



EARLY YEARS CALL TO ACTION 2017

Tell the provincial and federal governments to make BC's young children and families a priority, and step up with significant policy changes and investments.

- Advances children's rights
- Emphasizes the primary role of families
- Supports communities
- Affirms society's collective responsibility
- Highlights the importance of culturally safe, respectful and relevant services and supports
- Recognizes our unique relationship with, and responsibilities to, Aboriginal peoples
- Acknowledges that governments need to take decisive action
- Prioritizes the supports and services that are unique to the early years
- Calls on governments to build from existing services
- Affirms that we can afford to make substantial and meaningful public investments
- Provides First Call, other organizations, governments and communities with an evidenced-based advocacy tool

BC's families with young children need more

TIME,
INCOME and
a **RANGE OF**
SERVICES

to help their
children
thrive.



We need
access for all
to **enhanced**
maternity and
parental leave and **affordable**
child care without long wait lists.

We are collectively responsible to
support all young children's healthy
development without discrimination.



BC ranks well below the **1% of GDP** benchmark for investment in early childhood education and care.



Early childhood investments still inadequate

Since First Call first published an early years Call to Action framework in 2003, no substantive progress has been achieved because senior levels of government have chosen not to prioritize the required public investments or make necessary public policy changes.

These choices have particularly devastating consequences for children and families facing the added challenges of poverty, racism, colonialism, migration, traumatic experiences and disabilities.

UNIVERSAL SUPPORTS AND SERVICES ensure access to ALL FAMILIES by also reducing the barriers experienced by VULNERABLE POPULATIONS and children with greater needs. This approach is called PROPORTIONATE UNIVERSALITY.

Children living in poverty

The early years (0-5) are a critical time for human brain growth, and learning important social-emotional, problem-solving and language skills. High poverty rates in this period create unfair and preventable inequities in children's health and development. Children in lone-parent families have a 1 in 2 risk of being poor; over 80% of these families are female-led.

Indigenous families and communities

The federal government has yet to comply with a Canadian Human Rights Tribunal order to end discriminatory underfunding of child welfare services for Indigenous children on reserves. Indigenous children on and off reserve are over-represented in BC's child poverty statistics.

Recent immigrants and refugees

Children in recent immigrant and refugee families in BC face much higher poverty rates. Families are often dealing with past trauma, adjustment to a new cultural context and social isolation.

Children with extra support needs

Underfunding creates wait lists and restrictive criteria, limiting access to early years therapies and other services for children with additional support needs. Strategies that ration access to needed services contradict research that shows early intervention is the most effective approach.

Underinvestment has resulted in heightened levels of vulnerability



BC research shows that **nearly a third** of all young children are vulnerable, or behind in some aspect of their development at **age five**, as measured by the Early Development Instrument (EDI)



Research, experience and the numbers all show us major changes to public policy are needed to help BC families overcome barriers and access the services they need



Public investment in early years programs and services remains inadequate



“Failure to invest in families with young children imposes substantial long-term costs to our education, health care, social welfare and justice systems, as well as undermining economic productivity and social stability.”



—Paul Kershaw
Lynell Anderson
Clyde Hertzman
Bill Warburton
“15 by 15” (2009)

Only **19%** of children under **12** in BC had access to a regulated child care space (Canadian average, 25%)



Most families pay **\$48-66** per day for child care in Vancouver, where median monthly child care costs **\$1,325**, compared to **\$164** a month in Montreal



2012: Fewer than **50%** of child care staff in BC have access to most benefits, and **63%** of employers have trouble filling positions

Making children a priority requires bold leadership from government, and **we must step up our efforts** to raise public awareness and build the political will that drives change.

Campaigns for Action

Since 2003, First Call and its partners have actively participated in efforts to raise awareness about poverty and inequality in general, the importance of the early years specifically, and the interrelationships between many social policy issues and BC’s economic and environmental health.

Growing awareness also brings new voices to the table; from the Surrey Board of Trade, to the Conference Board of Canada, to editorials in the *Vancouver Sun*, calls for action signal a growing understanding that only by addressing social determinants of health can we hope to achieve a strong economy and a healthy, productive society.

First Call and many others support a range of public campaigns that share a common concern – government policy that benefits young children and their families.

BC POVERTY REDUCTION COALITION

bcpovertyreduction.ca

With over 50 members and 400 supporting organizations, the coalition seeks a poverty reduction plan from the government of British Columbia that would include legislated targets and timelines to significantly reduce poverty and homelessness and improve the health and well-being of all British Columbians.

CAMPAIGN TO REPEAL S.43

firstcallbc.org/repeal-section-43

Section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada provides a legal defense for parents and teachers to hit children, within limitations related to age, degrees of force and parts of the body. This is contrary to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the UNCRC, so advocates aim to persuade Parliament and the Courts to repeal this defense of physical punishment.

\$10aDAY CHILD CARE PLAN

10aday.ca

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC and the Early Childhood Educators of BC released the \$10/day Plan in response to the deepening child care crisis facing BC families. The plan has been supported by families and organizations including local governments, boards of education, labour, social justice, seniors’, women’s and community groups, businesses and chambers of commerce.

GENERATION SQUEEZE

gensqueeze.ca

The 2009 UBC HELP report, 15 by 15: A Comprehensive Policy Framework for Early Human Capital Investment, highlighted the science of early child development, along with the benefits and costs of public investments in policies to reduce early vulnerability. This led to the movement-building Generation Squeeze campaign, which recognizes younger generations today are particularly squeezed for time, income and services when they have young children.

JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE

fncaringsociety.com/jordans-principle

Led by the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada, this campaign is named in memory of a First Nations child born with complex medical needs in Manitoba. Jordan died in hospital, having never spent a day in a family home, because of a jurisdictional dispute over funding for his home care. Jordan's Principle calls on the government of first contact to pay for the services and seek reimbursement later.

LIVING WAGE FOR FAMILIES CAMPAIGN

livingwageforfamilies.ca

The 2008 report Working for a Living Wage outlined the rationale and principles behind promoting regional living wage standards as a significant child poverty reduction strategy. While focused originally on Greater Vancouver and Victoria, the resulting Campaign – which is led by First Call, in collaboration with a range of partners – has attracted interest from communities and businesses across BC and Canada.

PROVINCIAL BAN ON SALE AND USE OF PESTICIDES

firstcallbc.org/news/continued-push-for-pesticide-ban

Because young children are particularly at risk from exposures to environmental toxins, more than 20 health and environmental organizations have issued a joint statement calling on the BC government to bring in new legislation that prohibits the use, sale and retail display of chemical pesticides for lawns, gardens and non-agricultural landscaping and that provides for public education about the ban and alternatives to chemical pesticides. They have also been working successfully at the municipal level to enact local bans.

SEED TO CEDAR CAMPAIGN

seedtocedar.com

The BC Aboriginal Child Care Society promotes this campaign to raise awareness about and support for Aboriginal Early Childhood Development and Care, and to advocate they be paid a living wage. The campaign highlights the need for expanded, comprehensive and culturally affirming Aboriginal programs and for stable funding to support existing programs and create new ones in under-served communities.

“Investment in early education can help to address core economic and social challenges facing Canada. It can help reduce poverty, address skills shortages, improve productivity and innovation, and a host of other national priorities.”

— TD Chief Economist Craig Alexander, TD Economics Special Report, *Early Childhood Education Has Widespread and Long Lasting Benefits*, November 27, 2012



putting children and youth first

810 – 815 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, BC V6C 1B4
604 709 6962
Toll free 1 800 307 1212
info@firstcallbc.org firstcallbc.org

A full basket of high-quality services rests on well-trained and supported staff, engaged communities and evidence-based public policy.



1. Quality child care
2. Public health services
3. Support for parents, families and caregivers
4. Early intervention supports and services

Families also need TIME together and adequate INCOME to balance and fulfill their CARING and EARNING responsibilities.