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First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition Minutes of June 9, 2010 BC Teachers' Federation Building

In attendance:

Heather Armour – Public Health Agency of Canada
Pat Frouws – BC Child Care Advocacy Forum
Rita Chudnovsky – BC Child Care Advocacy Forum
Avi Goldberg – BC Child Care Advocacy Forum
Emily Mliczko – Early Childhood Educators of BC
Lynn McBride – BC Aboriginal Child Care Society
Jean Moore – Canadian Mental Health Association
Karen Lai – SPARC BC
Pam Best – BC Child Care Advocacy Forum
Jeremy Vis – BC Association for Community Living
Rishima Bahadoorsingh – AMSSA
Adrienne Montani – First Call
Kayla Pompu – Vancouver Coastal Health
Amber Hill – BC Injury Prevention
Lindsey Doehle – First Call
Mark Gifford – Vancouver Foundation
Julie Renton – Westcoast Family Resources Society
Christine Hibbert – BC Child Care Advocacy Forum
Froozan Jooya – MOSAIC
Mab Oloman – Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
Andrina Perry – First Call
Darcelle Cottons – UBC Child Care Society
Diane Tannahill – BC Child Care Advocacy Forum
John Millar – Provincial Health Services Authority
Ross Neil
Dianne Liscumb – Westcoast Child Care Resources
Michael McCarthy Flynn – First Call
Lianne Carley – Vancouver Coastal Health – Population Health

Sanja Sladojevic – Windows of Opportunity Coalition
Robin Folvik – West Coast LEAF
Randi Gurholt-Geary – BC Child Care Advocacy Forum
Sara Shaw – School Age Child Care Association of BC
Katarina Jovanovic – Pacific Immigrant Resources Society
Bill Preston – BC School Trustees Association
Magnolia Villalobos – Richmond Women's Resource Centre
Kelly Read – Office of Mable Elmore, MLA
Elsie Kipp – PeerNetBC
Lynell Anderson – Human Early Learning Partnership
Julie Norton – First Call
Margaret White – BC Teachers' Federation
Jennifer Lambert – BC Federation of Labour
Deanna Ogle – West Coast LEAF
Helesia Luke – BC Society for Public Education
James Chamberlain – BC Teachers' Federation
Mike Clarke – BCGEU

On phone:

Theresa Hermary – Interior Health
Renee Quanstom – Golden CCRR
Kerstin Poirier – Social Planning Cowichan

Regrets:

Ian Boyko – Canadian Federation of Students
Ian Mass – Pacific Community Resources Society
Shirley Paterson – Family Support Institute
Margaret Antolovich – Public Health Association of BC

1. Introductions

Chair Julie Norton opened the meeting, and there was a round of introductions.

2. First Call Reports and Updates

ECD Roundtable

A special meeting has been scheduled for July 6 with MCFD Deputy Minister responsible for the early years, Chuck Eamer. Please RSVP for the meeting as there is limited space available.

Refugee Transportation Loans Campaign

First Call has released a list of MPs who have and have not responded to our survey question to find out if they would support change to the policy that requires refugees to pay back the costs of their transportation to Canada with interest. This list is now up on our website, and we are encouraging you to contact your MP if they haven't gotten back to First Call with an answer. A sample letter to your MP is also available on the website. Some MPs will only respond to a constituent.

Child and Youth Committee Meeting on Child Poverty

First Call presented to the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth in May. Our thanks to Julie Norton, Steve Kerstetter, John Millar and Cheryl Mixon for appearing on behalf of First Call partners. It's not clear if the committee intends to take action as a result of this meeting. As part of our presentation, First Call emphasized the need for a poverty reduction plan with targets and timelines that demonstrates real government commitment. Read the Hansard transcript here: <http://leg.bc.ca/cmt/39thparl/session-2/cay/hansard/Y00521a.htm>.

Update on Education Cuts

Shortfalls for many school districts were projected before the 2010 education budget came down. School boards are not allowed to run a deficit, so they have to make cuts. Four major areas will be hit:

- School closures – 33 schools are slated to close this year, and 24 are threatened.
- Layoffs will place increased pressure on class-size and composition.
- Altering the school calendar as a cost-saving measure.
- Reduction and elimination of educational programs.

The impacts on students will include less support for those with special needs and who speak English as a second language. Longer breaks can have a negative impact on students who rely on school as a social safety net.

Over the past year, school trustees have shifted their cautious approach and are making strong statements about under-funding. BC School Trustees Association reviewed the report on the Vancouver School Board by the special advisor, and commented on the need for board autonomy in their co-governance role. Boards are there to represent the interests of local communities, and advocacy plays an important role. Discussion is needed to define co-governance.

3. Update on research project Poverty and Education: A Teacher's Perspective

Margaret White presented on this research/action project being undertaken by the BC Teachers' Federation. Focus groups have been held with teachers to look at the impact of poverty on students and the school community. The data is currently being analyzed, and a summer workshop will be held with teachers. A report will be produced in the fall.

The research is focusing on exploratory research questions, including "how does poverty affect students in the classroom?", and, "to what extent are they excluded?" This research will also be tied into the living wage campaign project on effects of low wages on parents.

4. Mobilizing to Protect Children in the Workplace

Helesia Luke authored a report on children's injuries in the workplace for First Call, which was released in fall 2009. She found a 10 fold increase in the number of accepted injury claims for workers under the age of 14 since the work start age was lowered to 12 in 2003. A delegation from First Call met with the Minister of Labour after the report was released, but no action was taken by the ministry. First Call is now launching a website focused on this campaign, with the aim of bringing young worker standards in compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Labour Organization's standards. The campaign will also be mobilizing on Twitter and Facebook. We encourage

you to visit the website at <http://nochildlabour.org> and leave a comment under the Add Your Voice tab. Sample letters will also be available for contacting your MLA, MP, the Minister of Labour and the Premier.

This campaign has a broad target audience, including unions, faith groups, teachers, students, and parents. The campaign is not against age-appropriate work experience – the issue of child labour is a matter of protecting children from exploitation.

Deanna Ogle from West Coast LEAF runs a public education program on youth rights in the workplace, focusing on the Employment Standards Act. The program is in response to BC's change to the work start age. It uses a peer education model targeting young people ages 11 – 30. Youth are introduced to the concept of legal rights, and it's important that they are educated early. They are taught about asserting their rights. Youth are often working under very young supervisors, who also may not know that they or their staff have legal rights in the workplace.

Jennifer Lambert is with the Young Workers' Health and Safety program of the BC Federation of Labour. She gives presentations on workplace rights in schools, and this year lowered the age of her audience to grade 9. Her program speaks to 13,000 high school students a year. It focuses on four basic rights, including the right to refuse unsafe work. Young workers are often afraid to speak up, and they are taught ways to approach employers about an issue they're having in the workplace. Young workers are sometimes afraid to report injuries to their employers. <http://earnbc.ca> is a workplace rights website for all workers.

Sexual harassment is an issue for many workers, particularly in home-based work. Jennifer and Deanna gave a number of examples of how young workers can be exploited, including forcing restaurant staff to pay in advance in anticipation of customers leaving restaurants without paying, and not getting paid for working extra hours because their employer went over budget for wages.

Workers as young as twelve can never be expected to assert their workplace rights, despite the presence of great education programs. Work must be age-appropriate.

5. Celebration of Child Care Advocacy Forum

The BC Child Care Advocacy Forum is celebrating a decade of work and winding down, and facilitator Rita Chudnovsky shared the history of the forum in developing a common child care advocacy voice. The forum came on the heels of the strike in community social services, and was formed by the BC Association of Child Care Employers, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, Early Childhood Educators of BC, School Age Child Care Association of BC, and Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre. Participating organizations agreed to speak in a common voice where they had consensus, but they also spoke independently.

The forum was initially funded by a federal Status of Women grant, and the most consistent funding has been from Vancouver Foundation. The forum moved child care advocacy from the margins to the mainstream. Other organizations and tables have since taken up child care advocacy, and the forum will put its remaining resources into First Call's ECD Roundtable. The forum's public education materials are compiled on disc and in a binder, and they are all still available online at www.advocacyforum.bc.ca.

The forum's work focused on emphasizing child care as a solution, and included letter writing campaigns, postcards, MLA visits, and guides to putting on advocacy events. The

forum had a consistent message – we need federal and provincial child care plans for quality, affordable and accessible programs.

Representatives from the organizations participating in the forum shared their thoughts about the role of the forum and its impact on their lives and their organizations.

The ECD Roundtable will move forward on the forum’s “Child Care – A Smart Solution” postcard campaign and circulate them within the health field. They will also focus on the detrimental split of provincial responsibilities for child care and early learning, and look at how advocates can be mobilized in the education sector, which of course is also facing cuts.

At the September ECD Roundtable meeting, discussion will focus on school age child care issues, the need for a good child care plan, and advocating for child care as a solution and a key part of a poverty reduction strategy.

6. Time and Date of Next Meeting: September 8, 2010. Refreshments served at 9:00, meeting from 9:15 – 11:30 am. BC Teachers’ Federation, 550 W. 6th Ave. in Vancouver. Telephone participation welcome.