

First Call's Weekly Announcements – October 16, 2009

Next Coalition Meeting: October 14

Honouring Our Advocacy Fundraising Dinner: October 20

Next ECD Roundtable: October 28

Visit our [web site](#) for more information.

A. Advocacy/Calls to Action

1. [Support Autism/Special Needs Rallies in Kamloops and Kelowna Oct. 18](#)
2. [October 17: International Day for the Eradication of Poverty](#)
3. [Provincial Groups Protest Cuts to Children's Services](#)
4. [PCRS Brief on Youth Unemployment](#)
5. [Reminder: Living Wage Rally in New Westminster Tomorrow](#)

B. Research & Resources

1. [CEDAW Report Card from West Coast LEAF](#)
2. [Directions Youth Services Presents In Our Shoes](#)
3. [Homelessness Documentary](#)

C. Announcements

1. [Survey for Agencies Providing Services to Children and Youth with Special Needs](#)
2. [Thank a Youth Worker Day November 5](#)
3. [Ridge Meadows Sibling Connections Event](#)

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, conferences, media backgrounders, events and more.

First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition
202 – 1193 Kingsway, Vancouver, V5V 3C9
Ph: 604-873-8437 Fx: 604-874-9898
Email: info@firstcallbc.org

Advocacy/Calls to Action

1. Support Autism/Special Needs Rallies in Kamloops and Kelowna Oct. 18

Two rallies are being held this Sunday against the cuts to BC early intervention programs. The Kamloops rally is at 12:30 PM at Prince Charles Park – contact Samantha Warden at s.dwarden@gmail.com. The Kelowna rally is at 11 AM at Kerry Park – contact Lisa Watson, kellylisa@shaw.ca.

Find out more by joining the Facebook group “Reverse the EIBI funding cuts!”

[.../top](#)

2. October 17: International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

Officially recognized by the United Nations, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty takes place on October 17 every year. Social justice groups across Canada are organizing events to help commemorate this date. Among these will be a number of “Stand Up” events between October 16 (World Food Day) and October 18. In Stand Up events, participants simply stand at once together and are counted for their support for more urgent political action to the global crisis of poverty and inequality. In 2008, more than 116 million people in 127 countries – almost 2% of the world’s population – took part in Stand Up events, the biggest mass action in history!

To Stand Up against poverty in your community, search for an event at www.makepovertyhistory.ca.

[.../top](#)

3. Provincial Groups Protest Cuts to Children’s Services

[BC FamilyNet](#) and the [BC Coalition for People with Disabilities](#) have both written to Minister for Children and Family Development Mary Polak regarding cuts to children’s services. BC FamilyNet’s letter states:

BC FamilyNet Society, a provincial organization which promotes effective and readily accessible supports and services for people with disabilities and their families, is deeply concerned about the short-sighted elimination of programs which provide invaluable long term benefits to children who face extraordinary challenges, their families, and society as a whole.

Cutting funds for the Early Intensive Behaviour Intervention (EIBI) program for autistic children, and the Provincial Advisor Offices for the Infant Development Program (IDP), the Aboriginal Infant Development Program (AIDP), and Supported Child Care (SCC) represents a major policy shift in the use of always scarce dollars, yet your ministry has done this without apparent consultation with affected groups. Further we question whether depriving families of the proven EIBI program, to give them instead an amount of money insufficient to purchase similarly effective programs, while simultaneously spending \$20 million on a building with no funded programs, meets the goal of equitable and effective service delivery.

The Provincial Advisor Offices for IDP, AIDP and SSC, rather than representing a needless level of bureaucracy, provide the research, training, mentoring and crucial connection between families, that are integral to the successful development of children across the province. These critical services are presently provided by extremely knowledgeable staff. To lose their expertise, or in anyway dilute the essential roles these advisors play in the lives of children and families, would clearly be false economy.

FamilyNet is greatly concerned about further cuts within MCFD and to CLBC. We remain concerned about the large number of children who receive no funding whatsoever. At a time when \$14 billion can be found for capital stimulus projects, surely the amounts needed for long term investment in people can also be found.

BC Coalition for People with Disabilities wrote:

The BC Coalition of People with Disabilities (BCCPD) is extremely concerned about the proposed funding cuts for children with autism that will abolish the Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention (EIBI) program.

We are writing in the hope that you will reconsider this decision which will have tragic consequences for children living with this disability who will be unable to receive this crucial treatment as a result.

We support the Autism Society of BC's (ASBC) position that the decision to take EIBI treatment away from all children is regressive, fiscally unsound and will result in a great human cost. For children in the program and those on the waiting list, the EIBI program is their best chance for living a productive, meaningful life. Without it, they will start school at a significant developmental disadvantage. Most will be unable to catch up.

As ASBC has noted, failure to treat autism early will ultimately cost the province significantly more than the cost of the EIBI program. According to your own ministry's data, the cost of EIBI for the 70 children currently in the program is approximately \$5 million per year (70 children at \$70,000 a year). Research indicates that each \$5 million invested will save British Columbians roughly \$175 million in future health care and social services costs.

We respectfully urge you to reverse your decision to cut funding to this crucial program for children with autism in BC.

[.../top](#)

4. PCRS Brief on Youth Unemployment

This federal budget brief from Pacific Community Resources Society focuses on Skills Link programming:

The continuation and expansion of Skills Link programming, within the Youth Employment Strategy, is a fundamental support to an overall approach to ensure that the Government of Canada adequately supports Canadian youth in a way that supports a stronger and more vibrant Canada by achieving the following:

1. *Help to reduce the drag on GDP caused by unemployed "at-risk" youth who are drawing on criminal justice, alcohol and drug counselling, alternative education, and income assistance services.*
2. *"At-Risk" Youth who successfully attach to the labour market, will positively contribute to the national GDP.*
3. *Provide employers the opportunity to tap an untapped pool of young Canadian workers in an increasingly challenging labour market.*
4. *Provide employers an opportunity to give back to the community creating a "triple bottom line" for participating businesses.*
5. *Provide the appropriate interventions to assist "at-risk" youth in developing essential skills needed for long-term attachment to the labour market.*

RECOMMENDATION

Renew the Terms and Conditions for Skills Link programming in 2010 and increase the level of funding allocated to Skills Link programming to twice the present level, given the crisis of youth unemployment in the economic downturn.

Read more [here](#).

[.../top](#)

5. Reminder: Living Wage Rally in New Westminster Tomorrow

ACORN is launching a living wage campaign in New Westminster on Saturday, October 17 at 12 noon in front of City Hall. Their goal is to pass Canada's first Living Wage Bylaw in New Westminster.

Contact 604-522-8706 and visit www.acorncanada.org.

[.../top](#)

Research & Resources

1. CEDAW Report Card from West Coast LEAF

West Coast Women's Legal Education and Action Fund has issued a report card grading BC on its compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In her letter to Premier Campbell, the Executive Director of West Coast LEAF stated:

In [the report] you will see that West Coast LEAF has closely examined the expectations of the United Nations as articulated in the 2008 concluding observations

on Canada from the UN Committee on the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and compared them to the policies and actions here in BC.

In its report, CEDAW expressed many concerns about the status of women in Canada, and BC in particular. A number of these areas of concern are under the jurisdiction of the provincial government. In measuring government action against CEDAW standards, it is clear that BC is woefully neglectful of the women of this province.

As the eyes of the world turn to British Columbia in the coming months and days, we need to examine the ways in which BC is not meeting world standards or expectations.

These grades are based on the realities of women in BC and represent cross-sector consultation and extensive research. They are not random. I urge you to change this picture. West Coast LEAF intends to issue a report card based on these categories each year. We look forward to seeing progress; we look forward to reporting to the CEDAW Committee that BC is a sustainable, equitable and just place to live for all.

BC received C grades for violence against women and girls, and women and girls in prison, D grades for access to child care, women and social assistance, and women and housing, and F's for access to justice, and missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. The report is available [here](#).

[.../top](#)

2. Directions Youth Services Presents In Our Shoes

In Our Shoes is a new project from Vancouver's Directions Youth Services to provide greater understanding of what it's really like to be young and on the street. The website, www.inourshoes.ca, features short films with homeless youth, made by the youth themselves.

[.../top](#)

3. Homelessness Documentary

Home Safe Toronto is a documentary that deals with how Canadian families live with the threat and the experience of homelessness. It shows how the housing crisis in Canada is an expression of the increasing economic and job insecurity that has devastated the manufacturing sector in the Greater Toronto Area and throughout southern Ontario. The film reveals the consequences of this "new economy," where families surviving on low wages with no benefits, or on dwindling social assistance, are faced with the terrible choice between keeping a roof over their heads or putting food on the table.

For more information contact SkyWorks Charitable Foundation at info@skyworksfoundation.org. DVDs can be ordered at www.vtape.org.

Announcements

1. Survey for Agencies Providing Services to Children and Youth with Special Needs

The British Columbia Association of Child Development and Intervention (BCACDI), with the help of a provincial multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral steering committee, has been charged with leading a project whose aim is to identify and map services and service providers for children and youth with special needs in BC. This project is funded through a grant from the BC government, and is part of the scope of the 'Framework for Action for Children and Youth with Special Needs' initiative developed and signed off by the Ministries of Health, Education and Children and Family Development in 2008.

The goal of the mapping and modeling of service providers' project is to produce a comprehensive description of the services and service providers for children and youth with special needs in the province. This is a groundbreaking effort to document these services in Canada, and represents an important opportunity to help improve service planning and delivery for children and youth with special needs and their families in BC

We would appreciate your assistance in making this project as effective as it can be. Survey forms and detailed guide books for the completion of the survey regarding services for children and youth with special needs were mailed out to approximately 600 agencies from the education, social services and health sectors this summer. The response rate has been approximately 40% to date. A significantly higher response rate is needed to acquire a set of information that is comprehensive and useful. In order to ensure the highest return rate for all agencies providing services to children and youth with special needs, an on-line survey tool has been developed and will be sent to all agencies who have not yet completed the survey the week of October 13, 2009. This on-line survey will be easier and quicker to complete than the original hard copy survey.

We ask you to encourage all your member agencies which provide provincially funded services for children and youth with special needs and have not yet completed the survey form to complete this on-line survey form. All survey forms should be completed and returned by November 13, 2009. If any of these agencies have questions about the on-line survey form or if they have not received the on-line survey form then they should contact Dewey Evans at the ELM Group at kdevans@telus.net or by calling 604-990-4012.

2. Thank a Youth Worker Day November 5

November 5 is Thank a Youth Worker Day! Here are some ways you can participate:

1. Check out the Thank a Youth Worker Day (TAYWD) website at www.thankayouthworkerday.org.
2. Distribute orange ribbons to all supporters, including clients, participants, partners, employees, etc. You can order ribbons at Awareness Ribbon www.awarenessribbons.com/ribboncat.html
3. Host a TAYWD event (i.e. luncheon, reception, open house, breakfast, etc.)
4. Ask youth in your organization to plan a thank you for your front-line youth workers.
5. Gather and send thank you notes from parents, youth, and other staff to every youth worker in your organization.
6. Post flyers in your building(s) and in the community to promote TAYWD. (Flyer available on the website.)
7. Engage your local media: send a press release to local media outlets, invite media to local events, etc.
8. Feature stories about your youth workers in internal and external publications.
9. Put information about TAYWD on your website and in all publications.
10. Partner with other organizations in your area for a community-wide celebration.

[../top](#)

3. Ridge Meadows Sibling Connections Event

This event will celebrate the many contributions made by brothers and sisters of kids with developmental challenges. Boys and girls ages 8 – 12 are invited to participate on November 23 from 6:00 – 8:00 PM at the Ridge Meadows Child Development Centre. Contact Catherine or Rahim at 604-463-0881 ext. 302 and 316.

[../top](#)