

First Call's Weekly Announcements – July 27, 2009

Next Coalition Meeting: September 9

Next ECD Roundtable Meeting: September 17

First Call Fundraising Dinner: October 20

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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, conferences, media backgrounders, events and more.

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Advocacy/Calls to Action

1. Mobilizing for a Living Wage for Families

Families who work for low wages face impossible choices — buy food or heat the house, feed the children or pay the rent. The result can be spiraling debt, constant anxiety and long-term health problems. In many cases it means that the adults in the family are working long hours, often at two or three jobs, just to pay for basic necessities. They have little time to spend with their family, much less to help their children with school work or participate in community activities.

Something can be done! The Living Wage for Families campaign for Metro Vancouver is bringing together individuals and organizations to expose the injustice of so many people working for poverty pay.

You can now lend your support by publicly endorsing our campaign. Download the statement of endorsement [here](#).

A list of current supporters and more information about the campaign are available at http://livingwageforfamilies.ca/?page_id=9.

Here are some ways you can support the campaign:

- Arrange for us to give a talk or workshop on the living wage
- Start a living wage campaign in your community/workplace
- Consider becoming a living wage employer
- Publicly endorse our campaign
- Urge your municipal government to pass a living wage by-law
- Advocate to government for policy changes to increase supports to low-income earners and enhance public services that improve our quality of life. (e.g. more affordable housing)

Contact Michael McCarthy Flynn at info@livingwageforfamilies.ca for more information.

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2. Ministry of Housing and Social Development on Poverty and Wages

Over the last six months First Call has had a series of communications with the province about poverty and wages. An April 10 letter we sent to Minister of Housing and Social Development Rich Coleman emphasizes the low minimum wage in BC, and the value of these workers despite their relatively small numbers.

Our letter included data on the age and responsibilities of minimum wage workers, the growing income gap in BC, and the cost of food and the importance of good nutrition for child development. We also asked for a commitment to living wages for public service workers. You can read this letter [here](#).

In Minister Coleman's July 17 response, he stated that "we must carefully balance all of the costs and benefits associated with minimum wage policies and consider future

changes in the context of the overall strategy to address poverty issues and promote a strong economy.”

Coleman also stated “with respect to your recommendation that government provide a living wage for those employed by publicly funded agencies and programs, we are committed to fiscally responsible, sound management of taxpayer’s dollars...” We are concerned by the inference that paying a living wage is not fiscally responsible, given that poverty increases the need for health services and other social costs over the long-term. You can read the most recent letter from the Minister [here](#).

Older letters:

January 9 letter to [Premier Campbell](#).

March 13 response from [Minister Coleman](#).

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3. Call for Participants in Development of Provincial Family Council for Child and Youth Mental Health

The FORCE Society for Kids’ Mental Health, working with BC Mental Health and Addictions Service and partner provincial government ministries, are seeking youth and family members to form a working group that will facilitate the development of a Provincial Family Council for Child and Youth Mental Health.

It is proposed that a Provincial Family Council will provide input for the design of policies, programs and practices to improve the mental health of all children, youth and their families in BC. The proposed Provincial Family Council will focus on shifting from a philosophy of families as visitors to one where families are allies in the delivery of quality mental health care.

Psychosocial research has shown that family engagement is critical to effectively promoting and sustaining the mental health of children and youth. Without sustained child, youth and parent (caregiver) participation in all aspects of policy and program development and evaluation, the mental health of children, youth and their families will fail to adequately respond to the real needs and concerns of those it is intended to serve.

This work will involve participation in face-to-face meetings, teleconferences and email correspondence. Travel costs will be covered and honorariums provided to Working Group members as compensation for their participation in these activities.

Download more information [here](#). The application deadline is **August 4**.

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4. Province Cuts Student Aid Budget

Media reports are stating that the province has cut its budget for aid to post-secondary students by 14%. Though there was no official announcement, affected students were notified of program cuts by letter or phone call.

The Premier's Excellence Award was eliminated, as were debt-forgiveness programs for students who could not repay their students loans and for disabled students. The harshest cuts will impact students in nursing and other health care programs, where the budget for bursaries has been reduced by more than 50%.

Read more in the [Vancouver Sun](#).

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5. Video Documents Annual Women's Housing March

On June 13, 2009, approximately 400 marched to support the Annual Women's March. The march was endorsed by over 70 organizations with the core demands of:

- Social housing, child care, and health care for all!
- No more evictions and no more condos in the DTES!
- People before olympic profits!
- Stop criminalizing the poor!

Powerful video footage of the march is now available on Youtube – check it out [here!](#)

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6. Corrected Link: UN Human Rights Council Reviews Canada's Compliance

The piece below was in the last Weekly Announcements – the correct link for the recommendations of the United Nations Human Rights Council Review of Canada is here: http://www.canadiansocialresearch.net/UPR_2009_Canada.doc

The recommendations of the United Nations Human Rights Council Review of Canada for 2009 are available [here](#), with reasons given from government for those recommendations that have been rejected or only partially accepted. The recommendations to the federal government include:

- To *develop a national strategy to eliminate poverty*, which Canada rejected because the government says this is provincial jurisdiction;
- To *withdraw Canadian reservations to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly regarding the duty to detain children separately from adults*, which was not accepted due to two reservations Canada has to this Convention: Canada reserves the right not to detain children separately from adults where this is not appropriate or feasible, and Canada reserves the right not to apply the provisions of article 21 (concerning the best interests of the child in adoption) to the extent that they may be inconsistent with customary forms of care among Aboriginal people;
- Canada accepted a recommendation to *seek to demonstrate that challenges presented by relationships between its federal, provincial and territorial governments do not present unnecessary obstacles to the fulfillment of treaty obligations*;
- To *continue policies and programs aimed at reducing inequalities that still exist between the Aboriginal, recent immigrants and other Canadians*, which Canada accepted.

Research & Resources

1. Child Care Investments Pay Off

A recent Globe and Mail article by Daniel Treffer, J. Douglas and Ruth Grant Canada Research Chair in Competitiveness and Prosperity and the Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto, shows that investing in quality child care for kids results in lowering government expenditures:

Many of you will not fully appreciate just how rich the returns to investments [ROIs] in kids are... The City of Chicago has been running child-parent centres for the better part of 20 years. To their credit, the centre designers wondered whether the program was worth the extravagant costs. So they did a clinical trial, randomly letting in some kids and randomly turning away others. They then examined outcome differences between the two groups over the next 20 years of the children's lives. The ROIs were 9.0 per cent. For those with some business experience, you'll know that an ROI above 0 per cent triggers a strategic decision by management to invest.

The benefits do not last. *Fiction, not fact. There are effects that are not long-lasting, such as impacts on IQ. But there are also effects that have longevity, such as increased rates of high-school graduation. The Chicago example tracked effects for almost 20 years. One program, the Perry Preschool Program, has tracked kids for 37 years. All these long-term studies arrive at a single conclusion: Many important benefits last. Fact, not fiction.*

Kids in many daycares are stressed out and aggressive. *Absolutely. That is what cheap, unregulated daycare does. The reason Dr. Mustard's program is so expensive is that it costs big bucks to train and retain good educators. And as the Swedes know, good educators are needed to deliver great, regulated programs. You pay for what you get.*

The at-risk population is small and poor. *Since most of the population is not at risk, the returns to universal programs are negative. Wrong. According to my calculations, as long as at least 19.8 per cent of our kids are at risk, investors will earn more by placing their bets on kids than by investing in stocks and bonds.*

We must pay the \$15-billion up front, but it will take between 11 and 18 years before the full benefits are realized. *Okay, so there is a short-term budgetary issue to contend with. But there is no other fine print in my This Business of Kids Inc. prospectus. And you can take that to the bank.*

Read the rest of the article [here](#).

2. Obesity, Diets, and Social Inequalities

This article from the journal *Nutrition Reviews* highlights the link between poverty and poor nutrition. Excerpts:

Low-cost food and low-cost diets tend to be energy dense and nutrient poor. On one hand they are associated with overeating; on the other hand they are preferentially selected by the low-income consumer. The low cost and high palatability of energy-dense foods – mainly sugars and fats – along with the easy access to such foods can help explain why the highest obesity rates are found among the most disadvantaged groups...

There are sound economic reasons why poverty and obesity are so closely linked, and this could affect future obesity-prevention strategies. A combination of agricultural subsidies, pricing policies, regulatory action, and consumer education, involving cooperation among governments, academia, and the food industry, could facilitate access to an affordable supply of fresh, nutrient rich foods. In addition, while the onus to provide low income consumers with inexpensive, healthy foods is currently on the food industry, this view could shift to the need for policies to address broader societal issues, such as the falling value of the minimum wage and declining neighborhood resources.

This article is available online [here](#).

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3. Family Physical Activity Report Card

Active Healthy Kids Canada have released their annual report card on family physical activity. The report card stems from the knowledge that even when time is taken away from other subjects at school, physical education and physical activity do not negatively affect academic achievement. The report cites several studies showing that physical activity improves math and reading levels.

The report card gave Canada an F because 87% of kids are not getting the recommended 90 minutes of physical activity a day; however, the proportion meeting these guidelines has increased by 4% over the last 2 years. The report highlights a lack of active play, stating that only 50% of young children participate in unorganized sport, and 60% of disabled youth report that they seldom or never play games with friends.

Read more from the report card at www.activehealthykids.ca.

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4. Poverty Reduction Through Community Economic Development

The final report of the Canadian CED Network's Place-Based Poverty Reduction initiative brought together four partner organizations from diverse communities to document and promote innovative locally-based community economic development approaches to poverty reduction.

The policy recommendations put forward by the report include measures to: shift labour development policy to concentrate on reducing poverty and social exclusion and increase support for community-driven human capital development initiatives; recognize community economic development and social enterprise development as an effective strategy for poverty reduction and a pathway to self sufficiency for people in poverty by creating an enabling environment for co-operative and social enterprise growth; and address the barriers faced by low income individuals by investing in children, giving newcomers the tools to contribute, increasing the minimum wage, and reforming the system of taxes and benefits.

Read more [here](#).

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5. Justice for Girls Publishes Strategy to Prevent Girl Homelessness

"More Than Bricks & Mortar: A Rights-Based Strategy to Prevent Girl Homelessness in Canada" is a report published by Justice for Girls (JFG) in May of last year. The report, which follows a 2006 report by the United Nations that found homeless girls were more vulnerable to health risks and social and economic deprivation, is the result of interviews with 50 young women who were or had been homeless across Canada.

"Despite a context of economic prosperity and relatively progressive social policy in Canada," the report reads, "teenage girls who live in poverty are very often denied access to the most basic human rights...The Canadian government consistently fails to provide teenage girls who live in poverty with secure homes and communities in which to live in peace and dignity."

The Strategy to End Girl Homelessness mixes a Rights-Based Approach and Feminist Principles, and features 10 ways to prevent girl homelessness. Read the full report [here](#).

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Announcements

1. Auction Items Requested for First Call Fundraiser

First Call's annual fundraising dinner, *Honouring Our Advocacy*, is coming up on Tuesday, October 20! At this time we're asking for your support in gathering items to be auctioned at the event. Items could include:

- Tickets to arts or sporting events
- Gift certificates for restaurants and other services
- Getaways
- Unique gift items
- Tickets to children's events

This dinner is our major fundraising initiative, and we're asking all of our partners and supporters to contribute what they can. If you don't have something you can donate yourself but would like to help solicit auction items, please contact info@firstcallbc.org and we can provide you with a sample letter to potential donors. Let's make this the most successful dinner yet!

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2. Aboriginal and Practice Standards and Indicators for Delegated Agencies Undergoing Re-Design

Caring for First Nations Children Society is under contract to re-design the current Aboriginal and Practice Standards and Indicators (AOPSI) governing delegated agency practice.

The Practice Standards Re-Design will look to implement a new model developed from an Indigenous worldview and accountable to the First Nations Director of Child Welfare. This will be accomplished through a cooperative and consultative approach between First Nations delegated agencies, urban Aboriginal delegated agencies and Métis delegated agencies, the Province of British Columbia, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), traditional knowledge keepers, Indigenous scholars, children, communities, and families.

For more information, please visit www.cfncs.com.

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3. Child and Youth Human Rights Certificate Program

Mount Royal College in Alberta is offering a fully online 4-course program designed for those interested in learning about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and its implications for professional practice within a Canadian context.

The 4 online courses in this program examine major themes of the CRC: promotion, protection, participation, and provision. This program is especially useful for those working within the fields of early learning and child care, child and youth care,

education, social work, justice and child welfare, and counselling in helping to put into practice the spirit of CRC.

Course 1 starts in October 2009 and registration is open now. For more information and online registration visit: conted.mtroyal.ca/childrights

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