

First Call's Weekly Announcements – May 21, 2010

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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. Court Decides in Favour of Representative for Children and Youth

On May 13 Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond went to court for access to provincial cabinet documents that she had been denied in her investigation into the Child in the Home of a Relative program and it's replacement Extended Family program. Justice Susan Griffin ruled that government "failed to comply with their statutory duty" under the Representative for Children and Youth Act to provide the documents. Justice Griffin ordered that the requested documents be turned over to the Representative immediately. Read the judgment [here](#).

This judgment does not resolve the fact that legislation was introduced in April that would prevent the Representative from making public findings that are based on cabinet documents in the future. Ted Hughes, author of the report that led to the creation of the Representative's office in 2006, wrote to the Premier earlier this week in support of her position. Judge Hughes suggests tabling the legislation until the next sitting of the legislature, and offers his services as a mediator to attempt to resolve the issue of future access to cabinet documents. He also recommends mediation to address the strained relationship between the offices of the Representative and the Deputy Minister of Children and Family Development.

Both government and the Representative have stated their support for mediation by Judge Hughes. In his [letter to Hughes](#), Deputy Minister to the Premier Allan Seckel states that the issue must be addressed promptly so that it is resolved before the current sitting of the legislature ends on June 3. Seckel also confirmed that the government will not pass the legislation while mediation is taking place. Read an editorial in the [Victoria Times Colonist](#) in support of abandoning the legislation.

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2. Youth-Organized Rally Against School Budget Cuts in Vancouver

Join the youth rally against school budget cuts on Tuesday, June 1 at 4:00 PM at the Vancouver Art Gallery:

Students in British Columbia Canada Will NOT BE SILENT

*We will be wearing BLUE to show we are united on June 1st
Will you wear BLUE and will YOU take action with us on June 1st?*

*Vancouver & BC students are taking ACTION on June 1st 2010.
Our voices should be heard; we are the future generations of BC and Canada.
We want to be heard in VANCOUVER and we are inviting all teachers, parents and the Vancouver School Board to support us on June 1st.*

*Will the MEDIA support us on June 1st?
Will the VANCOUVER MAYOR support us on June 1st?
Will the BC GOVERNMENT listen to what we have to say on June 1st?*

*They (the government & politicians) SPEAK about future generations.
Our education is being compromised.
WHY is the VSB being forced cut costs?? This is the big question that we are asking.*

*We are not willing to keep silent anymore.
It is our future and we have the right to know, and we have the right to learn.*

RSVP for the event on Facebook by searching for “Youth Rally Against Budget Cuts,” and view a promotional video for the event [here](#).

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3. Recommendations for Tackling Overweight and Obesity in BC

A submission to the province by the BC Healthy Living Alliance provides recommendations for obesity and overweight reduction. Data from 2004 shows that close to 60% of BC adults are overweight or obese, 20% of children between 2 and 17 are overweight, and 7% of children are obese. The submission notes that overweight individuals face health problems and put increased pressure on the health care system, and that low-income and Aboriginal families in particular can struggle to eat healthy diets and be physically active. BCHLA calls for a whole of society approach to curbing overweight and obesity; recommendations are made for lifestyle changes, making the healthier food choice the easier choice, building skills and knowledge, and collaboration. Specific recommendations include:

- The BC Government should work with the Federal Government and other provinces/territories to restrict the marketing of unhealthy food and beverages to children.
- The BC Government should introduce a substantial tax on all sugar sweetened beverages.
- The BC Government should work with communities to support the development of comprehensive policies and strategies that reduce economic, social, cultural and systemic barriers thereby ensuring greater inclusion and access to physical activity facilities and programming for all British Columbians.
- The BC Government should improve access to healthy foods in remote and rural communities.
- The BC Government should introduce healthy living curriculum into schools which would encompass: physical education; food system knowledge, including differentiating between healthy and unhealthy food and beverages; food preparation skills; screen time reduction; and ensuring that students receive at least 60 minutes of daily physical activity.
- The BC Government should invest in active transportation, ensuring at least 7% of all infrastructure funding allocated for urban transit, road and other transportation construction be set aside for active transportation infrastructure.

Read the submission [here](#).

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4. Statement on Child Care Month in the Legislature

On May 4, Opposition Critic for Child Care Mable Elmore made the following statement:

As we celebrate May as Child Care Month, we extend our appreciation and thanks to all child care providers, early learning educators, professionals in the field, advocates and, of course, parents for their commitment and dedication to performing the essential work of nurturing and supporting our most precious and valuable resource – our children.

As well, we recognize the rights and important role that children themselves play in our society. As per the United Nations convention on the rights of the child, we are reminded that children have rights in early childhood and that young children are active social participants. Further, children are positive, participating citizens who are entitled to a full share of society's resources, meaning that they have a right to make claim on the government and receive services that support them.

A key foundation of lifelong learning, with long-term implications for prosperity at the societal level, is good-quality early childhood education and child care. This valid concept is embraced by many, including social scientists; policy experts; economists, including business leaders; and, of course, parents and grandparents.

As such, it's disappointing that British Columbia in Canada has the dubious distinction of ranking last out of OECD countries in terms of spending on child care and early learning. B.C. also has the worst poverty rate in Canada for the sixth straight year. More than ever, we need a quality, affordable and universally accessible early childhood education and care system.

Such a system is important to support children because it assists children in reaching their full potential and builds a strong knowledge-based society that supports family, especially parents who are in the workplace. It's also an essential part of gender equality that allows women to fully participate in social, civic and economic life. Such a system builds equity in quality of life and social infrastructure for rural, northern, remote and First Nations communities and also children with special needs. It's essential to reduce the poverty level.

As we mark Child Care Month, let us affirm that an early childhood education and care system builds social inclusion, and it is indeed the best way to support our children.

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5. NWT Adopts Anti-Poverty Motion

The legislature of the Northwest Territories has passed the following motion for a poverty reduction strategy:

WHEREAS every person has the right to a standard of living adequate to the well-being of their families and themselves;
AND WHEREAS approximately 10 percent of Canadians, or 2.9 million people, lived in poverty in 2007;

AND WHEREAS in some NWT communities, up to 50 percent of households have a total income of less than \$30,000;
AND WHEREAS 40 percent of NWT households with a senior have incomes below \$40,000;
AND WHEREAS health indicators, educational achievement, child apprehension rates and family violence can be directly related to poverty;
AND WHEREAS poverty is human-made and can be overcome;
AND WHEREAS the GNWT currently has no official definition of poverty and no clear and integrated strategy to combat poverty;
AND WHEREAS it should be a priority goal of the GNWT to eradicate poverty in the Northwest Territories;
AND WHEREAS eradicating poverty will significantly contribute to the achievement of all of the Legislative Assembly's goals and priorities;
NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Weledeh, that the government develop an anti-poverty strategy for the Northwest Territories;
AND FURTHER, that the Premier initiate discussions towards this strategy in partnership with business, organizations and those living in poverty;
AND FURTHER, that the government and partners start by developing a definition of poverty;
AND FURTHER, that the anti-poverty strategy identify specific, measurable targets, with clear cross-departmental mechanisms for coordination and integration of actions;
AND FURTHERMORE, that the government provide a comprehensive response to this motion within 120 days.

6 Canadian provinces and 1 territory have now committed to developing poverty reduction strategies. Find out more about a poverty reduction plan for BC at www.bcpovertyreduction.ca.

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6. UN Envoy Calls for Khadr to be Treated as Child Soldier

The UN secretary general's special representative for children and armed conflict has called on Canada and the United States to treat Canadian-born Omar Khadr as a child soldier and bring him into Canadian custody. The UN envoy stated that the prosecution of Khadr in Guantanamo Bay could set a dangerous precedent to try children around the world for war crimes. Read more about Khadr's case on the [CBC website](#).

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Research & Resources

1. Guide for Calculating the Living Wage in BC

The living wage is different for every community, depending on the cost of housing, transportation, food and other expenses, as well as subsidies and taxes. While the Living Wage for Families Campaign has calculated the wage for Metro Vancouver, a calculation guide has now been updated to assist other communities in calculating the wage appropriate for their costs of living. The guide was designed for BC communities, but it can also be applied to other areas in Canada with adjustments to the government transfer and tax information.

Download the calculation guide from the [CCPA website](#). Download the 2010 calculation for Metro Vancouver [here](#).

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2. Metro Vancouver Native Youth Resource Directory and More

Urban Native Youth Association has several new resources available online, including a new edition of a resource manual with information about a wide range of programs, services, and resources for youth and their families in Metro Vancouver, titled "Helping Hands: Empowering Native Youth."

Other new resources include "Eating Healthy on a Budget" and "It's a Balancing Act," a booklet on health and wellness. All of the resources can be downloaded from www.unya.bc.ca/resources.

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3. Canada Learning Grants Help Low Income Parents

The Canada Learning Grant helps lower income parents save up to \$2,000 in government contributions plus interest in an RESP for their children's post-secondary education. Government will contribute \$500 to open an RESP for a child born after December 31, 2003 whose parents receive the National Child Benefit Supplement as part of their Child Tax Benefit. A further \$25 will be paid to help cover any costs to opening the RESP. For every qualifying year after the RESP is opened, government will contribute a further \$100 per year for the child up to the age of 15 years. Find out more [here](#).

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4. The Science of Early Child Development

A new brief from the Council for Early Child Development provides an overview of early brain development, including the sensitive periods of brain development and how early development impacts health, learning and behaviour. Read it [here](#).

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5. HST on Adult-Sized Clothing for Children

The province has released "[What's Taxable under the HST and What's Not?](#)", an inexhaustive list of common products and services purchased by British Columbians. While the majority of items on the list show no change to the amount of tax payable when the HST comes into effect, one change for families is that HST will now be payable on adult-sized clothing purchased for children under the age of 15. Previously, any clothing purchased for children was exempt from PST. According to a story in the [Province newspaper](#), the government doesn't track how much PST is rebated from clothing purchases currently, so we won't know how many families are impacted by this shift in taxation.

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Announcements

1. Health of the Homeless Summit in Vancouver

Health of the Homeless is a two day summit presented by the City of Vancouver, Vancouver Coastal Health, SFU and other organizations which will present the growing evidence of health challenges for people living in substandard housing. The event takes place on June 21 and 22 at the SFU's Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue. Download the registration flyer [here](#).

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2. Building Inclusive Communities Project Seeking Participants

Presented by PeerNetBC and Society for Children and Youth, "Building Inclusive Communities" is a 10-month program that brings together youth and other community members to work cooperatively on a community engagement project based on the Society for Children & Youth's "Making Your Community More Child and Youth Friendly Toolkit." Through workshops, learning circles, and hands-on project coordination, participants strengthen their facilitation and community engagement skills. The foundation for these inter-generational projects is an ongoing two-way mentorship exchange between participants. For the 2010/11 program year, 12 people will be selected to participate in the BIC program.

What will you get out of this experience?

- mentoring & coaching from staff at PeerNetBC and at SCY
- extensive training and practice in facilitation and community engagement skills
- opportunities for intergenerational learning and experience in a mentoring relationship
- experience in community-based project management
- increased understanding of how to make communities more child & youth friendly
- community-based networking opportunities
- deepen existing intergenerational friendships and / or develop new friendships
- a \$25 honorarium for each training day and learning circle attended (total of \$350)

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

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3. Economic Justice for Women Panel June 2 in Vancouver

The Vancouver & District Labour Council Women's Committee presents *Economic Justice for Women* with panelists Adrienne Montani of First Call and the Living Wage for Families Campaign, Jocelyn Vergabera of the Philippine Women's Centre, and a representative from UNITE HERE Local 40. Join the committee for a lively discussion on the economic issues facing women and their everyday reality.

The panel takes place on Wednesday, June 2 from 7 to 9 pm in Boardroom 1, Maritime Labour Centre, 111 Victoria Drive in Vancouver. Free admission - everyone is welcome to attend.

Please stay after for a social with refreshments & snacks. For info or assistance with childcare please contact the VDLC office - 604-254-0703 / office@vdlc.ca.

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4. Children the Heart of the Matter Call for Presenters

This early learning conference will take place on February 4 and 5, 2011 in Surrey. Proposals are invited until May 28, 2010 to:

Children the Heart of the Matter
 c/o Child Care Options Resource and Referral
 #100-6846 King George Hwy, Surrey, BC V3W 4Z9
 Tel: (604) 572 8032 Fax: (604) 572 8185
 Email: sharlene.wedel@options.bc.ca

Find out more [here](#).

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