

Provincial & Regional Partners:

Aboriginal Mother Centre Society
ACT Autism Community Training Society
Adoptive Families Association of BC
Affiliation of Multicultural Societies & Service Agencies
Alternate Shelter Society
Association for Community Education BC
Autism Society of BC
BC Aboriginal Childcare Society
BC Assoc. for Child Development & Rehabilitation
BC Association for Community Living
BC Association for Play Therapy
BC Association of Child Care Employers
BC Association of Family Resource Programs
BC Association of Pregnancy Outreach Programs
BC Association of Social Workers
BC Council for Families
BC Crime Prevention Association
BC Farm Women's Network
BC Federation of Foster Parents Association
BC Government & Service Employees' Union
BC Institute Against Family Violence
BC Pediatric Society • BC Recreation and Parks Association
BC School Trustees Association
BC Teachers' Federation
BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses
Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland
Boys & Girls Clubs of BC
Canadian Association for Young Children
Canadian Jewish Congress, Pacific Region
Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division
Canadian Red Cross • Capilano Student Union
Caring for First Nations Children Society
Centre for Safe Schools and Communities
Cerebral Palsy Association of BC
Child & Family Counseling Association
Child & Youth Care Association of BC
Child Care Advocacy Forum
Children's & Women's Health Centre of BC
Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
Council of Parent Participation Preschools BC
Deaf Children's Society of BC
Dietitians of Canada, BC Region
Developmental Disabilities Association
Early Childhood Educators of BC
East Kootenay Childhood Coalition
Family Services of Greater Vancouver
Federated Anti-Poverty Groups
Federation of BC Youth In Care Networks
Federation of Child & Family Services of BC
Health Officers Council of BC
Hospital Employees' Union
Infant Development Program of BC
Invest in Kids • Immigrant Services Society of BC
Justice Institute of BC
Learning Disabilities Association of BC
Literacy BC • McCreary Centre Society
MOSAIC • National Council of Jewish Women
Pacific Association of First Nations Women
Pacific Community Resources Society
Pacific Legal Education Association • PARCA
Parent Support Services Society • PeerNetBC
Penticton & District Community Resources Society
Phoenix Human Services Association
Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society
Public Health Association of BC
Social Planning & Research Council BC
Society for Children & Youth of BC
Society for Public Education of BC
Society of Special Needs Adoptive Parents
Sunshine Coast Community Services Society
Toxic Free Canada
United Way of the Lower Mainland
Vancouver Coastal Health – Population Health
Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre
Westcoast Family Resources Society
Working Group on Poverty • YWCA of Greater Vancouver
...and 26 Community Coalition Partners.

January 9, 2009

The Honourable Gordon Campbell
Premier of British Columbia
Room 156, West Annex
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Premier Campbell,

We are writing to you regarding opportunities to improve the health and well being of our province's children. First Call partners were pleased to read, as reported by the Canadian Press, that helping children is your top political priority. We were also pleased to see recent television spots that invited British Columbians to share their views for the future with their provincial government.

Members of our Coordinating Committee would very much appreciate a meeting with you at your earliest convenience to suggest further options to help the province develop its programs, policies and services for children and their families. Our partner organizations have expertise in virtually every area of public policy affecting children and their families.

We agree with your year-end remarks that many programs for children will take years to develop fully, but we would encourage you to consider immediate policy action to reduce BC's persistently high rate of child poverty and to meaningfully increase the incomes of many families, especially during these tough economic times.

There are three changes in particular which could be done almost immediately and which would produce immediate improvements in the lives of children. One is a long over-due increase in the BC minimum wage to support people who are trying to work their way out of poverty. The second is a commitment to making sure people working to deliver services funded by the provincial government, whether directly or indirectly through contracts, are paid a living wage that lifts families out of poverty. The third is a substantial increase in income assistance rates for people unable to work or unable to find work. Further, both the minimum wage and income assistance rates should be indexed to the cost of living once a year

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to ensure that our provinces' most vulnerable citizens have the same protection against inflation as accorded by the federal government to recipients of federally run pension programs.

First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition is a coalition of more than 80 provincial and regional organizations, mobilized communities and individuals who believe children should have "first call" on society's resources. In the interest of BC's children and youth, we look forward to having the opportunity to work with you on these important issues and to bring forward other policy proposals that can improve children's lives now. Please let us know when we can meet with you.

Sincerely yours,

[original signed by]

Julie Norton
Provincial Chair