

FIRST CALL

OCTOBER 20, 2018 BRITISH COLUMBIA
Municipal Election Toolkit

First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition is a non-partisan, province-wide coalition of over 105 provincial and regional organizations who come together to mobilize British Columbians in support of strong public policies and the allocation of resources for the benefit of children and youth.

First Call has built a broad provincial consensus around the need to ensure all British Columbian children and youth benefit from the **4 Keys to Success for Children and Youth**.



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**KEYS TO SUCCESS
FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

- 1** A strong commitment to **early childhood** development
- 2** Support in **youth transitions** from childhood to adulthood
- 3** Increased **economic equality**
- 4** **Safe and caring** communities

LET'S GET BC'S CHILDREN & YOUTH ON THE MUNICIPAL AGENDA!

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October 20, 2018 is Election Day

in municipalities across the province. On that day, eligible voters exercise their right to vote for mayors, councilors, school board trustees (and, in Vancouver, park board trustees).

The purpose of this toolkit is to support individuals and community groups in their advocacy for legislation, policy and practice at the municipal level that benefit children and youth and their families.

The toolkit is structured around the 4 Keys to Success. Each section highlights current problems, outlines the role of the municipal government, and suggests questions for candidates.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Elections are the perfect time to speak up for children and youth.

Here are some ways you can contribute to positive change for youth and children in your community during an election campaign:

- YOU CAN VOTE if you're 18 or older, have lived in BC for at least 6 months and in your community (e.g. municipality) for one month
- Discuss the issues in this toolkit with friends, neighbours and family.
- Attend or organize an all-candidates meeting, and ask the questions included in this toolkit.
- Write to your local newspaper or call-in to a radio show.
- Contact candidates and tell them you want them to support children and youth. Use the information and questions in this toolkit for speaking points.
- Hold a public forum. It could be as simple as gathering friends to talk about the issues over coffee. Or, hold a larger event and invite candidates to attend. Include youth and marginalized groups in the planning and organizing.
- Join a local advocacy group that focuses on a child and youth issue of concern to you.
- Encourage any group of which you're a member, such as faith or cultural groups, to promote child and youth well-being in the campaign.
- Use social media to publicize your conversations with candidates.



Use these tags to post on social media

#BCed #BCPoli #fosteringchangebc #endchildpoverty
#livingwage



@FirstCallBC @FosterChangeBC @LWforfamilies

Key 1

A strong commitment to early childhood development

Early childhood is a crucial, time-limited period of human development, and data from BC's Early Development Index is showing increasing risks of less than optimal development among young children. Without supportive public policy and needed services, young families are stressed by the demands of caring and earning. All families should be able to access early childhood development supports and services that they need.

YOUNG CHILDREN'S INCREASED VULNERABILITIES

The Problem

- One third of BC's poor children, or 50,280 children, are under the age of six. Young children had a poverty rate of 18.5% in 2015.
- One third of BC children are entering Kindergarten vulnerable or behind in at least one area of their development – social, emotional, cognitive, communications or physical.
- BC ranks well below the 1% of GDP benchmark for investment in early childhood education and care.

The Role of Municipal Government

- Cities are often able to offer grants or in-kind support to local services like neighbourhood houses, child care spaces, recreational programming and community events that focus on supporting young children and their families
- Mayors, city councillors and school trustees can proactively work with senior levels of government to advocate for increased investments in supports and services for families with young children.

Q:

If elected, what will you do to reduce rising vulnerability among young children in your community?

THE CHILD CARE CRISIS

The Problem

After years of neglect by previous provincial governments, BC is now taking concrete steps to address the child care crisis across the province. These steps need to solve these big problems:

- Parent fees are too high, ranging from \$800/month for preschoolers to over \$1,000/month for younger children (provincial median).
- Too few licensed spaces – BC parents can't find or afford quality child care, especially for shift work, as there are only enough licensed spaces for 18% of young children.
- Early Childhood Educators' wages and benefits are too low – forcing many to leave the field and compromising the quality of the care available to many families.
- Due to the high cost and lack of child care spaces, many mothers cannot return to work when they are ready to.

The Role of Municipal Government

- Municipal governments can endorse the \$10aDay Child Care Plan calling on the provincial government to begin building a better child care system. The \$10aDay Child Care Plan is the community's solution to BC's child care crisis. 32 local BC governments support the Plan but they do not have the resources or mandate to implement it alone. If your local government has already endorsed the Plan, encourage them to support the next steps the campaign is calling for.
- Cities are responsible for many local regulations, such as development zoning, and can require that child care spaces be included in new buildings.
- School Boards can ensure stability for the many child care programs that operate on school sites.

Q: Affordable and high quality child care encourages children's healthy development, allows mothers to enter and remain in the work force, enables families to move out of poverty and benefits the economy by reducing social costs and increasing tax revenues. If elected, will you endorse (or advocate for the continued implementation of) the \$10aDay Child Care Plan?

Q: If elected, what will you do to help increase the number of child care spaces in our community?

RESOURCES

First Call's Early Years Call to Action

<https://firstcallbc.org/take-action-for-bcs-young-children-and-families-email-the-premier/>

\$10 a Day Child Care Plan 10aDay.ca

Human Early Learning Partnership earlylearning.ubc.ca

BC Association of Pregnancy Outreach Programs bcapop.ca

BC Aboriginal Child Care Society acc-society.bc.ca

BC Association of Family Resource Programs frpbc.ca

BC Council for Families bccf.ca

BC Association for Child Development and Intervention bcacdi.ca

Key 2

Support in transitions from childhood to youth to adulthood

Transitions are times of increased vulnerability when children and youth may need extra support to navigate them safely. Developmental transitions include moving into adolescence and into the expectations of adult life.

Other stressful transitions include changes in family, such as when parents separate or divorce or are unable to keep their children safe.

Dealing with a mental illness, being new to Canada or coming to terms with a minority sexual orientation are other examples of circumstances and transitions that require extra support.

The Problem

- There are approximately 7,000 children and youth in government care at any time in BC.
- While many families support their children well into their 20s with a range of financial and emotional assistance, youth who age out of foster care are often left to fend for themselves.
- 40% of homeless youth in BC have spent time in foster care.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth in Canada, and Aboriginal youth are 5-6 times more likely to commit suicide than other youth. Gay and lesbian youth are 6

times more likely to commit suicide than straight youth.

The Role of Municipal Government

- Civic leaders can ensure there are youth-friendly spaces in areas such as parks, community centres, schools and libraries, and cities and towns can create more safe and free spaces where youth can meet.
- Cities can subsidize and increase accessibility to after-school programs offering sports and arts activities and homework clubs.
- School boards and councils can ensure that children and youth have access to counsellors and youth workers to talk about anything from sexual health to family problems to employment.
- School boards and councils can give power to Youth Committees and find other creative ways for youth to have a voice on issues that concern them. They can organize youth forums so that young people can gather and discuss issues and provide valuable perspective to municipal leaders.

Q: The youth in our community have limited places to socialize safely. If elected what would you do to create more public youth-friendly spaces?

Q: If elected what would you do to ensure that youth voices are represented in decision-making?



RESOURCES

Fostering Change fosteringchange.ca

McCreary Centre Society mcs.bc.ca

Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks fbcyicn.ca/programs/transitions/

BC Teachers' Federation bctf.ca

BC Federation of Students wearebcstudents.ca

Inclusion BC inclusionbc.org

Canadian Mental Health Association-BC Division b4stage4.ca

Key 3

Increased economic equality

Research has long demonstrated that poverty is toxic to children's health and development. From poor nutrition to family stress to exclusion from social participation, there are many ways poverty is known to raise the risk of life-long ill effects on health and reduce opportunities for children to realize their full potential. Growing income inequality in BC is recognized as a threat to the health of both individual children, youth and families, as well as to communities as a whole.

CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY

The Problem

- BC's child poverty rate is 18.3%, or 1 in 5 children. First Call's regional fact sheets and maps contain the poverty rates for many local communities and areas. Child poverty is most severe in the coastal regional districts, with some rates as high as 46%.
- Approximately 85% of BC's poor children live in the 25 urban areas. Urban child poverty rates across the province range from 9% to 26%. Children living outside of urban areas have a poverty rate of 23%.
- While BC's income and disability assistance rates were increased by \$100/month in 2017, families receiving welfare still live thousands of dollars below the poverty line.
- Inequality in BC is growing. In 2015, the richest 10% of families with children received 24% of the total income of all families with children, with the poorest 10% shared only 2% of the total income pie. Between 1989 and 2015,

families in the richest 10% gained more than \$100,000 in average yearly income, while the poorest 10% of families gained less than \$5,000 per year.

The Role of Municipal Government

- Elected municipal and school board officials can demand that the promised provincial and federal government poverty reduction strategies address poverty and growing income and wealth inequality through tax reform and increased social policy investments. Cities can also develop their own poverty reduction plans.
- Cities can stop low-income housing from being demolished, and they can require that new developments include affordable rental and social housing.
- Municipal governments can advocate for reduced fare or free transit passes for low-income individuals and families.

Q:

If elected, will you endorse and/or advocate for evidence-based poverty reduction strategies for BC, including the right to affordable rental housing and better income supports for families living in poverty?

Q:

If elected, will you advocate for free access to public transit for children and reduced transit fares for low-income individuals and families?

LOW WAGE POVERTY

The Problem

- The majority of poor children in BC live in families with parents in the paid labour force, many of them working full-time and sometimes multiple jobs.
- A parent with dependents working full-time all year would have to earn much more than the minimum wage of \$12.65/hour to be above the poverty line.

The Role of Municipal Government

- Cities and boards of education can pay their employees a living wage and can agree to only contract for services with companies that pay a living wage.

Q:	The majority of poor children come from working families. The municipal level government has a responsibility to avoid contributing to the problem of low-wage poverty. If elected will you commit to adopting a living wage policy requiring the municipality or school district to pay a living wage to both its employees and contract staff?
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THE HEALTH EFFECTS OF POVERTY

The Problem

- Living in poverty, even for one or two years, can have serious negative impacts on children's health and development. These impacts include longer-term effects such as increased risks of chronic disease, school failure, and vulnerability to criminal involvement.
- Health inequities are associated with higher costs for our health and social service systems, and social costs to our communities.
- If disadvantaged British Columbians were as healthy as those with higher education and incomes, we could avoid an estimated \$1.2 billion in health care costs.

The Role of Municipal Government

- Public schools can reduce or eliminate fees that act as barriers to inclusion for low-income students.
- Municipalities can provide free or discounted recreational services and access to programs for low-income children, youth and families.
- Municipalities can increase food security through zoning that would ensure low-income neighbourhoods have access to reasonably priced, quality fruits and vegetables.
- Municipalities can support community gardens, community kitchens and schools can provide healthy meals and nutritional information to students.

Q:	School and recreation program fees remain a significant barrier to low-income families. If elected, how will you ensure that children and families have equal access to school and community programs?
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Spotlight on Municipal Living Wage Employers

Cities and School Boards can make a difference. By becoming Living Wage Employers, cities and school boards can ensure their workers are able to live in and contribute back to their communities. Many municipalities in BC are already leading the way, such as the City of New Westminster (the first municipality in Canada to become a Living Wage Employer) and School District 69 - Qualicum.

City of Vancouver

On May 1st, 2017, the City of Vancouver became a Living Wage Employer. This means the City commits to paying its staff and in-scope contractors at least the hourly Living Wage. Vancouver is the largest municipality to date to become certified.

Vancouver's certification followed several years of working with the Living Wage for Families Campaign and allies to develop a plan. The campaign was successful for several reasons. It had a clear mandate from City Council, the City Manager, and the Corporate Leadership Team, and it was supported with enough resources. The City also committed a cross-departmental team, including a communications specialist and dedicated legal support, which ensured a clear path for implementation.



Work should lift you out of poverty, not keep you there

“Quesnel can help lead the way by establishing benchmarks which challenge all employers to pay wages that reflect the true costs of living in our community and which also give people the ability to engage more fully in our local economy and social dynamic.”

MAYOR BOB SIMPSON

Congratulations!

Quesnel is the second municipality in Canada to implement a living wage policy



Certified Municipal Living Wage Employers

- ✓ City of Quesnel
- ✓ City of New Westminster
- ✓ City of Pitt Meadows
- ✓ City of Port Coquitlam
- ✓ City of Vancouver
- ✓ School District 69 – Qualicum

RESOURCES

First Call's 2017 BC Child Poverty Report Card still1in5.ca

Living Wage for Families Campaign livingwageforfamilies.ca

CCPA-BC Poverty Reduction Plan bcpovertyreduction.ca/learn-more/plan-for-bc/

SPARC BC sparc.bc.ca/resources-and-publications/category/43/poverty

Campaign 2000 National Child Poverty Report Card campaign2000.ca

BC Poverty Reduction Coalition bcpovertyreduction.ca

Raise the Rates Coalition raisetherates.org

Parent Support Services Society of BC, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

parentsupportbc.ca/grandparents_raising_grandchildren

All On Board allonboard.ca

Key 4

Safe and caring communities

Families should be able to raise their children in communities that are safe and supportive. This includes physical safety, safe places for play, and an environment that is clean and healthy for growing bodies.

The Problem

- The average Canadian child is sedentary for three to five hours per day in front of a television.
- 40% of Canadian children already have at least one risk factor for heart disease due to an inactive lifestyle.

The Role of Municipal Government

- Cities can create green spaces and parks accessible to all residents, and schools can make sure they have safe playground

equipment and sports resources for children and youth.

- Cities are responsible for many local regulations, such as development zoning, for designing the physical environment, and can require and protect green spaces and child friendly spaces.
- Simple structures such as small walls, fountains, designs in the pavement, or water ways have a positive effect on children's lives and are relatively easy for cities to work into their design plans.
- Creating more bike and walking routes, and including them in new road structures will positively affect recreation, health and community cohesiveness, and increase bicycle and pedestrian safety.

Q: If elected, what would you do to make our community more family, child, and youth-friendly?

Q: Recreation and parks play an important role in keeping children healthy, particularly those from low-income families. If elected, how will you ensure that all children have access to safe places to play?

RESOURCES

International Play Association Canada ipacanada.org

Inclusion BC inclusionbc.org

BC Healthy Living Alliance bchealthyliving.ca

Society for Children and Youth-Child Friendly Communities childfriendlycommunities.ca

UNICEF Child Friendly Cities childfriendlycities.org