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**First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition
Minutes of February 13, 2008
BC Teachers' Federation Building**

In attendance:

Fred Milowsky – Office of the Representative for Children and Youth
Sherman Lam – Community Living BC
Tanya Sather – Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion
Lorette Tataryn – Westcoast Family Resources Society
Rachel Gold
Ian Mass – Pacific Community Resources Society
Mike Clarke – BC Government and Service Employees' Union
Dawn Steele – Parent
Steve Kerstetter – First Call
Jason Chan – S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
Wilma Clarke – Institute for Safe Schools and Communities
Ruth Fahlman – Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

Gladys Evoy – YWCA Crabtree Corner
Lois Hollstedt – Community Living BC
Darryl Quantz – Vancouver Coastal Health
Andrina Perry – First Call
Lesley Richardson – First Call
Adrienne Montani – First Call
Ruth Annis – First Call (chair)

On phone:

Deb Frolek – Kamloops Child Development Society
Shawn Hoey – Caring for First Nations Children Society
Lenora Pritchard – BC Aboriginal Child Care Society

Regrets:

Mitzi Dean – Pacific Centre Family Services Association
Glenn Hope – BC Council for Families

1) Welcome and Introductions

Adrienne Montani opened the meeting, and a round of introductions followed.

2) First Call Reports and Updates

Early Childhood Development Roundtable:

The Roundtable is continuing to correspond with the provincial and federal government regarding accountability for one-time-only funding for child care. MCFD Deputy Minister Lesley du Toit has been invited to the April 23 Roundtable meeting to speak to the government's early years plan. Dawn Williams from the Ministry of Health presented at the last Roundtable meeting about new child care licensing regulations.

Office move:

First Call is moving into offices at Family Services of Greater Vancouver's Kingsway site at the end of March. Our new contact information will be circulated soon.

Living Wage for Families Project:

First Call is working with the Hospital Employees' Union, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and a table of other researchers to calculate a living wage for Metro Vancouver. So far we have tested the living wage with an immigrant parent group and a business group from Vancity.

Additional updates:

- First Call Chair Michael Goldberg presented to the Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology at their request. The topic was urban child poverty, and the focus was the stacking of clawbacks of government credits and subsidies for lower income working families. [Presentation is available on the First Call web site].
- BC's Attorney General responded to First Call's letter regarding the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program, and stated that FMEP is working with Canada Revenue Agency on a case-by-case basis to end the scooping of child support payments by the CRA when money is owing to the government.

Maternity leave for adoptive families:

Coalition Partner the Adoptive Families Association of BC has been engaged in a legal battle to grant the maternity benefit portion of Employment Insurance leave to adoptive parents, as adoptive families need this important time to bond with their children. In late January 2008, the Supreme Court of Canada decided not to hear this case. A brief discussion elicited support from a number of participants for this policy change. The topic can be pursued at a future coalition meeting.

[Ruth Annis assumed the chair.]

Mandatory treatment for addicted youth:

A parent advocate has contacted First Call looking for us to endorse and write letters in support of legislation mandating detox for youth. We will schedule time for further discussion of this issue at a future coalition meeting.

Comments from various participants:

There was previously "safe care" legislation on the table which mandated detox for children with mental health and other problems because of the danger to themselves. This is definitely still a current issue. First Call would have to hold significant debate to come to a consensus on this issue. There isn't sufficient detox available to meet current needs, never mind if it is mandated. For example, youth detox services are severely lacking in the Fraser Valley. The BC Alliance for Mental Health and Addictions could take leadership on this issue. The failure rate of detox is high, and there are inadequate post-treatment supports. This discussion should start with First Call's Coordinating Committee to decide if this is an issue they want to take on. It is good to see if there's interest in it in the larger coalition. First Call should spend more time on youth issues such as this one, i.e. the balance between child rights and protection needs. We need services that youth can relate to.

3) Resolution in Support of Jordan's Principle

First Call has put forward a resolution in support of Jordan's Principle, which we hope will gain the support of each of our Coalition Partners. Through the process of asking each Coalition Partner for support, we hope to educate the Coalition about this important initiative for First Nations children and youth. We will be sending the resolution out to all Coalition Partners to discuss at their board meetings and let us know their comments by or at the April 9 coalition meeting. The resolution asks the provincial government to put Jordan's Principle into legislation and commit to a timeline. The text of the resolution is as follows:

As a coalition of provincial and regional organizations and mobilized communities across British Columbia, First Call's partners endorse the 4 Keys to Success for Children and Youth:

- *A strong commitment to early childhood development;*
- *Support in transitions from childhood to youth to adulthood;*

- *Increased economic equality;*
- *Safe and caring communities.*

First Call's partner organizations feel strongly that Jordan's Principle, a child-first principle for resolving jurisdictional disputes involving the care of First Nations children, positively contributes to our commitment to safe and caring communities. Therefore, be it resolved that:

As a Coalition, First Call supports the full implementation of Jordan's Principle through legislation. We call on the government of British Columbia to follow through on its commitment to supporting Jordan's Principle by:

- *Bringing a bill to the provincial legislature for a vote that confirms British Columbia's commitment to implementing a child first principle, based on Jordan's Principle, to resolve jurisdictional disputes involving the care of First Nations children without disrupting services to or negatively impacting the quality of life of First Nations children;*
- *Including in the proposed bill a commitment to immediate implementation of the principle when the dispute is between provincial ministries;*
- *Including in the proposed bill a timeline for concluding negotiations with the federal government on the implementation of the principle in the case of federal-provincial disputes;*
- *Working on an ongoing basis to ensure adequate support and care for First Nations children across ministries and jurisdictions.*

First Call resolves to continue advocating for the full implementation of Jordan's Principle until satisfied that the needs of First Nations children in BC will no longer be compromised by jurisdictional disputes. First Call recognizes the complexities of implementing Jordan's Principle and looks forward to supporting and contributing to the process of successful implementation at the provincial level.

[Contact First Call for background information on the resolution.]

Comments:

We could ask the Mental Health and Addictions Alliance to support Jordan's Principle. Over 1500 organizations have already declared their support. One partner reported that legislation on Jordan's Principle will be tabled at this sitting of the legislature. It is easier for the federal government to pass a resolution, as they are less likely to be the government of first contact.

We should contact Jordan's family to let them know about the resolution, and translate it into Cree if we have the resources.

4) Discussion of Provincial Throne Speech

The only child and youth issue that has been picked up by the media so far is the study of all day kindergarten for 3-5 year olds. They are asking, is this the solution to child care?

We need ministries to work together – the ECD field needs to be included in any discussion of all day kindergarten. Out of school care would still be a necessity.

The school trustees knew nothing about the proposal for all day kindergarten. This is similar to the Centre for Autism announcement – nobody in the autism networks knew

about it, and it was not requested by the community. It may be an expansion of an existing residential program.

The new MCFD relationship with Aboriginal communities, moving towards regional Aboriginal authorities with responsibility for child and family services, has been divisive in some communities. Aboriginal communities want a government to government relationship rather than another layer of bureaucracy that can be easily removed. Lots of discussion is going on about this at different levels. What role can First Call play in educating the full coalition about these debates and issues?

Government is saying they support child care for families, but they are not taking any action. Strong Start is not child care.

5) Lois Hollstedt, Chair of Community Living BC

CLBC is a new crown corporation that started in 2005. It is the result of families, advocates, and service providers giving feedback that services should be centred on individuals. CLBC devolved from MCFD to provide services for people with developmental disabilities. The majority of board members are connected to someone with a developmental disability. They have 17 centres, each supporting a particular geographic area. 17 community councils assist the board in resource allocation.

CLBC is undertaking profound change in service delivery. They are looking at the system from the bottom up. Identifying individualized needs is the most important first step. They are creating new roles for staff and new systems to evaluate what people need. There is an existing imbalance in services geographically. They are working on three new tools to facilitate people's entrance into CLBC: 1. guide to support allocation of resources; 2. catalogue of services and costs; 3. priority ranking tool.

Previous record keeping methods were inefficient, as CLBC couldn't track individuals in the system. They require good information to be accountable, which is an enormous challenge. Their budget for next year is \$700 million. They are no longer only approving services for people with a plan – the planning process has become more flexible. CLBC is trying to adjust their system to make it work better for community services and for advocates. They never used to keep waitlists, but waitlists are important so that they can identify demand.

CLBC is creating a separate waitlist for children. This will help support their argument for resources. There is a joint CLBC and MCFD committee to resolve how CLBC will deal with children and make a recommendation to government. This should happen by the spring. The oversight of children's services policy still rests with MCFD, and they still hold some pieces of the budget, which is frustrating for CLBC.

Tamara Kulusic is the new manager of children and family services. CLBC is sharing information with the Office of the Public Trustee and working with the Representative for Children and Youth. There is now a single point of contact at CLBC for children. They have invested hugely in training for staff, service providers and families.

CLBC recognizes that communication is an issue, and it can be a challenge for them to reach everyone. Their board meetings are open. They need believable data to get resources from the government. They haven't been given the budget to allow them to meet the province's great goal for people with disabilities or the goal of the legislation that created CLBC.

Discussion:

Youth reaching the age of 19 are being squeezed out from services, creating huge challenges for families. Does the government have the guts to take responsibility for this?

The minister is fully aware of this challenge. We need to tell that story and to plan earlier for service provision. The system should facilitate transition, and families shouldn't have to prove that they need continued services. We need to make the economic argument for these services. Parents shouldn't have to stay home to look after an adult child.

There was a court ruling (Fahlman) that those with an IQ over 70 cannot be excluded from receiving services by policy, but they are still not getting served. This challenge is getting worse, particularly for kids in care. Families don't necessarily know that CLBC exists and are sometimes not successful at accessing services. MCFD and CLBC have been talking about starting waitlists for eight years. Maybe CLBC should be more realistic about how much they can provide. Accountability is absent in the current situation with responsibility split between MCFD and CLBC.

We don't want to fracture the system so that nothing is being done well. One point of contact for services is most efficient. MCFD is accountable for both streams of service delivery.

The Representative's office is hearing about cases where children have been deemed ineligible for CLBC. Many of these children are in or from care. IQ is not a good indicator of vulnerability.

CLBC is restricted by legislation and cannot advocate for expanding eligibility. Other parties at the table need to take this on.

We are glad to hear that advocacy is welcome. The CLBC model should focus on families' individual needs.

The Vancouver and Fraser FASD collaborations would like CLBC to come to the table. People with FASD and other populations with IQ's above 70 may not be best served by CLBC. The majority of people with FASD have an IQ around 90, yet they are more vulnerable because they have some independence and fewer services. All new initiatives only serve the most severely affected.

FASD is not part of CLBC's mandate, so staff have not been allocated to attend the collaborations.

Is CLBC doing any planning around services for people with dual diagnosis? CLBC should be tracking Aboriginal identity as part of their data collection.

Tracking Aboriginal identity is being discussed by the CLBC board.

The First Nations worldview has a different interpretation of what is in the best interests of a child – this should be kept in mind when discussing the rights of children. Some First Nations delegated agencies aren't getting along very well with the Aboriginal authorities. Suggest that CLBC involve the First Nations Directors Forum in discussions of children's services.

The fact that services for those with an IQ over 70 falls under the current mandate of CLBC presumes a responsibility on their part to act.

The Fahlman case ruled that you can't use IQ as the only measurement – there is a combined measurement which includes an IQ of 70 as one factor.

Determination by IQ can't be a policy of CLBC, it has to be a regulation. Their mandate is services for those diagnosed with mental retardation using the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV. The definition in DSM-IV is IQ under 70 combined with other measurements.

6) Time and Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 12, 2008, 9:00 – 11:30 am, BC Teachers' Federation building, 550 W. 6th Avenue, Vancouver. Telephone participation welcome. The main topic will be impacts of provincial and federal budgets on children and youth. Guest speakers will be Marc Lee of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and Lynell Anderson of Human Early Learning Partnership.