

First Call's Weekly Announcements – July 9, 2010

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Next ECD Roundtable: September 15
First Call 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. Federal Poverty Elimination Act Tabled

More on the bill for a national poverty plan from [Citizens for Public Justice](#):

Bill C-545 directs the federal government to consultatively develop a federal poverty elimination strategy, creates a new, independent Poverty Commissioner to monitor progress of the strategy, and provides a stronger advisory role for the National Council of Welfare, to be renamed the National Council of Poverty and Social Inclusion.

The poverty elimination strategy would focus on three major elements: income security, housing and social inclusion. The bill emphasizes the need for gender-based analysis, different urban and rural responses, and a strong human rights framework.

The bill also calls for the major cornerstones of an anti-poverty strategy as identified by the National Council of Welfare: timelines and targets, selection of a poverty measurement, accountability measures, and monitoring and reporting. The strategy would also require a whole of government approach, with health and income security ministers playing a key leadership role.

CPJ has long advocated for a poverty elimination strategy as the most important contribution the federal government could make in reducing and eventually eliminating poverty in Canada. We are pleased to see this vision move one step closer to reality with this bill.

This is a reality that many Canadians support, as demonstrated by the public support for the Dignity for All campaign, which CPJ co-founded with Canada Without Poverty. 340 different groups and over 5,400 individuals – including MPs and Senators from every party – have expressed their support for the DFA campaign, which includes as one of its goals a federal poverty elimination strategy.

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2. Response to Changed Group Size Regulations for School-Aged Child Care

Recently the Ministry of Children and Family Development announced changes to the regulations for school-aged child care – facilities with kindergarten and grade 1 students can take up to 4 more children for a total of 24, and facilities for grades 2 and up can take up to 5 more children for a total of 30. MCFD says that these changes will increase options for families and support the expansion of full-day kindergarten. The revised child care guidelines are available [here](#).

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates has released a commentary on the new guidelines:

On June 22, 2010, BC made a decision that will likely erode the quality of before and after school care for Kindergarten and Grade 1 children. Until now, BC Child Care Regulations required 1 staff person for every 10 children with a maximum group size of 20. The new regulations only require 1 staff person for every 12 children with a maximum group of 24.

No fewer than 3 BC ministers, Mary Polak, Minister of Children and Family Development; Ida Chong, Minister of Healthy Living and Sport; and Margaret MacDiarmid, Minister of Education, say this is good news that helps families get ready for full-day kindergarten this September. But, here's the real story:

- The BC government introduced full school day Kindergarten for 5 year olds with NO thought about the impact on child care.*
- They did not consult with the child care sector about moving 5 year olds from existing daycare programs to Kindergarten or about the impact on existing Kindercare programs for children in half day Kindergartens.*
- They did not reduce class size or integrate early childhood educators into full day Kindergarten to ensure these programs are play-based, as required by their new Kindergarten Program Guide.*
- Now BC's Ministry of Children and Family Development uses the Kindergarten ratio of 1 teacher for 22 students to argue that the new child care regulations do not erode quality because "Children ...have greater adult support during before and after school care than they do during their school hours."*
- While citing evidence about the importance of quality early care, BC's Minister of Education demands that School Boards generate profit to fund K-12 education by raising rents for on-site child care – leading to lost child care spaces and higher parent fees.*

Read more of the [commentary from CCCABC](#).

In an interview with the [Chilliwack Times](#) First Call Provincial Coordinator Adrienne Montani emphasized that child care regulations are minimum standards, not best practice – increasing the child-to-caregiver ratio will have an impact on the quality of care.

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3. Petition to Preserve the Mandatory Long Census Form

Please sign this petition before Monday, July 12!

The Harper government is moving to eliminate the Canada census long form questionnaire and replace it with a voluntary survey. The long form was sent to 20% of households and is a critical source of information about diversity, employment, income, education and other characteristics of Canadians. It is essential to business, research, planning and good public policies and programs. Stakeholders ranging from the business community to university researchers to social justice advocates are raising their voices to oppose this move.

Sign the petition [here](#), and [read some reaction](#) to the proposed changes from three Alberta municipalities.

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4. Court Presses Government to Remedy Violation of Khadr's Rights

Earlier this week the Federal Court of Canada ordered the government to come up with possible remedies for the breach of rights of Canadian child soldier Omar Khadr, who is in custody in Guantanamo Bay. In January the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Canada has breached Khadr's right to life, liberty and security of the person under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, though it did not order the federal government to repatriate Khadr.

Canada has been given one week to provide a list of remedies to the Federal Court. On Wednesday it was reported that Omar Khadr has fired his American lawyers and will boycott or represent himself in his upcoming war crimes trial before an American military judge. Read more about Omar Khadr's case in the [Toronto Star](#).

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5. Voices-Voix Coalition

The Voices-Voix Coalition is calling for the Government of Canada to:

1. Respect the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Therefore,
 - Cease to deliberately target those who speak out against government policies with the use of smear campaigns, dismissal from employment, funding cuts, blatant and subtle threats, regulations designed to obfuscate and prevent public debate, and other acts of bad faith.
 - Commit to parliamentary hearings in the Fall of 2010 that address widespread concerns about the loss of democratic space in Canada.
2. Act in accordance with Canada's democratic traditions and values. Therefore,
 - Actively promote and support political diversity and public debate, instead of avoiding it.
 - Recognize and respect the vital role, expertise, and necessary independence of civil society organizations.
3. Be transparent. Therefore,
 - Demonstrate full respect for and accountability to the Parliament of Canada and the Canadian People.
 - Allow complete access for Canadians to information regarding public policy decisions.
 - Base funding decisions for government and civil society organizations on fair standards and democratic principles, instead of partisan agendas.

To find out more about the Voices-Voix Coalition and sign on in support of their declaration, visit www.voices-voix.ca.

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6. Petition for Access to Justice in BC

West Coast LEAF has launched an Access to Justice petition calling for a reformed legal aid system that is equal, accessible, and respectful of human dignity.

Since 2002, changes to legal aid funding, structure and governance in BC have put the justice system into crisis and resulted in reduced access to justice for women, new immigrants and refugees, and low-income British Columbians.

Legal aid is a vital social service; not only because it is legally mandated and necessary for a functioning justice system, and not only because it is necessary to promote equality and justice in our society, but also because drastic cuts have cost Canadian society and tax payers in unmet legal needs and the resulting expenses of social exclusion. Underfunding legal aid services is no longer a viable option in British Columbia.

Sign the petition [here](#) and join the [Facebook group](#).

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Research & Resources

1. Making a Difference Makes You Happy

A group of college students and adults in the US were surveyed to determine whether political activism results in happiness and life satisfaction. In an article in Yes! magazine, author Tim Kasser described the survey's findings: "political activism scores were associated with feeling more pleasant emotions, reporting greater life satisfaction, and having more experiences of freedom, competence, and connection to others." To establish a causal relationship between political activity and well-being, Kasser and his colleague then asked a group of college students to write letters to the head of their school's dining services; one group wrote about how they enjoyed the food, and the other group wrote about ethical and political issues associated with the food. The group that wrote about political issues felt more alert, energized, and alive than the other group after this exercise.

[Read more.](#)

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2. Parenting Resilient Children

Kids Can Cope: Parenting Resilient Children at Home and at School is a publication from the Psychology Foundation of Canada. It defines resiliency, discusses how resiliency develops in children and how parents can support it, and looks at resiliency at school and for parents:

Experts have different theories and terms for talking about resiliency, but one point is unanimous among them: the single most important factor in child resiliency is relationships. Supportive relationships contribute to resiliency throughout life. For children, it's more basic than that. Most of the resiliency they have, and their ability to develop other resiliency assets, is dependent on relationships, particularly relationships with parents or parent figures.

The report provides concrete examples of what resiliency looks like and how parents interact with their children to build resiliency. Download it [here](#).

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3. Comfort, Play and Teach Videos

Comfort, Play & Teach is Invest in Kids' research-informed parenting approach to support healthy child development. Comfort, Play & Teach builds parenting confidence, strengthens the parent-child bond, enriches the moment for the child and parent, and, ultimately, opens a world of possibilities for both parent and child.

The videos are available online [here](#).

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4. Olympics Sidelines Youth

This article in the Dominion looks at the impacts of the Vancouver Olympics on homeless and street-involved youth. Author Jacqueline Kennelly argues that, rather than "relat[ing] to the athletes, who are themselves youth adults, and be[ing] inspired by the examples of these fine roles models," homeless youth in Vancouver may have been more impacted by VANOC's failure to fulfill their commitments in the Inner-City Inclusivity Statement, the doubling of homelessness in Vancouver since it won the Olympic bid, and the inadequacy of welfare rates.

"You don't know what it is to live on welfare until you've lived on welfare. It's awful. Especially in BC. You can't even live off welfare and have a place unless you have housing [provided], which is impossible," said Sarah, a young woman living in a youth homeless shelter in Vancouver.*

The irony, of course, is that the Olympics are touted—especially at the bidding stage—as an event that will make things better for the inhabitants of host cities.

...homeless youth found themselves increasingly moved from downtown tourist streets such as Granville or Robson.

"There are certain neighbourhoods [the police] won't let you in, but in the West End, if they find you in one place? They'll be checking it every night after that for about a month," said Curtis, a young Aboriginal man living in a youth homeless shelter. The Downtown East Side—an area notorious for open drug use, sex trade work and poverty— was the only neighbourhood these young people felt was free from police harassment in the year before the Olympics.

"They don't care if you're down there. They'll come up to me while I've been using drugs and they're like, we don't care that you're using. Just stay out of sight," said Jennifer, a formerly homeless woman who continues to attend the youth drop-ins at her local homeless shelter.

The pressure to get off downtown streets meant that some youth had trouble accessing the services clustered around the West end of the city, including youth shelters such as Covenant House and Directions. It also meant they were pushed into areas of the city where they faced increased risks of drug involvement or crime...

Homeless and street-involved youth also noticed police treated other young people differently during the Games, particularly if they were obviously Olympic revellers. "If you're wearing Canada gear, you can be as hammered as you want and the cops won't bother you, as long as you're going, 'Go, Canada!'" said Jason, a young man currently housed in Vancouver's east side. This injustice rankled Jason and other youth, particularly given that they experience regular police harassment for relatively minor infringements.

Read the story [here](#).

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Announcements

1. 2010 Young Parent Provincial Conference

The BC Alliance for Young Parents and BC Council for Families are holding *Young Parents Moving Forward* on October 22 in Vancouver. The goal of this year's conference is to educate and inform participants on current topics and critical issues affecting young parents -- from sexuality and relationships, substance abuse and homelessness, to adolescent development and parenting skills.

Full details and registration information will be available in August at www.bccf.ca.

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2. Dads Make a Difference Program in Nanaimo this Fall

Calling all dads (& children) for a new FREE program in partnership with the Nanaimo Mens' Centre + SD68 at Nanaimo District Secondary School. Strengthen your contribution to your family every Saturday morning as you arrive with your kids at NDSS and begin with a fun activity and sports. Next, everyone prepares and enjoys a meal. Then, just be a dad or discuss dad-parenting ideas of interest to you.

Speakers and resource people assist as dads learn and grow together in parenting skills week by week. Learn what your kids need from their dad at different ages and discover solutions for better fathering. Share with other dads.

Call for details today 250.740.2026 or e-mail communityschool@sd68.bc.ca to enroll for a family strengthening opportunity. All dads are welcomed regardless of what school your children attend. The program will start in early fall.

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3. Health & Wellbeing in Children, Youth and Adults with Developmental Disabilities Conference

Sponsored by UBC's Interprofessional Continuing Education in cooperation with Community Living BC and UBC Department of Psychiatry, this conference will take place September 30 – October 1 at the Coast Plaza Hotel in Vancouver. The conference objectives are:

- To increase awareness of the interrelatedness of physical and mental health for individuals with Developmental Disabilities
- How to maximize health in order to minimize disability and improve function
- Understanding the fit between the capacity of an individual and the structure and expectations of their environment
- Share knowledge and common experiences with others working in the field

Download the brochure [here](#).

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4. Registration Now Open for BCACL's National Family Conference

Registration is now open for the 2010 National Family Conference, *Families, a Journey of Generations Moving Mountains*. Hosted by the BC Association for Community Living, Family Focus Society and the Canadian Association for Community Living, the conference will be held from October 22-24, 2010, at the Fairmont Chateau Whistler. Visit the conference website (www.familyfocusconference.com) to register and for more information. The conference will include topics relevant to families and individuals who are seeking information that relates to children with special needs from birth to 6 years of age, school age children, adult sons and daughters of all ages, and self advocates. Read the preliminary conference program [here](#).

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