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**First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition  
Minutes of October 14, 2009  
BC Teachers' Federation Building**

**In attendance:**

Michele Aderem – PACE Program  
Grace Tait – Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Services  
Mable Elmore – MLA Vancouver-Kensington  
Colleen Bob – RespectED, Red Cross  
Adrienne Montani – First Call  
Kate Hodgson – Network of Inner City Community Services Society  
Katarina Jovanovic – Pacific Immigrant Resources Society  
Michael McCarthy Flynn – First Call  
Anisa Kassam – Foster parent/Pacific Community Resources  
Lisa Chapeskie – Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion  
Shane Simpson – MLA Vancouver-Hastings  
Karen DeLong – BC Association for Community Living  
Rishima Bahadoorsingh – AMSA  
Shannon Piedt – BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit  
Margaret White – BC Teachers' Federation  
Andrina Perry – First Call  
Noelle Virtue – BC Healthy Living Alliance  
Bill Preston – BC School Trustees Association  
Fred Milowsky – Office of the Representative for Children and Youth

Jennifer Charlesworth – Federation of Community Social Services  
Julie Renton – Westcoast Family Resources  
Tami Overbeck – Sea to Sky Community Services  
Iglika Ivanova – Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives  
Cheryl Mixon – Family Services of Greater Vancouver  
Helesia Luke – BC Society for Public Education  
Lesley Richardson – First Call  
James Chamberlain – BC Teachers' Federation  
Jean Moore – Canadian Mental Health Association  
Jocelyn Helland – Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks

**On phone:**

Amy Higginbotham – BC NDP Researcher  
Catherine Guzik – Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development  
Carol Burbee – Northern Lights College

**Regrets:**

Mab Oloman – Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC  
Lila Murao – Hospital Employees Union  
John Millar – Health Officers Council  
Janice Macdonald – Dietitians of Canada, BC Region  
Wanda Gendron – Western Society for Children

**1. Introductions**

Chair Cheryl Mixon opened the meeting.

**2. An Analysis of Child Work-Related Injury Claims in BC – Presentation by Helesia Luke**

BC proposed legislation to eliminate the permit system for young workers under 14 in 2003. A coalition was formed to oppose lower standards, but the law was changed in late 2003. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives published a policy paper on the changes in 2004, and a survey of young workers in 2005.

New labour regulations governing 12 – 14 year olds are limited. A young person:

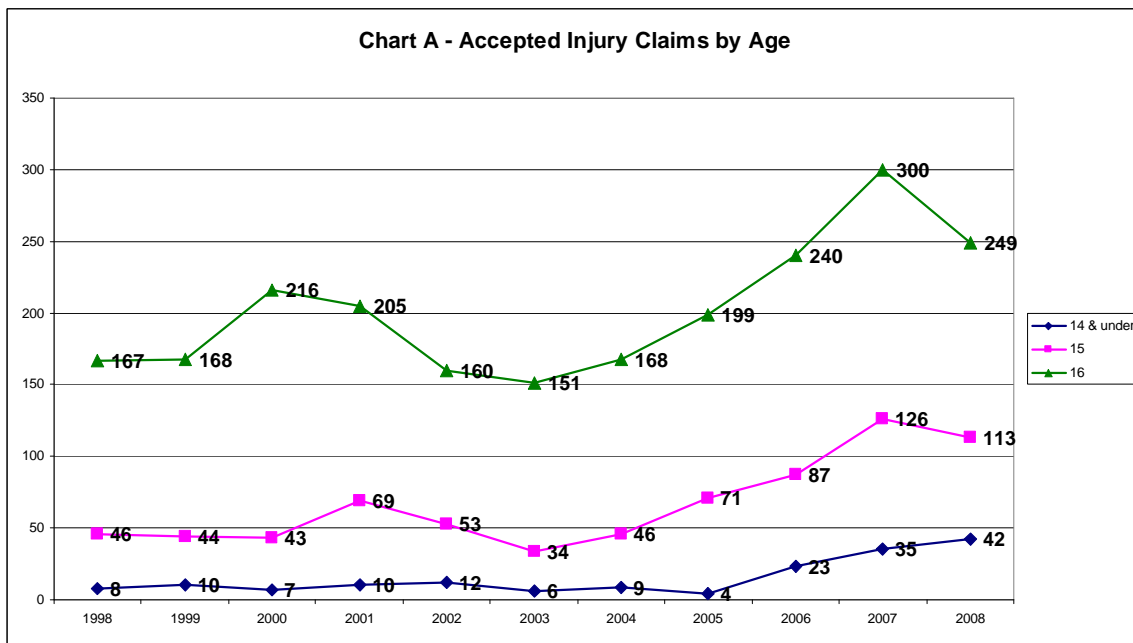
- needs one parent or guardian's written consent
- must not be employed at the same time he or she is scheduled to attend school
- can work up to four hours on a school day and no more than 20 hours in a week that has five school days
- must not work more than seven hours a day on a non-school day
- may work up to 35 hours in a week "containing less than five school days"

- must be under the direct and immediate supervision of a person aged 19 or older at all times

The incentive to change the regulations was to reduce red tape for employers. The result was the jurisdiction with the youngest work start age in North America, and parents are effectively put in charge of their child’s safety in the workplace. There is a lack of data about these young workers as the employment standards branch is not tracking them, and Statistics Canada does not track under 15’s in the workforce.

As provincial jurisdiction applies to work permits from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, some migrant workers may be as young as 12. However, the data obtained from a freedom of information request to Citizenship and Immigration Canada is not significant.

The new report published by First Call, *What’s Happening to Our Children?: A Look at Child Work-Related Injury Claims in BC Over the Past 10 Years*, uses data from WorkSafeBC. No particular trends were visible for workers under 14, or 15 and 16-year-olds, between 1998 and 2004. After 2004, claims increased for all of these ages.



The numbers are small, particularly for 12 – 14-year-olds, but the trend line is unmistakable. The top five categories of injuries for 12 – 14’s were cuts, other injuries, other strains, back strain, dislocation and fracture. The top five occupation categories were accommodation and food services, retail, agriculture, general construction, and food and beverage manufacturing and “other” services.

In other age groups, increases in injury claims are correlated with increases in labour force participation. However, no data is available on how many 12-14-year-olds are working. Injury claims may also be increasing due to lack of protection and government oversight.

Alberta also lowered the age that young people can go to work, but has severely limited the tasks that 12-14’s are allowed to perform in the workplace.

Reflecting the intended shift of responsibility for children's safety to their parents, WorkSafeBC has increased educational programs aimed at parents.

Recommendations in the report include enacting legislation to protect young workers, setting a federal standard, establishing a multi-stakeholder advisory group, and gathering and monitoring data.

Next steps in terms of advocacy on this issue will include a meeting with the Minister of Labour, the creation of an informational website to gather support for change, and collecting and publishing stories to illustrate the data.

## **Discussion**

Mark and Craig Kielberger may be strong allies on this issue. They are aware of BC's labour laws for young people.

WorkSafeBC tribunal claims are another possible source for qualitative data. Canada Revenue Agency may also be able to provide data from income tax returns.

How will the Olympics affect young workers?

First Call could reprint the poster on child labour from the "Everyone Counts" campaign, and prepare short fact sheets for public education purposes. Write articles on this for coalition partners' newsletters.

Share information with Parent Advisory Councils, and the Learning Roundtable.

Tie this campaign to the campaign to end refugee transportation loans, which is concerned with young people leaving school to work to help pay off the loans, and to child poverty data.

Ask that a review be undertaken by the provincial Standing Committee on Children and Youth.

Share information with youth through Check Your Head, and the Social Justice 12 course.

Investigate if younger youth in care are being encouraged to work?

Form our own advisory group.

## **3. First Call Consultations and Advocacy Issues**

Adrienne Montani shared a summary of issues identified for advocacy from First Call's June 2009 youth issues forum and 5 regional consultations in 2008/09. These issues will help inform First Call's work and the focus of future coalition meetings. She invited attendees to let us know if there are issues that we've missed.

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

Our fundraising dinner, Honouring Our Advocacy, is coming up next week.

The annual Child Poverty Report Card will be released on November 24, which is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the all-party commitment to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000.

The next Early Childhood Development roundtable is on October 28, and a delegation is going to Victoria to meet with Minister Polak on October 29.

## **5. BC Budget Update and Impacts**

The Federation of Community Social Services is gathering data from their members and will do an economic analysis and look at potential for action. It is not yet clear how the child and youth sector will create an overall picture and analysis of the budget and cuts. Feel free to use the FCSS template for tracking cuts and share information with them. FCSS is trying to uncover the impacts on service delivery. Their members are already encountering difficulties finding out who to refer their clients to for services that are being moved into health authorities. Cuts are expected to get worse next year. Core services are being moved to the gaming fund, which has traditionally been discretionary funding. An analysis of the social impact is not being done. Boards of Directors are starting to mobilize through a new organization called Board Voice. The current consultations for the 2010 budget are another opportunity to have our voices heard.

Key communications messages from the Federation of Community Social Services include:

- now more than ever, we must strengthen our social services to prepare for increased demand for services
- the slumping economy is hitting our communities hard
- investing in the social infrastructure of our communities is a smart business decision
- social services hold our communities together

The office of the Representative for Children and Youth will be monitoring cuts and is getting calls from affected organizations. Some organizations are being forced to amalgamate to save money. Contracts in the child and youth serving sector are expiring in 2010.

Shane Simpson invites questions to bring to the Minister during estimates for Housing and Social Development, which will probably take place the last week of October.

There is another, subtle layer to the budget cuts; practices can start to change, for example youth in care being denied youth agreements and sent to underage income assistance instead. Policies for these kinds of decisions vary across regions. An additional tool is available from the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks to track frontline advocacy issues such as the one described above. The Network of Inner City Community Services has students that may be able to collate the information gathered.

The impact of budget cuts is much greater than the money being saved.

Questions about impacts of budget cuts could be added to community homelessness counts.

At a future First Call meeting, we will discuss how use of the advocacy form from FBCYICN is going.

**6. Time and Date of Next Meeting:** December 9, 2009. Coffee served 9:00 – 9:15, meeting is from 9:15 – 11:30 am. BC Teachers' Federation building, 550 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Vancouver. Telephone participation welcome.