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## **First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition Minutes of December 14, 2011 BC Teachers' Federation**

### **In attendance:**

Steve Kerstetter – First Call  
Helesia Luke – First Call  
De Whalen – Richmond Poverty Response Committee  
Steve Bailey – BC Retired Teachers Association  
Kristen Yarker – Dietitians of Canada BC Region  
Andrina Perry – First Call  
Melissa McDowell – AMSSA  
James Chamberlain – BC Teachers' Federation  
Peter Prontzos – Langara/APPPAH  
Adrienne Montani – First Call  
Anne Peterson – Delta Child and Youth Committee  
Jack Styan – RDSP Resource Centre

Mae Burrows – CCSBCY and TFC  
Michael McCarthy Flynn – First Call  
Dianne Heath – BC Association of Social Workers  
Cheryl Mixon – Family Services of Greater Vancouver

### **On phone:**

Renee Quanstrom – Golden CCRR

### **Regrets:**

Karen Williams – SPARC BC  
Kelly Read – Office of Mable Elmore, MLA  
Vanessa Kay – City of Vancouver  
Michele Haddon – MCFD

## **1. Introductions**

Chair Helesia Luke opened the meeting, and there was a round of introductions.

## **2. First Call Reports and Updates**

First Call is gathering voices from young people about their experiences in the workplace for the Child Labour Standards Improvement Project. The legislative shift to parent responsibility for safety in the workplace is unreasonable. Please contact First Call if you're able to help with outreach for this campaign.

The Living Wage for Families Campaign surveyed municipal election candidates on their support for municipal living wage policies. A number of candidates who were interested in the living wage did get elected in November, so now the campaign is identifying which municipalities to target. Early Living Wage Employer, Eclipse Awards, has been nominated for a best small business employer award. The campaign also has a new faith group engagement project funded by United Way, and a Catherine Donnelly Foundation-funded project to hold listening circles with low wage parents.

The Early Childhood Development Roundtable has sent a letter to Minister McNeil expressing concerns about the emergence of commercial child care in BC. Child care is the only core service for children and families with a profit model built in. It appears as though the for-profit operators' profit margin is related to the smaller share of revenue they spend on wages, compared to non-profit child care operators. The last ECD Roundtable meeting included a presentation from Joan Geber, Ministry of Health, on the new Nurse Family Partnership Program. MCFD held an invitation-only forum on Early Childhood Development in November. First Call attended, and it seemed to be an opportunity for the new Deputy Minister to get to know the field. He has committed to sharing what he heard at the event. MCFD will be releasing an early childhood plan soon.

## **3. Public Consultation on Banning Cosmetic Pesticides**

Mae Burrows presented to the provincial Special Committee on Cosmetic Pesticides, and focused on the unnecessary use of pesticides, integrated pest management and neurotoxins. Pregnant women and children are particularly vulnerable. Longer term impacts include things like a suspected link to higher rates of testicular cancer in young men. Cosmetic pesticides are supposedly safe to use if directions are followed, however research shows that pesticides only reach about 10% of their intended target due to drift. Health Canada has been slow to act to protect children. Integrated pest management doesn't eliminate use or prevent abuse of pesticides. How is it workable? Who will monitor it?

It used to be said that arguments for banning smoking were junk science, and the same is now being said about cosmetic pesticides.

First Call is hoping to host a public event with expert Dr. Bruce Lamphear (SFU) to raise awareness of the impacts of low doses on children. Meeting participants suggested educating and mobilizing young people is an important focus. There was discussion of how to do this through schools, through engaging them in organizing the forum, and other avenues. The BCTF is hosting a regional conference in Nelson in April on environmental justice.

The public consultation on banning pesticides in BC ends Friday, Dec. 16.

#### **4. Update on Polygamy Reference Case**

First Call circulated a brief summary of the supreme court decision. The judge decided that breaches of charter rights by the polygamy law are justified. The decision recognizes harms to women and children.

#### **5. BC Child Poverty Report Card**

Steve Kerstetter presented a summary of the report card on behalf of First Call. BC is the worst or second worst province on child poverty, depending on which measure of low income is used. The rates have been consistent for two-parent families. Lone parent mother-led families always have a higher rate of poverty, but that rate has dropped dramatically, possibly because mothers are working longer hours. Often families are living in poverty that is much deeper than the actual poverty line.

48% of children are in families with at least one parent working full-time full-year. Families on welfare are well below the poverty line. This year's report card has a special focus on newcomers. The more recent immigrants have much higher rates of poverty than earlier arrivals.

The richest 10% of families in BC have a higher combined income than the poorest 50%.

The BC poverty gap is \$3.8 billion – this is how much it would cost to get everyone to the poverty line. A comprehensive poverty reduction plan is needed.

There was good media coverage of the release of the Report Card. The provincial government responded that they recognized there is a child poverty problem and will be developing "regional poverty reduction plans". First Call will be meeting with the Deputy Minister for Children and Family Development in January to discuss child poverty.

On the day of the release, the opposition NDP re-introduced their [Poverty Reduction Act](#) in the BC Legislature. Meeting participants noted they would like the NDP to release their ideas or plan for poverty reduction.

## **6. Partner Updates**

The Richmond Poverty Response Committee is looking at local child poverty rates, much of it hidden. They are working with the Richmond University Women's Club chapter.

The Dietitians of Canada, BC are working on their next Cost of Eating in BC report.

Judith Neamtan is a research librarian interested in volunteering to help with scholarly research, and may lead a workshop if there is interest.

BC Teachers' Federation is holding a conference on child poverty at Carleton Elementary on February 17, and a conference on racism and poverty in Hazelton April 27-28.

The Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network interviewed children and caregivers about what to do with Registered Disability Savings Plans when kids age out of care. They are looking for people who can help with getting the word out about this. Visit [www.plan.ca](http://www.plan.ca) for more information.

Anne Peterson is organizing a Delta Community Planning Council.

**7. Time and Date of Next Meeting:** Wednesday, January 11, 2012.

Refreshments served at 9:00, meeting from 9:15 – 11:30 am. BC Teachers' Federation, 550 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. in Vancouver. Telephone participation welcome.