



Media Release  
For immediate release  
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## **Opinion Survey Finds Most British Columbians Unaware That Children Allowed to Work at 12 Years of Age**

Vancouver – A June public opinion survey commissioned by First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition found that only 6% of British Columbians could correctly identify the age at which a child can be formally employed without the need for a government permit in BC.

Survey respondents most commonly assumed the minimum age for a child to begin work without a permit would be 16 years old (34%) followed by 15 (24%) and 14 (20%). In fact, the work start age in BC is 12 years of age.

In 2003, the provincial government lowered the work-start age from 15 to 12 years and imposed only four conditions on employment. As a result, BC has the lowest child-related employment standards in North America and is the only province that has virtually no restrictions on the occupations, tasks, or time of day a child can work.

“We know from data that every single year over the past ten years children under 14-years were injured on the job seriously enough for WorkSafeBC to pay out tens of thousands of dollars in injury claims,” commented Adrienne Montani, First Call’s Provincial Co-ordinator. “As many children and youth begin summer jobs, it’s important for everyone to realize how few safeguards are in place to protect them from exploitation and injury.”

Survey respondents were also asked their opinion about what age a child should be to enter formal employment without the need for a government permit. More than one-third of residents (36%), thought it should be 16 years old. About one-in-five (18%) said 14 years, with a similar proportion (21%) saying 15 years.

The large majority of BC residents (78%) would support the introduction of legislation to provide greater regulation of the employment of children aged 12 to 14 years, including almost half (47%) who would strongly support it. Of those who opposed the idea of new legislation, 15% did so because they feel children of this age should not be working at all.

“It’s interesting to see that most people support a work start age that is in keeping with international standards,” observed Montani. “In 2016, the Canadian Government ratified the International Labour Organization’s Convention 138. Countries that ratify the convention must set a minimum age for employment. Canada committed to 16 years of age and agreed to prohibit hazardous work for those under the age of 18.”

Once again, First Call urges the BC government to protect children by complying with these accepted international standards.

Survey Methodology:

- 500 residents aged 18 years of age or older from across British Columbia using Mustel Group's own randomly recruited Giving Opinions online panel.
- The survey questionnaire was programmed and hosted by Mustel Group, with data collection taking place between June 8 and 11, 2018.
- At the data processing stage minor weighting factors were applied to ensure the sample's final distribution of BC residents reflects that of Statistics Canada census data according to age, gender and region.
- The margin of error on a random sample of 500 completed interviews would be: 4.4% at 95% confidence level in the most conservative case.

About:

First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition is a non-partisan coalition of 105 provincial and regional organizations who have united their voices to put children and youth first in BC through public education, community mobilization, and public policy advocacy.

First Call thanks the Law Foundation of British Columbia and Lush for their support of the BC Child Employment Standards Improvement Project.

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