



202 – 1193 Kingsway, Vancouver V5V 3C9
Phone: (604) 873-8437/1-800-307-1212
Fax: (604) 874-9898
E-mail: info@firstcallbc.org
www.firstcallbc.org

**First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition
Minutes of December 10, 2008
BC Teachers' Federation Building**

In attendance:

Adrienne Montani – First Call
Andrina Perry – First Call
Julie Norton – First Call
Rebecca Siggner – SPARC BC
Ruth Annis – FASD Collaboration Roundtables (Chair)
Jason Chan – SUCCESS
James Chamberlain – BC Teachers' Federation
Julianna Torjek – City of Vancouver Youth Outreach Team
Andy Wachtel – Consultant
Mary Collins – BC Healthy Living Alliance
Jennifer Kim – Ministry of Advanced Education & Labour Market Development
Ian Mass – Pacific Community Resources Society
Bev Kerr – Office of the Representative for Children and Youth
Mariam Bouchoutrouch – Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House
Steve Kerstetter – First Call
Jean Moore – Canadian Mental Health Association
Margaret White – BC Teachers' Federation
Heather Armour – Public Health Agency of Canada
Bill Pegler – CUPE
Kirsty Allen – Single Parents on Campus
Jean Thompson – Vancouver Coastal Health
Darryl Quantz – Vancouver Coastal Health
Joanne Wooldridge – Vancouver Coastal Health

Sarah Nykolaishen – Parent Support Services
Gyda Chud – First Call
Cheryl Mixon – Family Services of Greater Vancouver
Karen DeLong – BC Association for Community Living
Ruth Annis – First Call
Michael Goldberg – First Call
Jane Thornthwaite – BC School Trustees Association
Dianne Liscumb – Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre
Andrew Kmetc – Vancouver Coastal Health
Tannis Cheadle – Vancouver Coastal Health

On phone:

Laurie Fisher, Queen Alexandra Foundation for Children
Moire Porter, Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Vancouver Island

Regrets:

Wanda Gendron – Western Society for Children
Kathleen Shiels – Western Society for Children
Bob Bowles – Valley Transportation Advisory Committee
Carol Anderson – Westcoast Family Resources Society
Janice MacDonald – Dietitians of Canada
John Millar – Health Officers' Council
Mab Oloman – Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

1. Reports and Updates

New Partner

Immigrant Services Society of BC is First Call's newest coalition partner.

Child Poverty Report Card

The 2008 report card was released on November 21. The BC rate was 21.9%, the highest in Canada again. 40% of young Aboriginal children living off-reserve were in poverty. Low wages is a major contributing factor – it would take a minimum wage of \$10.76 for an individual to reach the poverty line and families need more. The gap between rich and poor is increasing in BC, and we need a poverty reduction strategy. No working family should be living in poverty. Income Assistance rates should be indexed to inflation and the child tax benefit needs to be increased. The report card contains other recommendations such as increasing access to quality child care, building more social housing, and restoring access to Employment Insurance for many people.

Thanks to everyone who took part in producing the report card. The media conference went well, though we ended up with a bit less coverage than last year. These statistics have been raised in the Legislature by the NDP a number of times. First Call will circulate a sample letter that supporters can sign and send to Premier Campbell.

The report card is available online here:

<http://www.firstcallbc.org/pdfs/economicequality/3-reportcard-b&w.pdf>

CCPA Poverty Reduction Strategy

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives is releasing this tomorrow. They have already released some survey results showing that a very high majority of British Columbians support action: 87% believe now is the time for strong political leadership to reduce the number of poor people in Canada and our province; 91% said they would feel proud if our premier took leadership on poverty reduction; and 74% said they would be more likely to support a provincial party that pledged to make poverty reduction a high priority.

First Call Fundraising

We cleared \$10,000 at October's fundraising dinner. We have hired fundraising consultants to develop a plan for First Call. We have started talking about the dinner next year and whether/how to go ahead.

We have a budget shortfall for coming year. Thanks to all of the partners who have donated to our partner appeal over the last six months – we raised \$6600. We are currently doing an individual appeal to past donors and would like to implement a monthly donor program. In our current appeal, the Tides Canada Foundation has offered to match all donations by 50%.

Living Wage for Families Campaign

An advisory committee has been struck for this First Call-led campaign, and Vancity has granted us \$15,000 for this work. We are hoping to be able to hire a campaigner at some point. During the civic election, Vancouver Mayor Robertson said he would like to see the city commit to paying employees a living wage. (The living wage for Metro Vancouver is \$16.74).

First Call has had opportunities to speak about the importance of a paying a living wage to the executives of Vancouver Coastal Health and Fraser Health in conjunction with Hospital Employees' Union workers.

We hope that partner organizations will be able to use the evidence in the living wage calculation report in their service contract negotiations with government.

We have been working with the Metro Vancouver Alliance, which is based on the community organizing model created by the Industrial Areas Foundation (US). This way of organizing is also used by London Citizens (UK), which has a very successful living wage campaign; it involves shifting power to a broader base of people.

2. Immigration Integration Branch Update

Update from Jennifer Kim:

The Immigration Integration Branch (formerly part of the Settlement and Multiculturalism Division of the Ministry of Attorney General) is now located in a new ministry focused on social capital – the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development. Anti-Racism and Multiculturalism Services has stayed with the Ministry of the Attorney General and has been renamed the Multiculturalism and Inclusive Communities Office.

The Immigration Integration Branch is responsible for ensuring that BC immigrants and newcomers are successfully integrated into BC communities and workplaces. The Branch oversees the WelcomeBC strategy.

Their early years initiatives include the June 2008 Learning Forum and Consultation, the final report from which will be released next week. The Branch also runs an Early Childhood Refugee Pilot Project, and child care services for 0 – 5 year olds whose parents are enrolled in ELSA and Blended Information and Language Services Programs. These programs have a combined budget of \$3.7 million.

Immigration Integration Branch's middle years and youth programs include the Friends of Simon Tutoring Project, which is focused on newcomers and Aboriginal children, and the Settlement Workers in Schools program. They also have an initiative for out of school youth and young adults aged 15 – 25 to support educational, training and work opportunities. This program will be running in the Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley and Victoria. Find out more at www.WelcomeBC.ca.

There may be a potential opportunity for First Call to work with Metropolis BC in training immigrant researchers to look at the health impacts of low wages.

Discussion:

Housing and community development concerns have come up in the requests for proposals for youth programs. Housing is on the Minister's radar.

Most of the refugee child care program contracts are with school districts, who subcontract delivery of services within the community. StrongStart Centres are connected to these pilots, and many newcomers are using these centres.

Youth service hubs are an idea worth exploring. At-risk youth often have multiple problems, and service hubs avoid them needing to be referred out. They can deal with housing, training, and other issues. Many different partners can be involved.

3. Health Inequities Report

Presentation by Tannis Cheadle and Andrew Kmetec:

This report was published by the Health Officers' Council of BC after a number of stakeholder consultations and a symposium on population health. It is intended to contribute to a better understanding of health inequities, support informed discussion, and identify policy options. It is not a comprehensive literature review, but it draws on local, national and international sources.

Health inequity is defined as systematic, socially produced and unfair. If the health of British Columbians was equitable, then it would not be affected by geography and socio-economic status. While BC has the healthiest population in Canada, there is a paradox because of the high rates of socio-economic disadvantage. There is a ten year gap in life expectancy between the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver and Richmond. There are also

high rates of poverty and food insecurity in BC. The report shows that the prevalence of smoking, heart disease, diabetes, and other health conditions is affected by income.

The economic costs of health inequity are estimated to be \$3.8 billion annually in BC. Health inequity contributes to lower economic productivity.

There has been national and international success in increasing equity. One of the guiding principles is leveling the social gradient. Policy options should address income and food security, education and literacy, early childhood development, housing and healthy built environments, and health care.

There will be some events in 2009 where the issues in the report can be discussed further.

4. Coalition Partner Updates

A new report is available from the National Council on Welfare. BC's best year for welfare rates was 1994. 2004/2005 was the worst time because the rates are not indexed to inflation.

The Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks has released a new rights booklet, which is available on their web site.

SPARC has a new report on lone mothers on income assistance.

BC Association for Community Living reports that they have been urged to address waitlists for families.

5. January Coalition Meeting

First Call has invited the three provincial party leaders to discuss their platforms for children and youth. We need to discuss what message we want them to hear from us at this meeting. Send us your suggestions and burning issues.

6. Time and Date of Next Meeting: January 14, 2009, 9:00 – 11:30 am, BC Teachers' Federation building, 550 W. 6th Avenue, Vancouver. Telephone participation welcome.