

## First Call's Weekly Announcements – May 13, 2010

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Next Coalition Meeting: June 9

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.

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**Advocacy/Calls to Action**

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## 1. First Call is on Twitter!

Get your advocacy news on the go! Follow First Call's updates at [www.twitter.com/firstcallbc](http://www.twitter.com/firstcallbc) and be the first to hear what's new in the child and youth sector.

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## 2. Representative for Children and Youth Taking Government to Court

As reported in the May 3 Weekly Announcements, BC's Representative for Children and Youth is fighting to maintain her access to provincial cabinet documents. The hearing will begin today in the BC Supreme Court.

The Representative provided the following statement to the media:

*I have applied to the Court for an order to compel Government compliance with their obligations under the Representative for Children and Youth Act. I remain open to discussions to resolve the issue, but have exhausted all other options to get the material necessary to complete an audit and review of a vital program that impacts close to 5,000 children and youth in BC.*

Public Eye is reporting on [reaction from government officials](#), the Representative's [petition](#) to the court, and the [response](#) by Minister Polak to the BCASW news release included in the last Weekly Announcements. Read the response to Minister Polak from Tracey Young of the BCASW [here](#).

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## 3. Complaint Filed Against Shelter Allowance Reductions

Pivot Legal Society and West Coast LEAF have filed a complaint with the BC Ombudsperson against the Ministry of Housing and Social Development's policy that reduces the shelter allowance of a family on income assistance when a child is taken into temporary foster care. From Pivot:

*When a child is in temporary foster care, social workers are charged with returning the children safely to their parents as soon as possible. Although family reunification is the goal, when a child is placed in the temporary care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development, their family shelter allowance is reduced to that of a single person [when the family consists of a lone parent and child], currently \$375 per month, by the Ministry of Housing and Social Development.*

*For poor families and single mothers in particular, the reduction in shelter allowance is devastating, often resulting in the loss of family housing. If a parent loses their housing because their shelter allowance has been cut, the possibility of reuniting children with their family is significantly compromised because there is no longer a safe place for the child to be returned to, or even to visit.*

Read the complaint to the Ombudsperson [here](#), and visit the [Ministry of Housing and Social Development website](#) to submit a comment to the Minister in support of this recommended policy change that will help to preserve families.

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## 4. Red Tent Campaign Against Homelessness

Red Tent is national campaign that invites the participation of all persons and organizations wishing to end homelessness in Canada.

The goal of the campaign is to persuade the federal government to enact a funded National Housing Strategy that will end homelessness and ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for all persons living in Canada.

The strategy of the campaign is to use red tents and like items as symbols on the streets and in the media to draw attention to Canada's homelessness crisis, educate the public about the need for a funded national housing strategy and mobilize people across the country to pressure government to take action on homelessness.

The Red Tent campaign was initiated by Pivot Legal Society, and recently had a victory working with the Carnegie Community Action Project in Vancouver in support of a homeless man who was challenging the city bylaw against erecting tents on sidewalks. The police and the mayor of Vancouver have issued statements saying they will not ticket people sleeping in tents, but the law is still on the books. Pivot is now working on having this bylaw struck down.

Find out more about the campaign at [www.redtents.org](http://www.redtents.org).

Bill C-304 for a National Housing Strategy is now in third reading debate in the House of Commons. The NDP and Liberals have confirmed their support for this bill. Read it [here](#) and [call your MP](#) to let them know that you support this bill.

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## 5. Assessing the Impacts of Provincial Budget Cuts

Below is a short summary from the Federation of Community Social Services of BC about the funding reductions across the Community Social Services sector. Most of the information included is in regards to cuts that were experienced last fiscal year and prior to the STOB 80 reduction process that many of their member agencies are now engaged in. Current information allows us to speak to the impacts and cumulative effect these reductions across funding bodies are having on communities. It is important to have a sense of the dollar amounts, but also the stories that go along with these cuts - how are community members, services and agencies feeling the impact? Sometimes changes are made to policies or practices which may restrict and alter access to services and this is also important information to capture.

Attached is a reporting template designed by the FCSS to capture the impacts of budget cuts by both their members and other agencies. Completed templates can be emailed to [Rebecca@fcssbc.ca](mailto:Rebecca@fcssbc.ca) with a copy sent to [info@firstcallbc.org](mailto:info@firstcallbc.org).

## **Funding Reductions and Service Delivery Impacts Overview**

*As of April 22nd, 2010 The Federation of Community Social Services of BC has noted the following funding reductions and service delivery impacts across the province.*

*This information has been gathered through direct communication from members to the Federation and through analysis of media reports and government and agency communications and includes 72 service providers (FCSS members and non-members).*

### **Service Providers have reported funding reductions from the following sources:**

- Ministry of Children and Family Development (17)
- Attorney General (1)
- Regional Health Authorities (30)
- Ministry of Education (6)
- Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport (2)
- Ministry of Housing and Social Development
- Impacts felt by declining United Way funding/gaming revenues/donations (9)

### **Regional Impacts**

#### *Fraser:*

*9 FCSS members have reported approximately \$508,296 in funding cuts from the Fraser Health Authority. Two members have reported cuts to gaming grants totalling \$210,000, and two member agencies report cuts to MCFD funding totalling \$220,000.*

#### *Interior:*

*5 FCSS members reported experiencing funding cuts from MCFD (\$186,000) and School District (\$60,000).*

#### *Northern:*

*3 member agencies reported MCFD funding reductions, and one agency reported a funding cut of \$653,184 from the Health Authority.*

#### *Vancouver Coastal:*

*Agencies in the Vancouver Coastal region have experienced \$990,544 in funding reductions from the Health Authority (includes non-FCSS members). Two member agencies report funding reductions from MCFD.*

#### *Vancouver Island:*

*Service providers have experienced a \$955,242 cut in funding from Health Authorities (included non-FCSS members). One member agency reports a \$300,000 cut in funding from MCFD.*

### **Agencies across the province report impacts including:**

- Reduced service hours

- Program closure
- Staff lay-offs/reduction of hours
- Increased infrastructure pressure
- Community members experiencing increased barriers to receiving service and support in a timely manner
- Changing demographics in who the agency serves
- Families presenting with more complex issues, and in a greater state of crisis
- Increase in demand for service
- Increased pressure on admin time
- Longer waitlists
- 20 agencies identified that programs affected are unique in the community they serve

*Whether through reductions to funding, elimination of provincial granting programs or changes to the ways in which money is distributed, the community services sector has already seen a decrease in funding of at least \$21 million. Not all agencies provided dollar amounts regarding the cuts they were experiencing; it is fair to say that this analysis likely dramatically underestimates the depth of cuts impacting communities across BC.*

The Coalition to Build a Better BC is also tracking cuts across sectors – visit their website [here](#). We encourage you to share information about further cuts by using the contact us form on their website.

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## 6. Calls to Action from the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada

From the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada newsletter:

*The evidence is in: access to quality, affordable child care services is important for children, families, communities and even the economy. In spite of this evidence, multiple reports confirm that Canada has the weakest child care services among developed countries. Behind the research, behind the evidence and behind the facts are stories - your stories. Stories from families, early childhood educators and so many others who are experiencing the current situation as well as stories from those who have hopes and dreams for a better future for child care in Canada.*

*Throughout the CCAAC's history, we have had the privilege of hearing many of your stories and they have inspired us to continue advocating for publicly-funded child care services. Today, and just in time for Mother's Day 2010, we are launching a campaign that provides opportunities for your stories to be more broadly shared, in the hope that they will inspire action across the country to build quality, affordable, accessible and inclusive child care services.*

*Please, share your story!*

Visit [www.WENEEDCHILDCARE.ca](http://www.WENEEDCHILDCARE.ca) and tell us why Canada needs child care!

CCAAC has also issued a news release supporting the women's organizations that have lost their federal funding:

*The Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC) adds its voice to denounce the recent de-funding of several Women's organizations such as the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, the New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity and several other organizations.*

*"These organizations are merely the latest victims of the Harper cuts," says Susan Harney, spokesperson with the CCAAC, "Our organization stopped receiving federal funds for social research and public education projects in March 2008, in spite of our track record of consistently delivering results."*

*The CCAAC has always been a small organization. However, the loss of federal funding forced the CCAAC to lay off staff and rely even more on volunteers – notably, women - to monitor Canada's progress on child care services.*

*"These funding cuts have significant implications for democracy in Canada," concludes Harney. "Our governments have signed international agreements for both women and children, committing to the provision of quality, affordable child care services and to fostering ongoing dialogue about the crucial importance of quality in early childhood. A vibrant non-profit sector is essential for engaging citizens in supporting Canada to meet these commitments."*

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## Research & Resources

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### 1. Moving Mountains for Children – New Whistler Citizen's Group

A group of parents, child care workers and community members are meeting monthly to work toward enhancing the wellbeing of young children and families in Whistler. They are looking at early childhood development opportunities for children and families and creating new opportunities based on community and parent needs. This is an extension of the "Putting Children First" initiative of Sea to Sky Community Services. Find out more by visiting [www.movingmountainsforchildren.com](http://www.movingmountainsforchildren.com) or e-mailing [info@movingmountainsforchildren.com](mailto:info@movingmountainsforchildren.com). There is also a family events and resources page for Whistler at [www.whistler4kids.com](http://www.whistler4kids.com).

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### 2. Citizens for Public Justice Paper on the Impact of the Recession

*Bearing the Brunt: How the 2008-2009 Recession Created Poverty for Canadian Families* details the increase in poverty and economic insecurity caused by the recession:

*By examining key economic indicators, the paper charts the rise in poverty caused by the recession. Unemployment rose, but Employment Insurance was inadequate in meeting the needs of the unemployed. Social assistance caseloads rose across the country as a result. The rate of precarious work increased, as the most economically vulnerable employees were also the most likely to lose their jobs as a result of the recession. Low income Canadians had to stretch their incomes farther as the cost of living increased more than inflation. The result was rising debt loads, an increase in bankruptcies and skyrocketing food bank use.*

The provincial factsheet for BC shows that food bank use increased by 15% in 2009 and that 31% of food bank users are children. BC had the third highest increase in unemployment, and less than half of unemployed workers qualified for EI during the recession. Food prices increased by 4.3% between 2008 and 2009, compared to the core inflation of 0%, and the rent for two-bedroom apartments increase by 2.8%.

The full report and provincial factsheets are available [here](#).

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### 3. Canadian Child Care Federation Video for Quality Child Care

The Canadian Child Care Federation is a federation of 20 provincial and territorial affiliate organizations. They have a new three minute video emphasizing the important role played by child care workers in our society, including the promotion of safety, early education, and policy advocacy. Watch it [here](#).

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### 4. Salvation Army Report on Homelessness

The Salvation Army has released a new report on the perceptions of poverty and homelessness in Canada, based on public opinion polling data gathered in late 2009. The findings include that one in nine Canadian adults have either worried about or personally experienced homelessness, including 16% of British Columbians (one in six). The Salvation Army notes a marked increase in demands for their services – a 26% increase between 2008 and 2009. Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents ranked poverty issues as the most important social problems in Canada. Download the report [here](#).

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### 5. Recreation Fees Survey Data Available for BC Communities

From the BC Parks and Recreation Association:

Recreation fees and charges data is now available online at the [CivicInfo BC website](#). Survey results include rental rates and admissions for pools, arenas, fitness centres, community centres and fields. All reports can be customized and are viewable in an HTML or Excel format. For more information, visit the [BCRPA website](#) or contact Parks and Recreation Coordinator Heather Muter at [hmuter@bcrpa.bc.ca](mailto:hmuter@bcrpa.bc.ca) or by phone at 604-629-0965 ext. 229.

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## Announcements

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### 1. Living Wage Victory to Be Featured on CBC's The Current

On Friday morning, CBC Radio's The Current will feature a discussion of the recent bylaw for a living wage passed in New Westminster. Speakers will include city councilor Jaimie McEvoy. The Current airs from 8:37 – 10:00 AM on Radio 1. After the episode has aired you can listen to it online at [www.cbc.ca/thecurrent](http://www.cbc.ca/thecurrent).

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### 2. Rethinking Drug Education Lecture and Webinar – May 14

Dan Reist from the Centre for Addictions Research of BC at the University of Victoria will present a new approach to drug education involving providing young people with opportunities to develop the skills to function in their communities where drugs are a reality.

The lecture will take place on Friday, May 14 from 3:30 – 4:30 PM at the University of Victoria's Ocean, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences Building, Room A104. It will be webcast [here](#). Download the flyer for this event [here](#).

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### 3. Langara Seminar on Environmental and Social Sustainability

Vancouver's Langara College presents a weekend seminar called *Talking and Walking Sustainability*, which will emphasize the need to keep environmental and social justice on equal footing. The seminar will feature Adrienne Montani of First Call, Marc Lee of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the David Suzuki Foundation's Ian Bruce, and George Heyman of the Sierra Club and others. It takes

place on Friday June 11 (evening only) and Saturday June 12. To find out more contact [jkemp@langara.bc.ca](mailto:jkemp@langara.bc.ca) or 604-323-5981.

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#### 4. Impact of Trauma and Neglect on the Developing Child

The Justice Institute is offering a two day course on Understanding the Impact of Trauma and Neglect on the Developing Child: Clinical Implications and Application of Neurodevelopmentally-informed Treatment Strategies.

This course will review clinical work and research that can help us better understand developmental trauma, neglect and the relational problems that arise from neglect and threat. An overview will be provided that suggests new directions for clinical practice, program development and policy.

Date: June 2-3, 2010  
Fee: \$345; group rate, \$325  
Location: JIBC New Westminster Campus  
Instructor: Dr. Bruce Perry, PhD  
To register, call: 604.528.5590 or 1.877.528.5591

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