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## **First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition Minutes of November 9, 2011 BC Teachers' Federation**

### **In attendance:**

Julie Norton – First Call  
Adrienne Montani – First Call  
Jean Moore – Canadian Mental Health Association  
Emily Mliczko – Early Childhood Educators of BC  
Brenda Penton – CLICK  
Steve Bailey – BC Retired Teachers Association  
Lianne Carley – Vancouver Coastal Health  
Darlene Rigo – Helping Spirit Lodge Society  
Jennifer-Lee Koble – Helping Spirit Lodge Society/UBC  
Margaret White – BC Teachers' Federation  
Michael McCarthy Flynn – First Call  
Mike Clarke – BCGEU  
Devika Ramkhelawan – Watari Youth Family and Community Services  
Trish Garner – BC Poverty Reduction Coalition  
Rachel Douglas – Public Health Agency of Canada  
Megan Yarema – Canada Without Poverty

Karen Moss – Red Cross  
Melissa McDowell – AMSSA  
Michele Haddon – MCFD  
Andrina Perry – First Call  
Selina Lai – Society for Children and Youth of BC  
James Chamberlain – BC Teachers' Federation  
Bill Preston – BC School Trustees Association  
Iglika Ivanova – Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives  
Rebecca Quan – Office of Jenny Kwan, MLA

### **On phone:**

Kylee Swadden – Vibrant Abbotsford  
Amy Taylor – The Advocacy Centre, Nelson

### **Regrets:**

Karen Thompson – SPARC BC  
Kelly Read – Office of Mable Elmore, MLA

## **1. Introductions**

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

## **2. Cost of Poverty in BC**

Iglika Ivanova from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives presented her recent report on the cost of poverty. While we often hear about the costs of doing something about poverty, it's a misconception that doing nothing costs nothing.

The Ontario Food Banks Association produced a report in 2008 that was a collaboration between academics and business economists to determine the cost of poverty in that province, and the BC report uses the same methodology. The Cost of Poverty in BC is co-published by SPARC BC and the Public Health Association of BC.

Poverty is linked to a number of factors that society pays for, including poor health and school outcomes. BC has the highest poverty rate in Canada, though it had been doing better until the mid to late nineties.

Not all health expenses are covered by MSP, so poor people are often on their own for the cost of prescription drugs, dentistry, optometry, and other health costs. There are higher levels of chronic disease among low income people, resulting in increased costs to the health care system. The largest disparity in health is between the poorest and second poorest quintile of the population. If the poorest quintile of British Columbians were as healthy as the second poorest, BC would save \$1.2 billion a year in health care costs.

The poverty related costs of crime are estimated to be up to \$745 million a year. Lost productivity is another cost to society, though most poor people are working.

A conservative estimate of the total cost of poverty to BC society at large is between \$8 and \$9 billion a year. Other costs have been identified that couldn't be included in this research, such as child poverty and resulting poor outcomes, the costs of providing emergency services to the most vulnerable poor people, and the costs of reduced social cohesion.

While government rhetoric around poverty has shifted in the last few years, current supports are disjointed, so we haven't seen an improvement in poverty rates. This is why we need a provincial poverty reduction plan. Poverty reduction will cost less than maintaining poverty. Only 4% of British Columbians are on welfare, while 12% are in poverty.

7 provinces and all 3 territories now have poverty reduction strategies. Ontario's plan focuses on child poverty, and has resulted in a reduction in child poverty according to the most recent statistics. A provincial plan should address homelessness, food security, low paying jobs, child care, and the accessibility of training and education. It must include legislated targets and timelines and needs to be comprehensive. Community members should be involved in the development of a plan, and it should focus on marginalized groups. A poverty reduction plan for BC would cost about \$4 billion to implement.

Poverty gets more expensive and difficult to deal with the longer we leave it. Some of the ways to support a plan for BC include:

- Read the report and share the short video  
[<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/costofpovertybc>]
- Get involved with the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition [<http://bcpovertyreduction.ca/>]
- Support the work of the CCPA

### **3. Consultation on the Representative for Children and Youth Act**

There is a public consultation taking place on the Representative for Children and Youth Act until November 25. First Call's 2006 submission on this Act recommended that it:

1. Follow the Hughes recommendations
2. Add these acts to "designated services": Schools Act, Employment and Assistance Act
3. Insert explicit references to a mandate to promote the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
4. Expand monitoring function beyond performance measures to child's best interests
5. Require comment on general well-being and rights of children and youth to be consulted and heard in matters affecting them
6. Rights of children/youth in care to information about the Representative

The Schools and Employment and Assistance Acts are not currently designated services. First Call will circulate our submission to the current consultation and encourages others to also participate.

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

The 2011 municipal election kit is now available for download from the First Call website. It provides information about the role of municipal governments on a variety of child and youth issues and includes sample questions for candidates.

The Living Wage for Families Campaign has surveyed Metro Vancouver municipal candidates about their support for a living wage policy. Those results are available online. The campaign also has a new website specifically for living wage employers – it profiles current employers and has information on getting certified as a living wage employer. Find it at [www.lwemployers.ca](http://www.lwemployers.ca).

Lead Now is coordinating national opposition to Bill C-10, the omnibus crime bill which includes changes to the Youth Justice Act. Submissions are available online identifying some of the issues with this bill from the Representative for Children and Youth, UNICEF, and the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children.

## **5. Partner Updates**

The BC Retired Teachers Association is hearing a presentation on the early care and learning plan from CCCABC and ECEBC.

The Poverty Reduction Coalition has a youth initiative to develop messages about poverty reduction for youth. A couple of Lower Mainland events are coming up.

On November 23, Society for Children and Youth of BC will host speakers on child rights education to promote resilience.

**6. Time and Date of Next Meeting:** Wednesday, December 14, 2011.  
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.