

First Call's Weekly Announcements – February 3, 2010

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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. Representative Asks for Plan on Child Poverty

Last week the Representative for Children and Youth, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond met with the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth to discuss two of her recent reports. Of the report *Housing, Help and Hope: A Better Path for Struggling Families*, she stated:

This case of the infant brought some of the stark realities of the day-to-day lives of young families living in poverty with young children into focus for my office. As I've reported to you before and as I state very strongly in this report, this case led me to make a more urgent focus on poverty in British Columbia, particularly as we looked beyond the individual circumstances of this family and looked more systemically at what is available for families in crisis and families whose children may be removed by the child welfare system, particularly vulnerable families like aboriginal families.

The Representative noted that she was publicly directed by the Premier to bring the issue of child poverty to the Committee on Children and Youth and consider "to what extent does British Columbia have a response to child poverty, and is it an adequate one?" She further stated:

I know that British Columbia has many programs and strengths around responding to poverty. I'm not suggesting that there are no programs and services that are available to address different aspects of the lives of those who are struggling, but there is not a system. It is not integrated. There are not targets, measures or accountability, nor does it have a dedicated focus on children...

I am recommending that we get a plan in British Columbia, that we have strong, single accountability and a commitment by everyone that it become a non-partisan issue to make progress on reducing child poverty.

*I think this committee has an opportunity to take a leadership role in changing lives by addressing a challenge that 105,000 B.C. children face every day. So as representative, **I'm asking the committee members to consider passing a resolution to strike a subcommittee on child poverty.***

I respectfully submit that the action plan for this subcommittee include a White Paper for public discussion and a quick round of consultations with key stakeholders throughout B.C.

I further respectfully ask you to consider a subcommittee commitment to report to the Legislative Assembly with recommendations for a poverty reduction plan within four months. Time is of the essence on this issue as day to day B.C.'s children and youth struggle in poverty.

The complete transcript of this meeting is available [here](#).

In an interview with [Public Eye Online](#) after the meeting concluded, Committee Vice-Chair Maurine Karagianis stated that there was "**tacit agreement on the recommendation by the children's representative that a subcommittee will take action on a child poverty initiative.**"

An article in the [Victoria Times Colonist](#) looks at the background of the Representative's request and the Premier's refusal last year to meet with her and the leader of the opposition to discuss child poverty.

Another major issue raised at this meeting by the Representative was **lack of response to her recommendations by the Ministry for Children and Family Development**. Read more about that issue on [Public Eye Online](#).

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2. Ministry of Children and Family Development Prepares for Possible Cut Backs

According to a memo obtained by [Public Eye Online](#), the Ministry of Children and Family Development is looking at possible cut backs in funding for community service providers. While the budget for MCFD has been maintained by the province, inflation, increased caseloads and costs of service delivery are putting pressure on the ministry. The memo says that there will be no reduction in services provided by Aboriginal agencies to Aboriginal children and families, as they are the ministry's top priority.

The memo outlines a set of guidelines agreed to by the ministry and the Federation of Community Social Services Board of Directors that will "guide discussions related to future service delivery with community service providers":

- There will be no across the board percentage reduction in funding for community service providers unless an agreement is made at the Provincial level.
- Direct services to children and families will remain a priority through this process and every effort will be made to find savings through efficiencies and secondarily through service reductions.
- Residential services are in scope for review and potential cost reductions. However, this will not affect admission of a child into care of the Province when required under the Child, Family and Community Service Act.
- Consideration will be given to unique community contexts, for example to ensure that if a rural or remote community has only one service delivery agency that it remains viable and sustainable.
- Services with low utilization levels will be reviewed and potentially reduced.
- Preference will be given to agencies which are able to provide a continuum of MCFD services to support an integrated approach to service delivery.
- Sharing operational costs to gain economies of scale will be encouraged.

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

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3. HST Impact on Social Services Organizations

The provincial government has been setting rebate levels for the provincial portion of the HST, and the Federation of Community Social Services is concerned that the rebate level will not make the new tax fiscally neutral for the social services sector. This rebate level is set at 57%, and the Federation has written to the Minister of

Finance asking for 75%, which is the rate that municipalities are getting and is estimated to be fiscally neutral. Schools will receive a rebate of 87%.

In a fact sheet circulated to its members, the Federation noted that in Ontario, charities and qualifying non-profit agencies will get an 82% rebate on the new tax, and that the HST will lead to an increase in operating costs for non-profits including required revamps to accounting systems, re-writing contracts that straddle the HST implementation date, accounting and legal services, and commercial leases, amongst other costs. Organizations that rely on consultants and contracted services providers will see an overall cost increase of at least 2.6% with a 57% HST rebate.

Read the Federation's discussion paper on the HST [here](#).

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4. BC Report to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

"Nothing to Report" is the title of the submission of the BC CEDAW Group to the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in response to Canada's follow-up report to that Committee. The BC CEDAW Group is a coalition of women's non-governmental and non-profit organizations committed to advancing the equality interests of women and girls. First Call has officially endorsed this report.

Canada was asked to report back to the UN CEDAW Committee within one year on its implementation of two recommendations after CEDAW reviewed Canada's progress in 2008. Those two recommendations involve women's poverty and social assistance rates, and police and government failure to prevent or effectively investigate violence against Aboriginal women and girls.

In 2008, the CEDAW Committee called on Canada to carry out thorough investigations of missing or murdered Aboriginal women and take measures to address any racialized pattern to the disappearances. The CEDAW Committee also recommended minimum standards for the provision of funding to social assistance programs and monitoring the use of such funds by provincial and territorial governments, as well as an impact assessment of social programs related to women's rights.

The BC CEDAW report examines the evidence showing that BC has taken no action toward meeting these recommendations, and it concludes that the BC government has failed to act on either of the central issues identified by CEDAW.

Read the report [here](#).

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5. Get to Know the Provincial Treasury Board

The Treasury Board is the Cabinet committee responsible for budget and management matters. If your MLA is on the Treasury Board, you have a direct pipeline to the key decision-making body for provincial budgets, and we urge you to let your MLA know what your budget priorities are. Find out how to contact MLA's [here](#).

Members of the Treasury Board:

Colin Hansen (Chair), Vancouver-Quilchena
Shirley Bond (Vice-Chair), Prince George-Valemount
Stephanie Cadieux, Surrey-Panorama
Ron Cantelon, Parksville-Qualicum
Ida Chong, Oak Bay-Gordon Head
Blair Lekstrom, Peace River South
Steve Thomson, Kelowna-Mission

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Research & Resources

1. Edmonton and Calgary Push to Keep Schools Open After Hours

The cities of Calgary and Edmonton are working on plans to keep schools open after school hours and on weekends in an effort to provide healthy activities for kids, make streets safer and reduce gang activity.

Calgary has received provincial lottery funds to keep schools open evenings and weekends for the next two years. Edmonton's proposal is to keep schools open as community hubs from 3 to 6 PM. They have also applied for provincial funding but have not yet heard back.

Read more about this great example of municipal leadership in prevention in the [Edmonton Journal](#).

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2. Government-Assisted Refugee Statistical Highlights

Immigrant Services Society of BC has released a report for 2009 on government-assisted refugees. 37% of the 885 individuals who arrived in BC last year were children under 18. The top five destinations were Surrey, Burnaby, Tri-Cities, Vancouver, and New Westminster.

Due to the Olympics, refugee arrivals will be minimal in the first quarter of 2010, and the majority are expected to arrive between September and December. ISS is

working with BC Housing to provide access to BC Housing units in Vancouver for government-assisted refugees.

Chris Friesen of ISS will present at First Call's February 10 coalition meeting on arrival patterns, programs and service trends for immigrant and refugee children and youth. Read more of the ISS update [here](#).

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3. Putting Science Into Action Conference Papers in Paediatrics and Health Journal

The December issue of Paediatrics and Health features a number of papers from the "Putting Science Into Action" Conference that was held in New Brunswick in May 2009. In the editorial, Clyde Hertzman and Robin Williams reveal their "ah-ha's" from the conference:

- We as Canadians have got to do something to improve outcomes for our youngest.
- In spite of what we say about 'children and our future,' how we really treat kids and families is grounded in our history and culture.
- Changing how we value kids and families has to begin now.
- Bottom feeding on international lists of how we treat and invest in our youngest sucks!
- The true investment required in our early years system and supports for families seems large (\$18 to \$22 billion), but pales in comparison with what we are spending on health care and education.

Read the details of these insights [here](#).

The table of contents for the journal and all articles are available [here](#).

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4. CBC Documentary on Hyper Parenting and Its Effects on Children

Parents have always wanted the best for their children, but in recent years, some have taken it to new extremes. Raising kids has become more product development than child development. And as these children enter adulthood, many are finding themselves unprepared for the real world. Is all of this attention giving the next generation a competitive edge or creating new problems that will last a lifetime?

Premiering Thurs. Feb. 4 at 9 p.m. ET/PT on CBC-TV's Doc Zone, Hyper Parents & Coddled Kids sheds light on this question while exploring the cultural pressures that make hyper parenting almost impossible to resist. The one-hour documentary examines the intensely competitive hyper parenting phenomenon – and its effects on kids today. From exposing babies in the womb to prenatal education systems and enrolling them in gymnastics before they can walk to negotiating their grown kids' job contracts and salaries, parents today work hard to make sure their children stay

ahead of the pack. But as these kids reach adulthood, will it be to their advantage or will it backfire?

"There are indications that the unprecedented amount of attention parents are giving their children may not have the outcome they had hoped for. In fact, in some cases, it may have the opposite effect," says Maria LeRose, co-director and producer.

Several experts weigh in on the issue including Canadian-raised journalist Carl Honoré, author of *Under Pressure: Rescuing Childhood from the Culture of Hyper-Parenting*; clinical psychologist Madeline Levine who works with many privileged kids who suffer anxiety and depression as a result of hyper parenting; and Ron Alsop, former Wall Street Journal editor and reporter, and author of *The Trophy Kids Grow Up: How the Millennial Generation is Shaking Up the Workplace*.

Hyper Parents & Coddled Kids will be rebroadcast: Friday February 5 at 10 pm ET/PT on CBC News Network.

Find out more [here](#).

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Announcements

1. 2010 Provincial Aboriginal Youth Conference - Vancouver

The BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres is excited to announce the 8th Annual Provincial Aboriginal Youth Conference "Gathering Our Voices." The conference will attract over 1000 Aboriginal youth from across BC and Canada.

This year's theme is "Our Health and the Environment", and it will be reflected in 30+ workshops, a 40 booth Health and Education Fair, Cultural and Recreational Activities, Evening Events and Motivational Speakers.

When: March 10-13th, 2010

Where: Vancouver, BC at the Hyatt Regency Vancouver

For more information: Contact Rosy Steinhauer, Youth Conference Coordinator at rsteinhauer@bcaafc.com.

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2. Adolescents and Adults with FASD Conference – Vancouver

Facing the Future Together: Where Do We Go From Here? takes place April 14 – 17 at the Hyatt Regency in Vancouver.

Participants can expect to:

1. Continue to expand their understanding of FASD as it presents in adolescence and adulthood and its potential implications and applications.
2. Learn about current findings about adults and adolescents with FASD from scientific, clinical, and community researchers.
3. Learn about innovative programs, projects, and practices that are making a difference.
4. Hear from individuals most directly affected.
5. Network, interact and engage in discussion with others in the field.

Click [here](#) for the program and [here](#) to register. Register before March 5 for the early bird rate.

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3. Nominations Open for the Child Care Awards of Excellence

MCFD is accepting nominations for the Child Care Awards of Excellence until February 28. Six categories of awards will celebrate the exceptional contributions of child care and early childhood education professionals. Twelve Awards of Excellence will be provided in the following award categories:

- General
- Aboriginal (Includes Lenora Pritchard Award of Excellence)
- Family Child Care Provider
- Promising New Early Childhood Educator
- Promising New Family Child Care Provider
- Lifetime Achievement

Find out more [here](#).

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4. Cheeky Video Highlights BC Child Poverty Rate

A group of BC musicians and actors have created a satirical music video highlighting child poverty in BC. Their message is that if most British Columbians knew the truth they would be shocked and would demand that government fulfill its responsibility to look after those most in need. Rather than boasting that BC is the best place on earth, it is time for us to demand that government ensures that BC is indeed the best place on earth for all its citizens, not just those who are financially well off.

View the video [here](#).

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