

First Call's Weekly Announcements – July 15, 2010

Next Coalition Meeting: September 8

Next ECD Roundtable: September 15

Annual Dinner: October 28

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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 for further details on upcoming First Call meetings, events, new publications and more.

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Advocacy/Calls to Action

1. The Needs of Canada's Aboriginal Children

In a Vancouver Sun op-ed, Karen Isaac of the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society discusses Canada's poor record on Aboriginal children, including the extremely high rate of Aboriginal children in care and poverty and inadequate spending on First Nations education and early childhood development. Isaac points out that UNICEF, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and even a Senate committee on poverty have condemned Canada for its lack of action on these issues. Read the article [here](#).

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2. Education Budget Impacts

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC have sent an open letter to education minister Margaret MacDiarmid regarding the rents of child care centres in schools:

It was with shock and disbelief that the Coalition of Child Care Advocates heard BC's Minister of Education urge Vancouver's Board of Education to generate profit by raising child care rents by \$1.5 million.

While child care is the mandate of senior levels of government, local government also has a significant role to play in supporting the development and sustainability of child care spaces and a child care system in British Columbia...

It is no surprise then that over half of all licensed child care spaces in the city of Vancouver have been created through the three public bodies, City, Park and School boards. Of these public spaces, almost 50% are within Vancouver schools, a total of 2,880 spaces caring for children.

Two Vancouver Board of Education policies make this success in supporting sustainable quality child care spaces in schools possible. First, the Board only rents and leases to child care programs delivered by non-profit societies – thus ensuring that public assets are not used to generate personal profits.

More importantly, Vancouver Board of Education rents space to these child care operators on a cost-recovery basis. Vancouver's rental fees are not designed to generate profit for the VSB but rather to cover the VSB costs of providing space – costs such as janitorial services, utilities, and supplies. In the absence of provincial or federal funding, this keeps school-based child care affordable and sustainable.

In this context, the Minister of Education's preferred change in rental policy, from cost-recovery to profit-making, is extraordinarily ill advised.

It undermines the province's stated commitment to reduce vulnerability of Kindergarten children from the current shocking average of 29% to 15% by the year 2015. It runs contrary to other provincial initiatives such as Full School Day Kindergarten, Neighbourhood Centres of Learning, and the Premier's 'Great Goal' of making BC the most literate jurisdiction in North America.

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

The COPE trustees from Vancouver's Board of Education had a guest column in the Vancouver Province decrying the decisions forced onto them by the Minister of Education:

COPE trustees on the Vancouver Board of Education will reluctantly pass this evening the budget Education Minister Margaret MacDiarmid has demanded.

Her budget will be a catastrophic blow to Vancouver's students at a time in our province when protecting and expanding public education should be our top priority.

For many years, and through many different elected boards, the VSB has tried to avoid the depth of cuts this government is now demanding. By doing our best to insulate core education services from the yearly cutbacks brought on by chronic underfunding, we have been able to remain one of the best places to learn in the world.

This year, however, there are costs coming from the provincial government that they are simply refusing to pay for -- costs such as salary, MSP and pension increases.

...rather than taking an honest look at how our entire provincial education system is funded, MacDiarmid chose to make a one-sided examination of just one board, ours, and ignore the critical situation facing every school board in British Columbia.

Through this entire process, the minister has repeated the constant refrain that her government has increased education funding every year.

But for boards across this province the reality is far different. If you are a parent, take a moment and ask your child if they would accept a \$5 raise in their allowance if it meant they had to start paying \$10 for rent and food.

If the VSB had a choice, we wouldn't accept that kind of offer either, but we don't have a choice. We've tried to avoid this level of damage for years, but now the minister has for all intents and purposes commanded us to make these cuts.

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

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3. Smart Family Policy Includes Funding Early Childhood Development

Two recent articles from Paul Kershaw and Lynell Anderson of the Human Early Learning Partnership emphasize the need for increased investment in early learning and care to reduce childhood vulnerability. From the Vancouver Province:

Families are doing their best to raise healthy children. But data show that nearly 30 per cent of B.C. children arrive at kindergarten vulnerable because they struggle to hold a pencil, follow instructions, get along with peers or know 10 letters. Why so much early vulnerability? Because Canadians in British Columbia are letting down families with children before age six.

At age six, something magical happens. Canadians have far less angst about society's role in supporting families with children. We show this by welcoming children into publicly funded schools. We do so because we know children deserve this support, and because we know supporting them well will generate social and economic benefits.

But before Grade 1, parents must generally fend for themselves, somehow balancing time to earn money with time to care personally. Many readers may be nostalgic for the 1950s, when some women stayed home to care and some men specialized in breadwinning. But wishing cannot make it so. Over the last three decades, income in 70 per cent of B.C. families stayed the same or lost ground, even as more and more households devoted a second parent's time to paid work, and even after taxes have gone down over the last 15 years (something that will surprise most readers). The reality is that the cost of living and gender equality mean the Leave it to Beaver family model is outdated.

[Read the rest of this story.](#)

From the Vancouver Sun:

...Although it is important to support child health elsewhere, it is ironic for Canadians to feign leadership when nearly 30 per cent of our own children are vulnerable by the time they reach kindergarten. Vulnerable young Canadians struggle with age-appropriate tasks such as holding a pencil, climbing stairs, following teachers' instructions, getting along on the playground, and knowing 10 letters.

Our domestic child development woes received little attention in advance of the G8/G20 summits, while international maternal/child health was debated in the House of Commons and media.

Why? Part of the answer is that pride in our medical system inclines us to believe incorrectly that Canada excels at promoting health. There is no doubt our system is good at preventing women and children from dying during pregnancy and childbirth. In fact, we are comfortable spending hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not more, to save one pre-term baby.

But while we go to heroic measures to help one sick individual, we are not generous in promoting the population's health by guaranteeing all families with children access to decent housing, food, early learning or quality child care, and enough unstressed time together.

[Read more.](#)

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4. Hotel Workers Fight for Job Security, Reject “Green” Initiative

On July 22, hotel workers in 15 cities across North America are staging a powerful protest against Hyatt Corporation and its billionaire owners. Here in Vancouver, workers will be in front of the Hyatt on Burrard St at 5:00 pm. This is a coordinated

protest to fight for dignity and respect for 50,000 hotel workers who are up against huge profitable multinationals that keep cutting jobs and increasing workload.

By cutting jobs and increasing workload, Hyatt and the other global hotel companies continue to try to squeeze workers who already suffer from increased workloads and remain at risk for greater injuries.

1600 hotel workers in Vancouver at the Hyatt, Four Seasons, Westin Bayshore, and Renaissance hotels are bargaining a new contract this year. All of these hotels are operated by wealthy global hotel corporations. The majority of hotel workers are women and immigrants. All hotel workers deserve safe jobs that support families and provide for a secure future. Hotel jobs should be good jobs.

For more information about the rally, contact 604-473-4815 or visit www.UniteHereLocal40.org.

On a related note, hotel workers are speaking out about “green” initiatives in hotels that increase their workload and the use of chemicals to clean while reducing their hours of work:

...At first glance, the new initiative, which was launched last fall, seems like a win-win situation for everyone. If guests give up housekeeping services for a day in a bid to “conserve natural resources,” the hotel gives you a \$5 voucher for foods and drinks in return.

But Ruiz says that when the rooms are finally cleaned it takes much longer, and involves more cleaning products and the use of energy to get the job done.

“Do you know how dirty a room gets when it hasn’t been cleaned for three days?” asked Ruiz, who has worked at the Sheraton for 18 years.

“Normally I clean a room in 30 minutes. After three days of no service, it takes me almost an hour and half to clean the room and I use just as much cleaning fluid because the bathrooms are filthy,” she said.

Read more in the [Toronto Star](#). The “Make a Green Choice” program is also in place in Vancouver’s Westin Bayshore hotel.

Find out more about [Hotel Workers Rising](#), the movement of hotel workers and allies to create safe, family-sustaining jobs in the hospitality sector.

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5. Nova Scotia Bans Sale and Use of Non-Essential Pesticides

The government of Nova Scotia has passed a pesticide control act banning the use of pesticides on lawns and, in two years, banning the use of pesticides on ornamental plants and trees. There is a list of exempted pesticides, and the ban does not apply to forestry and agricultural activities or golf courses. The sale of banned pesticides was also made illegal.

A coalition of organizations including First Call has been advocating for a similar ban in BC, given the environmental and health concerns associated with pesticide use. These toxins are more harmful to children than adults. Find out more about this campaign on the [Toxic Free Canada website](#).

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Research & Resources

1. Centre for Safe Schools on Summertime Internet Safety

From the newsletter of the BC Centre for Safe Schools and Communities:

During the summer months, young people with internet access and plenty of healthy curiosity may have more time to wander into some of the unsavory areas of the world wide web. Without parental supervision, free time on the web can provide greater opportunity to participate in risky on-line behaviours.

Police and child protection agencies across Canada and around the world have been warning parents about the dangers of child luring on the Internet for several years. The facts are indisputable: children are using the Internet more and more, and the predators know it. In chat rooms and social networking sites, 'friends' can be anyone, and children can make the mistake of connecting with unscrupulous people. When anyone enters their personal details on their closest 'friend', or makes new 'cyber' friendships, they may not realize the potential impact of their actions.

There are no borders in cyberspace and smart offenders use this fact to their advantage. The London based Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre has documented an increase in partial nude pictures captured via webcams as a result of on-line grooming. CEOP warns that "there is also a marked trend of the use of webcam streaming chat sites, enabling offenders to interact either through instant messages and/or webcam to share previously captured footage or live-time images of abuse of children in their care".

[Click here](#) to continue reading this article and get suggestions on how to increase children's safety on the internet.

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2. Protecting Children from Violence in Sport

This report from UNICEF focuses on issues in industrialized countries. Here is an analysis of the situation in Canada from the UNICEF website:

In Canada, sport is regulated and delivered through a number of federal, provincial and territorial policies and institutional arrangements and by a variety of industry and community sport organizations. They are pursuing a number of strategies to address declining participation, barriers to participation, improving school sport, closing the gaps in athlete development, upgrading coaching development, bolstering international competitive success and making ethical issues as well as safety central to sport. Recently, a number of studies have highlighted the high rate of injuries sustained by children in sport, particularly in hockey, that may lead to permanent learning disabilities and other neurological and psychosocial damage. Media reports have exposed the sexual abuse of young players within a culture of control and power exercised by adults in positions of authority. Clearly, there is a problem and clearly, Canada needs to do more to free children in sport from injury, abuse and exploitation.

What Canada needs to do:

- *There is no comprehensive national strategy for Canada's children. Canada needs a national children's strategy or plan, led by the federal government, that includes a coherent child protection framework to safeguard children from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation.*
- *There is a growing body of research on children's exposure to sport related injury but less empirical research on the full range of violence, abuse, exploitation and harm as defined in article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including physical, psychological, emotional and sexual abuse and exploitation, to guide appropriate policy and programmatic interventions in Canada. The Sport Canada Research Initiative should undertake a comprehensive study immediately to contribute to good policy and programme development.*
- *Building on good practices across Canada, Sport Canada should lead a cross-Canada education and awareness-raising programme for child participants, parents, coaches, sport managers, sport medicine teams and corporate agencies involved in sport to help advance a stronger culture of respect in sport.*
- *Effective policy and practices are not systematically implemented nor sufficiently enforced through appropriate accountability mechanisms. Federal and provincial departments for sport should set standards for good child protection policy and practice based on an evaluation of what works, and support their adoption and regulation by industry and community sport organizations.*

Find out more and download the report [here](#).

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3. Study on the Use of the Children's Fitness Tax Credit

This study from the journal BMC Public Health looks at the uptake and effectiveness of the Children's Fitness Tax Credit, a credit of up to \$500 for eligible physical activity programs that came into effect in 2007. The researchers found that parents in the lowest income quartile were less aware of and less likely to claim the tax credit than higher income families. Only 15% of families who claimed the tax credit said

that they believed it had increased their children's participation in physical activity programs. While more than half of parents with children in Canada have claimed the tax credit, the authors conclude that it has greater benefit for wealthier families. [Read more here.](#)

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4. Health Canada's Youth Smoking Survey

Results of the 2008-2009 Youth Smoking Survey shows that rates of smoking for youth in grades 6-9 did not change from 2006-2007 – 3% of young people in this age group are smokers in Canada. The rate of smoking for grade 10-12 students increased from 11% in 2006-2007 to 13%. This age group saw an increase in daily smoking over occasional smoking. Read more about the survey [here.](#)

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5. Yoga for Youth At Risk

From People First Radio:

A yoga project offered at Nanaimo District Secondary School has offered teens in an alternate program the opportunity to use yoga for its many physical and mental health benefits. Instructor Regis Chapman of Silent Motion Yoga told The Nanaimo News Bulletin that students' minds crave silence from emotionality and electronic overload, but that sometimes it can be difficult to obtain that experience. The project was inspired by a program in New York called The Lineage Project, which provides yoga and meditation for physical, emotional, and mental wellness to at-risk and incarcerated youth ages 10 to 21.

[Listen to this fascinating interview](#) with Regis Chapman of Silent Motion Yoga and with Beth Navon, executive director of The Lineage Project.

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Announcements

1. Vancouver Foundation Info Session on Youth Homelessness Initiative

Vancouver Foundation is pleased to announce the third year of its new granting initiative, the Youth Homelessness Initiative. This program provides grants to

organizations that are targeting the complex issue of youth homelessness in Metro Vancouver. We are specifically looking for initiatives that increase access to, and maintenance of, housing for youth at risk of homelessness who are transitioning to independence.

Early in the development of your proposals, interested applicants are asked to contact Nicole MacLellan (nicolem@vancouverfoundation.ca) to arrange a time to discuss your initiative with Catharine Hume, Director, or Vi Nguyen, Manager. Once a fit has been established with Vancouver Foundation staff, organizations will be invited to submit a full proposal due September 15, 2010.

A meeting for interested applicants is scheduled for Thursday, July 22, 2010 from 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm in the Vancouver Foundation Boardroom – Suite 1200-555 West Hastings Street. The focus of the meeting is to provide an overview of the Youth Homelessness Initiative, an opportunity for questions and answers, and a chance for interested applicants to meet with each other. If you plan to attend the meeting, please RSVP to Nicole MacLellan (nicolem@vancouverfoundation.ca) by Monday, July 19th.

More information about the initiative can be found here:
<http://vancouverfoundation.ca/grants/youthhomelessness.htm>

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2. BC Aboriginal Child Care Society Provincial Conference

BCACCS Provincial Training Conference *Healthy Children, Healthy Communities – Mind, Body, Spirit* will be held at the Coast Coal Harbour Hotel at 1180 West Hastings Street in Vancouver on November 18-20.

A primary focus of the training and professional development events at BCACCS is to translate culturally rich traditions into effective early learning and child care (ELCC) programs and services. Community involvement, leadership, and support are central to the healthy, holistic development of Aboriginal children, and the conference will promote the capacity of ELCC professionals to design and deliver programs and services that are immersed in these cultures and communities.

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

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3. Gathering Our Voices 2011 Aboriginal Youth Conference

The BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres is excited to announce that the 9th Annual Provincial Aboriginal Youth Conference "Gathering Our Voices" will be taking place in Prince Rupert, BC on March 21-24th, 2011.

This year's focus will be on current priorities for Aboriginal youth and will be reflected in workshops, information booths, cultural and recreational activities, evening events and motivational speakers.

For further information please contact Rosy Steinhauer, Youth Conference Coordinator at rsteinhauer@bcaafc.com or 1-800-990-2432.

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