

First Call's Weekly Announcements – May 27, 2010

Next Coalition Meeting: June 9

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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. Ted Hughes Announces Agreement Between Representative and Government

[CBC is reporting](#) that earlier this afternoon mediator Ted Hughes stated that the dispute over access to cabinet documents by the Representative for Children and Youth has been resolved. Both parties will be signing a protocol agreement, and the Representative for Children and Youth Act will not be amended. For more background on this story, download [last week's Announcements](#).

2. Child Care Advocacy Forum Celebrates a Decade of Advocacy and Winds Down

At the end of 2009, First Call coalition partner the BC Child Care Advocacy Forum honoured and celebrated a decade of working together to advance a progressive child care vision and agenda.

The Forum worked from the agreement that BC and Canada need a publicly funded child care system that entitles all children access to quality child care, and that this system must honour and respect diversity; must provide families with real choices; and must provide caregivers with wages, benefits and working conditions they deserve.

2009 was the final year of funding for the Forum from Vancouver Foundation, and now the Forum has decided to bring closure to their work, celebrate an important era in BC child care advocacy, and put their on-going commitment to advocacy to work where it can continue to make a difference.

First Call's Early Childhood Development (ECD) Roundtable will benefit from the time and resources that the Forum member organizations have chosen to devote to ensure that child care remains a priority at that table. The Forum has contributed their remaining resources to support First Call and the ECD Roundtable.

At the June 9 First Call Coalition Meeting, we will celebrate and honour the work of the Child Care Advocacy Forum. The full agenda for this meeting will be circulated closer to the date. For more information on the Forum, go to www.advocacyforum.bc.ca.

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3. Ask Your Municipal Council to Support the BC Poverty Reduction Strategy

From the [BC Poverty Reduction Coalition](#):

The BC Poverty Reduction Coalition is calling on municipalities across BC to take action in support of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy for the province. We are calling for action from individual councils and from the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM). The annual UBCM Convention is a valuable forum for policy-making. It provides an opportunity for local governments of all sizes and from all areas of the province to come together, share their experiences and take a united position. We want a united position on poverty reduction. We are urging city councils to do two things:

- Review and endorse the open letter, "[A Call for a BC Poverty Reduction Plan](#)".
- Adopt a resolution to submit to the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), before June 30th and in time for this year's annual convention in Fall 2010, that the UBCM urge the province to adopt a comprehensive strategy.

To this end, the Coalition offers for use by all BC city councils a [draft resolution to council](#) and a [draft UBCM resolution](#). **Please take these to your council and urge them to take immediate action toward a BC Poverty Reduction Plan!**

And congratulations and many thanks to the City of Nelson for their recent motion to put forward a poverty reduction resolution to the UBCM!

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4. Be a Witness to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on Aboriginal Child Welfare

On June 2, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal will resume with a hearing of the Canadian government's motion to dismiss the complaint by the Assembly of First Nations and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada that Canada provides less funding for child welfare services to First Nations children on reserves than other children. The government has already made two attempts in federal court to have the complaint dismissed, and the Department of Justice has recently opposed the public posting of transcripts from the tribunal. Read more news about the tribunal [here](#).

The I Am a Witness Campaign is close to reaching its goal of 5,000 supporters by June 2. Witnesses pledge to follow the case by attending the tribunal or through the media, and send a message that you care about all children being treated fairly and equitably by government. Sign on to become a witness [here](#).

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5. Begging for Justice Demonstration at the Legislature

Report from an inspiring demonstration recently held at the Legislature in Victoria:

At noon on Wednesday April 28th, the Begging Bowl event occurred. A small altar covered in a black cloth was set on a small carpet at the foot of the front steps of the

BC Legislature. At each end of the altar a person was kneeling with hands turned upward in a pleading position. New people came and took the place of the previous kneeler throughout the event. On the altar was a large wooden bowl (big salad bowl).

The pastor from Grace Lutheran was the master of ceremonies who welcomed people and outlined the program. The first speaker was Rev Harold Munn of St John the Divine Anglican church, begging for homes for the homeless and for a national housing strategy. Then Rev Alan Tysick, a United Church minister, begged for support for the mentally ill, expressing his righteous outrage and asking for justice to flow like a river. The priest responsible for the RC churches on the Peninsula begged for justice for the working poor, calling for an increase in the minimum wage, and the rabbi, after acknowledging Bernice Packford for linking him with Faith in Action and inspiring him to participate, begged for a provincial poverty reduction strategy. Each speaker eloquently framed their appeal within their own religious context - words of Jesus, the prophets, and the Torah.

After each person spoke, a symbol of their beg was placed in the large wooden bowl. While they were speaking people moved through the small crowd giving out paper and pencil, and people were invited to write their ask on the paper and come forward and place it in the bowl.

The NDP critic for housing and social development came forward and was presented with the begging bowl and asked to carry these begs forward to the legislature.

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6. June 1st is Hunger Awareness Day

Hunger Awareness Day is on Tuesday, June 1st, and Food Banks Canada has a short [online video](#) about hunger in Canada. You can also sign a petition on the website, and get fact sheets to support you in talking to your government representatives about hunger in Canada (click on "How to Help").

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Research & Resources

1. Provincial Scan of After-School Programming

BC Recreation and Parks Association has completed an environmental scan of after-school programming outside of licensed child care for children aged 6 to 12. The report examines active responses to the need for an after-school strategy in other provinces, current initiatives supporting children in the after-schools hours, promising practices and gaps that need to be addressed. The report emphasizes the

need for an after-school strategy for the health and wellbeing of children, and recommends a provincial framework that allows for a multiplicity of partners to direct and deliver after-school supports, compels support from a multiplicity of funders including the provincial government, and embodies the characteristics of a good after-school program as identified in the report. Download the report [here](#).

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2. Metcalf Foundation Paper Examines Poverty Measures

The Metcalf Foundation has released *Cutting Through the Fog*, a paper by Richard Shillington and John Stapleton that explains various measures of poverty used in Canada:

Who is poor in Canada? It depends on the measure used, and that depends on who is measuring. Different researchers use different criteria.

- *If poverty is defined as including only those whose physical existence is endangered, then a very small percentage of Canadians are poor – about 5% according to the Fraser Institute.*
- *If poverty is considered in relation to community norms and standards and being poor means that a person cannot fully participate in society, then the poverty rate is around 12% to 15%. This definition is used by anti-poverty organizations.*

Canada does not have an official poverty line – an income level below which someone is considered poor, depending on family size and where they live – adopted by federal and provincial/territorial governments. The closest thing to an official poverty measure, according to the federal government’s own documents, is one for which data are no longer being collected: the Low-Income Cut-offs or LICOs (before and after taxes).

The paper describes various income and poverty measures used in Canada, definitions of “working poor,” clawbacks/offsets of national child benefits, and how the unemployed are counted. Download the paper [here](#).

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3. CAPC/CPNP Resource on Reducing Teen Pregnancies

On the Move was a two year project funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada and developed by the Community Action Programs for Children and Canada Prenatal Nutrition Programs. The resource guide includes strategies for mobilizing community, engaging youth, and youth engaging youth to reduce rates of teen pregnancy in Canada. While designed for CAPC/CPNP project representatives, the resource contains useful strategies and research for many community workers and educators. Download it [here](#).

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4. Healthy Eating and Food Security Strategies for BC

A discussion paper prepared by the Dietitians of Canada, *Healthy Eating and Food Security: Promising Strategies for BC* highlights key strategies and actions that will support more British Columbians to be food secure and to make healthy food choices. The framework presented in the paper includes producing more local food, developing and promoting healthier products, improving availability of healthy foods for everyone, and strengthening food-related knowledge, skills and behaviours.

One specific strategy identified in the paper is limiting the advertising of unhealthy food and beverages to children by banning television advertising during children's programs, reducing "under the radar" advertising techniques, and applying restrictions to advertising where children gather. Download the discussion paper [here](#).

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Announcements

1. Two New First Call Coalition Partners

First Call is pleased to announce the recent registration of two new partners in our coalition.

[S.U.C.C.E.S.S.](#) is a multi-service agency that promotes the wellbeing of all Canadians and immigrants by encouraging community participation.

[West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund](#) (West Coast LEAF) has a mission to achieve equality by changing historic patterns of systemic discrimination against women through BC-based equality rights litigation, law reform and public legal education.

A complete list of First Call coalition partners is on our [website](#). Is your organization not yet a partner in First Call? Download a registration form [here](#).

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2. Poor No More Documentary Showing in Vancouver

MP Libby Davies and the Vancouver and District Labour Council are hosting a viewing of the anti-poverty film *Poor No More* and a panel discussion with Michael McCarthy Flynn of the Living Wage for Families Campaign and Lynn Flandera from UNITE HERE

Local 40. The screening will take place on June 24 at 7:00 PM at Chapel Arts Studio, 304 Dunlevy.

About *Poor No More*:

We were always told, "If you work hard, things will get better." But many hard-working Canadians have only seen things get worse. Corporate profits soared, but only the rich got richer. The recession took away more jobs and piled up more debt, leaving more people poor or insecure.

Poor No More offers solutions to Canada's working poor. The film takes three Canadians to a world where people do not have to beg, where housing is affordable and university education is free. They ask themselves: if other countries can do this, why don't we?

Hosted by TV and film star Mary Walsh, Poor No More offers an engaging look at Canadians stuck in low paying jobs with no security and no future. Mary then takes us on a journey to Ireland and Sweden so we can see how these countries have tackled poverty while strengthening their economies. The film offers hope to those who have to work two jobs a day and to those who cannot even find work.

Contact Libby Davies' office at 604-775-5800 for more information.

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3. Talking and Walking Sustainability Discussion at Langara

Langara College presents Talking and Walking Sustainability, a weekend event focused on keeping both environment and social justice on an equal footing. It takes place on Friday, June 11, from 7- 9:30 pm & Saturday, June 12, from 9 am – 5 pm at Langara College, 100 West 49 Ave in Vancouver. On the Saturday, First Call's Adrienne Montani will be part of a panel discussing poverty and sustainability.

Registration is \$49. Contact Leslie Kemp at 604-323-5981 or lkemp@langara.bc.ca.

Friday, June 11, 7 - 9:30 pm

Setting the Scene: Introduction to Sustainability 7:30 – 9:30 pm

Chair: Leslie Kemp, Program Coordinator, Community Development and Sustainability, Langara College Continuing Studies

Presenters:

Ernie Crey, Senior Policy Advisor to the Sto:lo Tribal Council

Bill Hopwood, Sustainability Activist

Mark Roseland, Director, Centre for Sustainable Community Development, SFU

Saturday, June 12, 9 am – 5 pm

Climate Change 9:30 – 11:15 am

Chair: Brenda Reid-Kuecks, Executive Director, Ecotrust

Presenters:

Ian Bruce, Team Lead, Climate Change Program, David Suzuki Foundation

Marc Lee, Senior Economist, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

Poverty 11:30 am – 1:15 pm

Chair: Michael Clague, Community Development Consultant

Presenters:

Adrienne Montani, Provincial Coordinator, First Call

Ben West, Healthy Communities Campaigner, Wilderness Committee

Lunch 1:15 – 2:15 pm

A Red Green Alliance 2:15 – 4:30 pm

Chair: Kathryn Cholette, Sustainability Activist

Presenters:

George Heyman, Executive Director, Sierra Club BC

Jim Sinclair, President, BC Federation of Labour

Vanessa Timmer, Director, One Earth

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4. Public Legal Education Course in Victoria

West Coast LEAF is holding a practical public legal education course designed for all activists, advocates, and community service providers who would like to learn about human rights law, equality rights, and how to develop legal strategies to address the impact of systemic discrimination.

The course will be held on June 16 and 17 at the BCGEU Victoria office, 2994 Douglas St. There is a \$100 fee and subsidies are available. Contact Deanna Ogle at 1-866-737-7716 or education@westcoastleaf.org for more information.

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