

First Call's Weekly Announcements – January 8, 2010

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With special guest Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond
Next ECD Roundtable: January 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, events, new publications and more.

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Advocacy/Calls to Action

1. First Call Endorses Business Case for Youth Specific Employment Service Delivery Model

At the December coalition meeting, First Call partners agreed to endorse this [youth specific employment service delivery model](#) presented by Pacific Community Resources Society.

\$280 million in federal funding is being transferred to BC to provide employment services, and the Ministry of Housing and Social Development is conducting consultations to develop a made-in-BC employment service delivery strategy.

There is a strong case for youth-specific employment services. The youth unemployment rate in BC is twice that of the general population. Unemployed, at risk youth have a specific set of barriers that limit their ability to attach to the labour market. Alberta and Ontario have evaluation data showing significant decreases in youth unemployment from their youth-specific strategies, and existing BC youth employment resource centres in the Lower Mainland have a good track record.

The coalition agreed to endorse this model, while noting that the full one-stop-shop resource centre model may not be a viable option in smaller communities around the province, and alternative youth-specific service models would need to be developed.

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2. Debating a Living Wage

Last week [an editorial in the Globe and Mail](#) questioned the effectiveness of living wages as a poverty-fighting tool.

The Living Wage for Families Campaign (hosted by First Call) responded with a letter to the editor, which you can read in full [here](#):

I feel that your editorial of Dec. 28th on the Living Wage misrepresents the approach of living wage campaigns by asserting that they are merely lobbying to get ineffectual municipal by-laws passed. The main thrust of many living wage campaigns is trying persuade large private and public employers that paying all their staff a living wage, especially their contracted staff who are usually on very low wages, is not only an effective anti-poverty approach but is also good for business.

This approach has been hugely successful in London, UK, with numerous private businesses signed up as living wage employers. The London 2012 Olympics will be the first living wage Olympics. Study after study shows that paying a living wage reduces staff turnover, increases productivity and improves customer service. The newly elected Conservative Mayor of London Boris Johnson has remarked: "Paying the London Living Wage is not only morally right, but makes good business sense too. What may appear to a company to be an unaffordable cost in a highly competitive market should more often be viewed as a sound investment decision."

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3. Investing in Child Care for a Stronger Economy

A recent BC Business article outlines the vision of child care and early learning as an investment for BC's economic future. Outlining a Human Early Learning Partnership report commissioned by the Business Council of BC, the article quotes the lead report author Paul Kershaw stating that child care is a social issue that has a direct and predictable economic return:

... researchers in B.C. are changing the tune of the child-care debate: they're saying it can also make us money, and lots of it. That's what B.C.'s business crowd heard when Clyde Hertzman, one of B.C.'s lead researchers on the topic, was invited to share his theories at the Business Council of B.C.'s Outlook 2020 summit in September this year. A big investment in early childhood education and care, he insisted, would help our GDP grow an extra 20 per cent in 60 years by enhancing our workforce. This is an astounding amount of money: tens of billions of dollars a year. Sure, it would be expensive, but the return on investment – and now imagine a ballroom full of besuited professionals and politicians all perking up – is in the realm of six to one.

... But there's a bright side, [Kershaw] says: by investing in government-funded support for kids under the age of six, we can lower the number of vulnerable kids by two-thirds. Of course, it won't be cheap. For B.C. to enjoy the full payback of childhood development, HELP is calling on the government to invest \$3 billion a year. The problem lies in convincing a government bound to a four-year election cycle to make an investment that won't pay for itself for 30 or 40 years. "We need business leaders to demand that our political leaders think more medium-term about this issue," Kershaw says. "That's the cultural shift we need."

Read more [here](#).

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4. Homelessness Hunger Strike Relay Hits One Year Mark

The 2010 Homelessness Hunger Strike Relay began on December 29, 2008, and since then over 70 participants have given up food for a week to protest Canada's lack of a national housing program. A rally for a national housing program will take place on February 20 from 12 – 2 PM at the Vancouver Art Gallery. The hunger strike relay will end in June of this year with a trek to Ottawa.

Watch [this video](#) from the one year anniversary and find out more at www.2010homelessness.ca.

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5. Caledon Institute Challenges Federal Liberals

A Toronto Star article written by the Caledon Institute of Social Policy calls on the federal Liberal Party to focus on poverty at their upcoming conference. The authors

argue that government no longer understands their crucial role in offsetting market-based inequalities, and that the Liberals can no longer boast of a “rich body of policy ideas.”

The article goes on to suggest aspects of an anti-poverty platform, including early childhood development and raising the Canada Child Tax Benefit. The authors suggest raising the GST back to 7% to fund the fight against poverty.

Read the article [here](#).

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Research & Resources

1. Cross-Ministry Transition Planning Protocol for Youth with Special Needs

From a letter from Mark Sieben, Chief Operating Officer, Ministry of Children and Family Development:

A new Cross-Ministry Transition Planning Protocol for Youth with Special Needs became effective November 1, 2009 and will begin to be implemented in the coming months.

We recognize that the transition to adulthood can be a challenge for youth with special needs and their families. Starting the transition planning process early and coordinating it with other government organizations is part of our commitment to improving cross-ministry collaboration to facilitate youth transitions to adulthood.

First Call is pleased to see that the application of Jordan’s Principle is mandated in the protocol under “Dispute Resolution.” The transition planning protocol document is available [here](#). Find out more on the [MCFD website](#).

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2. Investing in Aboriginal Education

Two new reports from the Canadian Policy Research Networks (which unfortunately closed its doors at the end of 2009 due to lack of funding) show that improving educational outcomes for Aboriginals in Canada is the most effective means to alleviate Aboriginal marginalization and poverty:

[**Investing in Aboriginal Education in Canada: An Economic Perspective**](#) by economist and Executive Director, Andrew Sharpe, and senior economist, Jean-François Arsenault at the Centre for the Study of Living Standards (CSLS), examines the strong positive correlation between education, employment and earnings that is well established in social science research, and postulates various positive economic outcomes for the Canadian economy – regionally and nationally – if Aboriginal educational attainment was improved even marginally. Sharpe and Arsenault argue that Canada’s Aboriginal population could play a key role in mitigating the looming long-term labour shortage caused by Canada’s ageing population and low birthrate.

In the second CPRN paper, [**Aboriginal Education: Strengthening the Foundations**](#), John Richards, Professor in the Public Policy Program at Simon Fraser University and the Roger Phillips Chair in Social Policy at the C.D. Howe Institute, and Megan Scott, graduate student at Simon Fraser University’s Public Policy Program provide a detailed analysis of the current state of Aboriginal educational programs and policies across Canada’s regions and highlight the successes, failures and lessons learned.

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3. Toronto Report on Street Involved Youth

This report from Toronto’s Yonge Street Mission summarizes interviews with hundreds of street involved youth and youth serving agencies. The in depth research project examines demographics and trends among street involved youth.

The report is available [here](#).

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4. Book About Early Years Community Development

Raising the Village is a practical resource for people and organizations who are looking for ways to collaborate and strengthen communities and keep child development a priority. With a foreword by Dr. Clyde Hertzman, *Raising the Village* by Tracy Smyth and Tammy Dewar is written with a solid backdrop of child development research and community development theory. Find out more at www.raisingthevillage.ca.

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Announcements

1. REACH Early Learning and Child Care Event in Victoria

A panel of renowned Canadian and international researchers will present a vision for early learning and child care on Tuesday, January 19 from 7:00 – 9:00 PM at the University of Victoria, Harry Hickman building room 110.

Moving Beyond Minimum Standards: A Vision for Early Learning and Child Care will feature presentations on the creation of an early learning and child care system that emphasizes links between innovative policies and innovative practices.

Presenters:

- Professor Margaret Carr, Professor of Education at the University of Waikato in New Zealand.
- Dr. Charles E. Pascal, as Ontario's Special Advisor on Early Learning, released his report *With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*, in June 2009.
- Prof. Peter Moss, Professor of Early Childhood Provision at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education at the University of London.

Registration is not required.

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2. 3rd Annual Poverty Olympics Taking Place in Vancouver

You are invited to the 2010 Poverty Olympics on Sunday, February 7 from 12:30 – 3:00 PM. Join the province-wide Poverty Olympics torch relay at VANDU, 380 E. Hastings at 12:30 PM. Opening ceremonies and games take place at the Japanese Hall, 487 Alexander St. beginning at 1:00 PM. This is a free, family-friendly event. Find out more at www.povertyolympics.ca.

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3. Four Feet Up Film on Child Poverty Screening in Richmond

Four Feet Up is a film examining child poverty in Canada. Twenty years after the House of Commons promised "to eliminate poverty among Canadian children," 8-year-old Isaiah is trying hard to grow up healthy, smart and well adjusted despite the odds stacked against him. Isaiah knows he's been categorized as "less fortunate," and his short life has seen more than his share of social workers, food banks and police interventions. His parents struggle to overcome a legacy of stereotypes, abuse and dysfunction and desire more than anything for Isaiah and his siblings to have access to the opportunities they never had.

Four Feet Up will be screened on Thursday, January 14 at 7:00 at the Ralph Fisher Auditorium, Richmond Hospital. The screening will be followed by a panel discussion and dialogue with the audience about the film and its impacts as well as potential solutions to the serious social issue of child poverty. The panel will include:

- Dr. James Lu, Medical Health Officer, Richmond Health Services/past Chair, Health Officers Council of BC
- Margaret White, Research Analyst, BC Teachers Federation
- Ted Bruce, Executive Director, Population Health, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority
- Steven Kerstetter, social policy consultant and volunteer with First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition

Find out more about the film [here](#).

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4. Ready, Set, Learn Event in Coquitlam

School District 43 is pleased to offer a free Ready, Set, Learn event for families and their three-year olds in the North Port Coquitlam neighborhood of schools. Children will be able to participate in a variety of play based learning activities, listen to stories and have a healthy snack. Parents will be able to learn and play with their child as well as meet with local community agencies and school principals. Each child will receive a free age appropriate book. Parents are encouraged to take the time to read it with their child, talk about the illustrations and have fun spending time together.

The event will take place at Coquitlam River Elementary School on Thursday, January 14 from 4:00 – 6:00 PM.

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5. Photovoice: Urban Native Youth Exhibit

Urban Native youth will speak about the inter-generational effects of the Indian Residential School System at this photo exhibit hosted by Urban Native Youth Association. Come to this special evening with free food on Friday, January 15 from 4:00 – 8:00 PM (exhibit opens at 5:00) at 1630 E. Hastings St. in Vancouver.

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