

## First Call's Weekly Announcements – April 23, 2010

Next ECD Roundtable: May 26

Next Coalition Meeting: May 12

Living Wage Roundtable: May 11

Visit our [web site](#) for more information.

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We encourage you to forward and share the Weekly Announcements with your networks. If circulating excerpts from the Weekly Announcements, please acknowledge First Call as the source of the information.

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, events, new publications and more.

First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition  
202 – 1193 Kingsway, Vancouver, V5V 3C9  
Ph: 604-873-8437 Fx: 604-874-9898  
Email: [info@firstcallbc.org](mailto:info@firstcallbc.org)

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**Advocacy/Calls to Action**

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## 1. Advocacy Against Education Cuts, Survey Supports School Funding

The mobilization continues against education cuts around the province. A parent in the **Chilliwack school district** has started a Facebook group and is trying to connect with other local parents and public education advocates to plan an action or rally to fight the school cuts.

Join the Facebook group "kids\_matter" [here](#), or email Chris at [kids\\_matter@shaw.ca](mailto:kids_matter@shaw.ca).

A group of **Vancouver students** has started a petition and are accepting signatures until April 29 asking VSB to change their plan to cut teachers and music programs. Join the Facebook group [here](#) or visit [www.wix.com/TheFutureLeaders/The-Future-Leaders](http://www.wix.com/TheFutureLeaders/The-Future-Leaders).

Visit the **BC Education Coalition** at [www.stopeducationcuts.ca](http://www.stopeducationcuts.ca) for more news about opposition to the cuts.

**The BC Society for Public Education** has released a survey showing that most British Columbians think the government is not doing enough to fund public schools:

*Eighty-one percent of those polled said that the provincial government should do more to protect public education. Seventy-nine percent said that the provincial government should increase funding to public schools.*

*The third and last question, asked if the province should continue to provide funds to private schools. Two out of three people surveyed did not agree with continued public funding for private schools.*

*BCSPE spokesperson, Catherine Evans, says her society commissioned the survey to find out what the majority of people throughout BC are thinking about the government's current direction on public education. "We were surprised by the strength of the response. It is clear that most British Columbians can see through the governments' messages. This survey tells us that most people understand that government funding has not kept up with rising costs."*

Read more from the media release [here](#).

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## 2. ACORN Launches Child Care Campaign in Surrey

Last week, BC ACORN launch their "Child Care in Crisis!" campaign with a rally outside of the office of the Ministry for Children and Family Development in Surrey. From the press release:

*Mothers and children are playing a game of 'Hide and Seek' with the Ministry of Children and Family Development in Surrey (MCDF). Accessing this elusive building*

*and its services are next to impossible, as Surrey ACORN members have noted. Sara Salaway, Surrey ACORN leader and working mother of two is exasperated about the cut backs to services regarding child care subsidies at the ministry's office: "Five to six years ago, you could walk into a social assistance office if you were low income and talk to a worker about subsidy eligibility and applications." These days, the services have been cut or farmed out to limited non-profit offices in the Lower Mainland.*

In a letter to Minister Polak, ACORN's Child Care Action Committee states:

*As parents and residents of Surrey we are concerned that the BC government has made deep cuts to child care and a service badly needed by families in our community. Studies show spending on child care programs and early learning "is an investment that returns \$2 for every \$1 invested."*

*As parents and residents of Surrey we demand that the provincial government build a system of child care in our community. We call on the BC government to commit to adequate funding for a community-controlled, universal and quality child care system.*

*As ACORN members, we demand the following issues be addressed:*

- 1. The income threshold for an average family of four is increased to accommodate the current realities of "working-poor" parents. This will allow more deserving parents to access the child care subsidy, and will prevent working parents from being cut off subsidy after a small rise to their incomes.*
- 2. Access to child care subsidy services must be more readily available to the general public. Many parents are unaware of the subsidy and do not know where to go to get help.*
- 3. The application process to apply for subsidy be simplified.*

For more information about the campaign and for copies of a petition contact [bcacorncenter@acorncanada.org](mailto:bcacorncenter@acorncanada.org).

Read an [article in the Province](#) about the campaign, with responses from the Ministry, the opposition critic for child care, and First Call's Adrienne Montani.

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### 3. School Trustees to Vote on Resolutions at AGM in Victoria

School trustees will be voting this week on resolutions about public education at their Annual General Meeting in Victoria. At least 11 resolutions relate to concerns about under-funding of actual costs, leading to ideas such as calling for a royal commission on public education, reducing the mandate of boards of education to fit the available funding, exemptions from offering all day kindergarten, a moratorium on required carbon emission offset purchases, and advocacy campaigns to let the public know the real facts about school funding.

One resolution suggests asking the Ministry of Education to redirect to the public education system the public money spent on independent schools, other than band schools. The resolution states: "In the 2008/09 school year, the provincial

government paid \$243.3 million to independent schools, money that should rightfully be used for public education."

Other resolutions raise concerns about student privacy in the release of Foundational Skills Assessment results, tracking the educational progress of children in care, and addressing critical staff shortages in rural districts. All the resolutions can be read [here](#).

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## 4. Dignity for All Campaign Update

The national campaign to end poverty has now been endorsed by 312 groups, as well as 43 MPs, 6 senators, and 5 provincial/territorial politicians. This week, campaigners were calling MPs and Senators in Ottawa to ask them to consider endorsing the campaign.

A conference will be held in Ottawa from Sept 22 – 24 to determine the campaign's vision for what a federal plan to eliminate poverty should include. Also, Ontario MP Tony Martin is drafting a private members' bill for a federal Poverty Elimination Act, and BC MP Libby Davies' affordable housing Act is moving to third reading in the House of Commons.

Find out more about the campaign and sign on as a supporter at [www.dignityforall.ca](http://www.dignityforall.ca).

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## 5. Transit Passes for Low Income People Spread to 3 BC Communities

The Caledon Institute has released a "community snapshot" on BC's Transit Ticket Assistance Program. BCTTAP began in Victoria with 5,000 tickets given to agencies to distribute to their clients:

*BCTTAP was initiated as a direct response to the voices of people in poverty. Based on the successful pilot project in BC's Capital Region, similar programs have been instituted in Abbotsford/Mission and Kelowna, in partnership with local municipalities and United Ways. A few transit rides do not lift people out of poverty, but the investment of a free bus ticket appears to be an essential piece of the poverty reduction puzzle. The [Victoria] Transit Commission, the CHALLENGE and participating agencies have worked to build trust and respect with residents in need – providing support and opportunities that help people help themselves. In BC's current economic climate, programs like BCTTAP are more important than ever.*

Read the community snapshot [here](#).

Remember to check out [Trip Ed](#), the campaign for a low cost transit pass for groups of children.

## Research & Resources

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### 1. UK Study on the Impact of Low Pay on Families

A new report from the UNISON, a union in the United Kingdom, examines the effects of low pay on the families of its workers. Like BC, more than half of poor children in the UK live in families with at least one working parent. The three main causes of poverty for working families identified in the report are:

- Inadequate pay
- Parents unable to work sufficient hours to rise above the poverty line
- Large family size

The UK continues to have a high-incidence of low paid work, and many workers identified lack of child care as preventing them from working more hours. The report examines the impacts of low pay on work patterns, managing child care, home and family life, and ways of coping. The report concludes that affordable and reliable child care would “go some way to enabling carers to explore opportunities to work in jobs that would help lift them and their families out of in-work poverty,” and that the research helped the union members to better understand their own circumstances and come up with strategies for change. Download the report [here](#).

### 2. Funding Really Early Development Initiative Launches in Kelowna

The Kelowna Capital News reported that local foundations, businesses, and government have formed a new partnership called FRED (Funding Really Early Development). The initiative, spearheaded by Success By 6, will fund projects to examine early childhood vulnerability. 25% of children in Kelowna are considered not ready to succeed in school when they enter kindergarten. Read more about it on the Success by 6 [website](#).

### 3. The Economic Costs of FASD – Manitoba Study

A new study from the University of Manitoba finds that children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder or with parents who abuse alcohol are far more likely than other children to see a doctor and require hospitalization and prescription medicine. The

total cost of health care and education for children with FASD was found to be three times that of the general population. The study's author recommends that more money be spent on FASD prevention. Read more in the [Winnipeg Free Press](#).

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#### 4. Prevention of Mental Illness through Early Childhood Development

A new publication from the Centre of Excellence for Children's Well-Being on Early Childhood Development looks at the increasing evidence that the origins of mental health problems diagnosed in later childhood, adolescence and adulthood can be found during pregnancy and very early childhood. The bulletin looks at two areas of research – longitudinal studies examining the development of mental health during early childhood, and genetic risk of mental health problems. Download it [here](#).

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## Announcements

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#### 1. Workshop and Videoconference on Addressing Health Inequities through Literacy - Monday

The Public Health Association of BC and Vancouver Coastal Health present a workshop and video conference on April 26 from 9:00 am to noon titled "Addressing Health Inequities through Literacy and Health Literacy." Presenters will include:

- Kelly McQuillen, Health Literacy Collaborative-PHC
- Connie Coniglio, Mental Health Literacy Network
- Iraj Poureslami, Interventions with Immigrants/Refugees
- Sean Muir, Comic books for Aboriginal Youth
- Leslie Clough, Health Literacy Month

The workshop will take place at Vancouver General Hospital, with satellite video conference sites at Surrey Memorial, Royal Inland in Kamloops, Kelowna General, Royal Jubilee in Victoria, and the Brunswick Building in Prince George. Pre-registration is required – click [here](#).

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## 2. Freedom-a-nation: Community Performance and Dialogue from Surrey Urban Youth Project

Freedom-a-nation: Different People, One Heart, One Beat is a community performance and dialogue which is the culmination of first phase of SUYP's 2010 Making Bridges Out of Walls Program. This phase has consisted of a 4-month arts-empowerment, anti-oppression, community organizing training for youth 14 and older in Surrey.

Freedom-a-nation takes place Thursday May 6<sup>th</sup> at the Studio Theatre at the Surrey Arts Centre, 13750 88 Ave, Surrey, Coast Salish Territory. Doors open at 7:00pm and the show starts at 7:30pm. The event is by donation. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

Join us for an exciting evening of original hip-hop, spoken word, film, dance, visual arts, theatre, and more created by participants of SUYP's Making Bridges Out of Walls Program to explore what welcoming and inclusive communities can look like in Surrey! Then participate in an interactive arts-based community dialogue to get your voice into the mix!

For information or to RSVP please contact [info@suyp.org](mailto:info@suyp.org) or 604-780-8463. Groups wishing to attend are highly encouraged to reserve seats.

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## 3. Free Workshop for Parent and Educators on ADHD - Vancouver

The Learning Disabilities Association of Vancouver presents a workshop to educate parents, educators and others about ADHD. It will address not only the basics of ADHD, but review the available services and interventions, and new research about ADHD. The following questions and concerns will be addressed:

- How do I know for sure a child has ADHD?
- What does ADHD medication do to my child?
- What are some signs the medication isn't working/is too much/is not correct for my child?
- What if I don't want him to have medication, are there alternatives?
- Who should I see to get my child diagnosed?
- Should I follow up with my doctor to monitor the medication?

The speaker is Dr. Ruth Wingerin, M.B. Ch.B, FRCP(C), Pediatrician at B.C. Children's Hospital. The workshop takes place on Tuesday, May 11<sup>th</sup> from 7:00 - 8:30pm at the Chan Centre at B.C. Children's Hospital, 950 W. 28<sup>th</sup> Ave in Vancouver. RSVP to [info@ldav.ca](mailto:info@ldav.ca).

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## 4. Free Energy Evaluation for Low-Income BC Hydro Customers

BC Hydro's Energy Conservation Assistance Program allows qualified low-income BC Hydro customers to save money by getting a free home energy evaluation, the installation of energy saving products, and personalized energy efficiency advice.

Energy saving products that may be installed include:

- Energy saving light bulbs (CFLs) indoor and outdoor
- Faucet aerators for the kitchen and bathroom
- Low-flow showerhead
- Water heater pipe wrap and blanket
- Draftproofing, such as weatherstripping, caulking and outlet gaskets
- Insulation for attics, walls and crawlspaces
- Low-wattage night light
- Energy Star® refrigerator

To qualify, your electricity bill must exceed \$500 a year and you must live in the Lower Mainland or on Vancouver Island. Tenants of rental housing can ask their landlord to apply on their behalf. The program will likely be expanded to other regions of the province later this year. To apply for the program, contact Melissa at 604-868-8872 or find out more [here](#).

BC Hydro is also doing batch upgrades for low-income housing complexes and is in the process of making upgrades to Kiwassa Neighbourhood House's units and Helping Lodge Spirit Society.

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