BC and the report card's author discusses: **Why is poverty so high in our province? What needs to be done?**
- [Lynell Anderson](#) of the Human Early Learning Partnership discusses **how public policy and public investment make the difference in addressing child poverty**, with a particular focus on the benefits of early learning and child care.

In addition, the Campaign 2000 national office has prepared a **sample letter to Prime Minister Harper** asking him to implement a poverty reduction strategy. Download it [here](#).

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### 3. Calls for Reinstating Prison Parenting Program

Both the BC Government and Service Employees Union and the BC Civil Liberties Association have issued press releases calling for the reinstatement of the mother-baby program at the Alouette Correctional Centre for Women. The program was

closed in April of this year. Women in federal prisons have been allowed to have their children live with them since 2003.

The BCGEU release states:

***Cancellation of the Mother-baby program denies the mothers the opportunity to breastfeed and bond with their children, depriving the infants of the acknowledged health benefits of breast milk, consistent care and the close relationship they need to thrive during the critical months following birth. [...]***

*"These women are serving out their sentences and seizing their newborns is cruel punishment not only for them but for their babies," said Darryl Walker, BCGEU president. "To additionally punish them is a great injustice, not only to them, but to their newborns."*

*Child protection workers in the Ministry of Children and Families, who are members of the BCGEU, have expressed strong concerns that without the program they must seize children. The outcome for both mother and child can be unnecessarily tragic and sad," said Walker. [...]*

*Also calling for re-instatement of the program is **Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond**, the Representative for Children and Youth. "In the best interest of children, **I ask British Columbians to join me in calling loudly for this program to not only be re-established, but expanded for women at Alouette, and in Prince George, too.** The costs of not having these kinds of programs will eventually place a far greater burden on the criminal justice system and society," she said in an op-ed piece in late September.*

[BCGEU news release](#)

[BCCLA](#) (scroll down for news release, position paper, and letters)

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#### 4. Canadian Paediatric Society Calls for a National Child Care Program

In the new issue of Paediatric Child Health, the Canadian Paediatric Society states:

*Not long ago, national leadership on this critical issue was within reach. **In 2004, the federal government at the time committed \$5 billion over five years to "ensure that children have access to high-quality, government-regulated spaces at affordable cost to parents"** (5). Agreements were signed between the federal and many provincial or territorial governments, under which the federal government would transfer funds to provinces and territories that developed early learning and child care plans. Fulfillment of the long-awaited vision of a national framework for early childhood education and care was close at hand.*

***At the time of the discussions, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development praised the collaboration among Canadian jurisdictions, citing it as a strength on which future progress could be made.[...] [They]***

further recommended that Canada create a national quality framework, and substantially increase public funding for services to young children.

**With a change in federal government in January 2006 came a change in policy. The child care agreements were cancelled. [...]**

*The child care file was essentially closed, and the vision for a national framework on early childhood education and care was lost. Yet, the need for nonparental care is here to stay. **Families rely on child care services more than ever; researchers estimate that at least 70% of children six months to six years of age use nonparental care (7). Despite the widespread use of these services, it is still largely the responsibility of parents to seek, find, afford and monitor care for their preschool children.** Regulated spaces represent a minority of the child care options from which families can choose. [...]*

**The Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS) believes that the only way to achieve sustained improvement is through a national strategy on early childhood education and care.**

Read the entire article [here](#).

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## Research & Resources

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### 1. HRSDC Releases New Report Using Market Basket Measure of Poverty

Human Resources and Social Development Canada has released "Low Income in Canada: 2000-2006 Using the Market Basket Measure." The Market Basket Measure is a measure of low income based on the cost of a specified basket of goods and services and is more sensitive to geographical differences in costs of living than the low income cut-off.

The report shows an 11.9% rate of low income among Canadians in 2006, compared to 10.5% incidence reported using the low income cut-off after tax.

The report also finds:

- *The national incidence of low income has undergone a downward trend over the past seven years, falling from 14.6% in 2000 to 11.9% in 2006.*
- *Among age groups, children experienced the largest decline in incidence; 3.7 percentage points since 2000 to 14.4% in 2006.*
- *Working families recorded a slight drop in their incidence of low income between 2000 and 2006. Although these families recorded a relatively low*

rate (7.3%), they still accounted for 35% of low income families and for 44% of low-income children in 2006.

Read the report [here](#).

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## 2. The Case for Business Action on the Socio-Economic Determinants of Health

The Conference Board of Canada has released a report titled "Healthy People, Healthy Performance, Healthy Profits: The Case for Business Action on the Socio-Economic Determinants of Health."

Excerpt:

*Business, along with the public and non-profit sectors, has an important role to play in addressing the socio-economic determinants of health. Many actions that businesses take would have a positive impact on health outcomes, and on the firms' productivity, competitiveness, and profitability. This report makes the case that businesses and other employers should take action on the socio-economic determinants of health because of the benefits such action will have for the health of Canadians and the positive impact it will have on firms' performance and profits. [...]*

*One way of achieving benefits is to offer products or services that address one or more of the socio-economic determinants of health. Winmark Corporation's Play It Again Sports franchises, for example, give consumers a chance to sell, trade, or consign lightly used sports equipment and to purchase used equipment at lower prices. The business model generates a profit for franchisees and makes it less expensive for families to engage in healthy behaviours while also contributing to their financial security.*

*There is evidence that investments in the socio-economic determinants of employees' health yield both individual and corporate benefits. For example, when CIBC introduced a backup child care centre for its employees, the initiative not only contributed to employee health by reducing some of the stress associated with balancing work and family responsibilities, it also produced significant savings. CIBC reports that in the first year of the program it saved 2,500 days of employee absence and \$1.5 million in productivity costs.*

*These examples embody the two ways by which business can act on the socio-economic determinants of health. Businesses can act as producers of goods and services that address one or more of the socio-economic determinants of health, and thereby generate a profit while improving health outcomes—an area that offers great potential for growth. Alternatively, businesses and other organizations can act as employers and introduce measures that address the socio-economic determinants of their employees' health while also improving their own organizational performance—a path that has proven successful for many employers. The report addresses both of these options and offers evidence of the performance and profit potential of each.*

The report is available online [here](#).

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## Announcements

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### 1. Economics for Everyone Public Forum and Conference

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and Vancouver and District Labour Council are holding a conference January 30 and 31 on the Economic Crisis in BC: Developing a Progressive Alternative.

On the Friday night, economist and author Jim Stanford will present a public forum titled "Economics for Everyone." On the Saturday, the morning session will examine how we got here and debunk false solutions. The afternoon session will explore alternatives for the future. Speakers will include Marjorie Griffin Cohen of SFU, MLA Bob Simpson, Jim Sinclair of the BC Federation of Labour, Seth Klein of the CCPA, and First Call's Adrienne Montani.

The event takes place at the Maritime Labour Centre in Vancouver. Contact [office@vdlc.ca](mailto:office@vdlc.ca) or 604-254-0703 to register.

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### 2. Strengths-Based Capacity-Building Presentation from HELP

The Human Early Learning Partnership presents Carl J. Dunst on the "Characteristics of Strengths-Based Capacity-Building Intervention Practices":

*More than 20 years of applied research and practice by the presenter and his colleagues as well as research and practice by others now makes possible the specification of the characteristics of child, parent, and family strengths-based interventions that are most likely to have capacity-building consequences. This presentation will highlight findings and lessons learned from research and different intervention projects that used strengths-based approaches to supporting and strengthening child, parent, family and community member behaviour and functioning.*

The presentation takes place on Thursday, January 15 from 11 am to 12 pm at UBC Robson Square. A web cast option is available. Contact [help.events@ubc.ca](mailto:help.events@ubc.ca) or 604-827-5755.

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### 3. Statistics Canada Conference on Immigration and Diversity

Statistics Canada is holding a one-day conference in Vancouver called Diversity Matters. The conference will feature a panel of high-profile experts who will present on the changes, trends and implications of ethno-cultural diversity and immigration at the national, provincial and regional levels. The keynote address will be given by BC's Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism Wally Oppal.

The conference is February 23 at the Sheraton Wall Centre. Register by February 2 for the early bird rate of \$199. Find out more [here](#).

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