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**First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition
Minutes of October 8, 2008
BC Teachers' Federation Building**

In attendance:

Adrienne Montani – First Call
Andrina Perry – First Call
Lesley Richardson – First Call
Glenn Hope – BC Council for Families
Julie Norton – BC Council for Families/First Call
Mab Oloman – Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
Colleen Bob – Red Cross RespectED Violence and Abuse Prevention
Rebecca Siggner – SPARC BC
Ruth Annis – FASD Collaboration Roundtables (Chair)
Carol Anderson – Westcoast Family Resources Society
Yvonne Hii – Child Development, City of Vancouver
Jason Chan – SUCCESS
Susan Papadionissiou – Surrey Office of ECD, Learning and Care
James Chamberlain – BC Teachers' Federation
Devinder Chattha – Progressive Intercultural Community Services
Tom Pearce – City of Vancouver
Lisa Chapeskie – Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion
Andrea Reimer – Western Can Wilderness Committee
Andrew Curran – Translink
Bill Hamilton – Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition
Omar Bhimji – Hub for Action on School Transportation Emissions
Matthew Carroll – BC Ministry of Environment/Youth Climate Leadership Alliance
Geoffrey Smith – BC Ministry of Environment/Youth Climate Leadership Alliance
Donna Chan – City of Richmond Transportation
Joan Caravan – City of Richmond Transportation
Marg Mahan – Better Environmentally Sound Transportation
Linda Lawlor – BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation

Kelsey Swanson – City of Surrey Community Development
Bonnie Fenton – Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition
Jordana Zbarsky – Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland
Kathy Berggren-Clive – MCFD Director of Advocacy
Chris Keam – Freelance Writer
Roger Wheeler – Interior Health
Michel Saab – SD 83 Board of Education
Bob Bowles – Valley Transportation Advisory Committee
Julianna Torjek – City of Vancouver Youth Outreach Team
Robyn Diakiw – City of Surrey Parks, Rec and Culture/School Board
Sophia Woo – Vancouver Coastal Health

On phone:

Michael Goldberg – First Call
Chris Gay – Children First
Rachel Douglas – Public Health Agency of Canada
Bob Yates – Consultant
Grace Steyn – City of Abbotsford
Lynne Reside – North Okanagan ECD Coalition

Regrets:

Wanda Gendron – Western Society for Children
Kathleen Shiels – Western Society for Children
John Millar – Health Officers Council
Lynn McBride – BC Aboriginal Child Care Society
Janice Nelson – Service Canada
Mitzi Dean – Pacific Centre Family Services
Ian Mass – Pacific Community Resources Society
Jean Moore – Canadian Mental Health Association
Mike Clarke – BC Government and Service Employees Union
Lilia Murao – Hospital Employees Union

1. First Call Reports and Partner Updates

Adrienne Montani and Julie Norton presented to the **BC Budget Committee** on behalf of First Call. The reception was positive, and they encourage other organizations and individuals to respond as well by attending a hearing or making a submission online:

<http://www.leg.bc.ca/budgetconsultations/>

The notes from First Call's presentation are available on our web site, and our formal written submission will be circulated soon.

The **fundraising dinner** is coming up on October 29! Your support at this event is critical, so please buy your tickets now (deadline is Oct. 24). This is a fantastic opportunity to meet, greet and support our advocacy efforts.

Agenda items for **future coalition meetings** – the November meeting will likely be focused on child and youth mental health. Addictions could also be included. Other suggested topics include:

- Implications of the federal election and the changing economy
- Youth engagement initiatives

Kathy Berggren-Clive is now working with MCFD in a new position as Director of Advocacy. The Strong, Safe, Supported document created advocacy positions in MCFD using the UN Rights of the Child as a tool for individual and systemic advocacy, as well as youth engagement. Advocacy is housed within integrated quality assurance under Sandra Griffin at MCFD.

First Call's **municipal election kit** is now available on our web site. Please send your feedback and let us know how you're using it.

2. Elections Discussion

What issues are making it on the agenda in communities around the province?

- ECD is not on the agenda in Vernon.
- Child poverty, housing and homelessness were featured in an all candidates meeting on the Sunshine Coast – this is a riding with a split vote.
- On Saltspring Island, the environment is the main issue. Voteforenvironment.ca is popular here. Child care is not on the agenda. Interestingly, Saltspring has two StrongStart Centres.
- In Vancouver-Kingsway there was an alternative-format meeting called the "all people's forum". They set up tables focused on policy issues with a candidate assigned to each. The candidates' job was to listen, and then to report back on the issue discussed at their table, followed by a question and answer period.
- Child care advocates expected child care to be a non-issue, but universal child care is in all the party platforms except the Conservatives. The Universal Child Care Benefit is smoke and mirrors – it's not a real child care benefit.
- Strategic voting is important in this election.
- A poll on child care that is being released today shows an increased interest in this issue amongst Canadians.
- The social justice action groups at BCTF have developed questions to ask at all candidates meetings for the upcoming provincial election.
- Strategic voting hurts party finances – parties are funded by Elections Canada based on how many votes they receive.

3. Living Wage Calculation Report

The calculation report *Working for a Living Wage: Ensuring Paid Work Meets Basic Family Needs in Vancouver and Victoria – 2008* was released on September 25. It was co-published by First Call, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Victoria Community Council. The living wage rate for Metro Vancouver is \$16.74/hour, based on two parents working full-time with two young children (\$16.39 for Victoria). This rate is above the poverty line. If the minimum wage were raised to \$10.60 an hour, this would bring an individual to the poverty line. The living wage is enough to take a family out of poverty, but it still provides a family with a very conservative, no-frills budget to live on.

An advisory committee for the living wage campaign is forming – they will be targeting large public and private employers and challenging them to raise the wages of their low income employees. First Call is talking to our health partners about this issue – many people working in hospitals for less than a living wage are women who have to take multiple jobs.

The living wage will also be brought forward to municipalities in their role as employers. A calculation guide is available on the CCPA web site so that other communities can find their living wage rate. The costs are based on real numbers.

We are looking for business champions of the living wage. Benefits packages add to the value for employees and bring down the wage. We want employers to think about how much it costs their employees to live. Employers can also play a role by becoming advocates for other public policy initiatives that would lower the cost of living for families, such as publicly-funded child care and social housing.

4. Child and Youth Friendly Land Use and Transportation Planning

Presentation by Richard Gilbert:

This initiative began in Ontario, where the guidelines are now being disseminated and implementation is beginning in some cities. They are moving forward on draft guidelines for BC, which are to be completed by March 2009.

Richard was a high school teacher, psychologist and municipal councilor in Toronto. He would be happy to receive any feedback on the guidelines through his web site, www.kidsonthemove.ca. After March, someone in BC will be tasked with disseminating and advocating for the use of the guidelines.

The guiding thought is that children and youth should be the focus of land use and transportation planning (and these two pieces should always be considered together). If children and youth are healthy, then society is healthy.

These are presented as guidelines as requested by developers, who want a level playing field to work with.

Children and youth are especially vulnerable to the impacts of transport, whether or not they themselves are traveling. Children and youth have generally not been consulted on considered in planning.

The guidelines are divided into the following groups:

- Putting children first (with others)
- Providing for children and youth as pedestrians
- Providing for children and youth as cyclists
- Children and youth using transit and school buses
- Children and youth in cars

Download the complete guidelines in Richard's presentation here:
<http://www.firstcallbc.org/pdfs/Gilbert%20presentation.pdf>

BC has a high children and youth pedestrian injury rate. Walking buses are becoming more popular. Skateboarding is hard to include in the guidelines.

Transfers between buses or other vehicles are the most difficult part of public transit use for children. Reducing school bus time is considered unrealistic, and is not usually a municipal responsibility. There is a high rate of exposure to air pollutants in school buses, e.g. from diesel fumes.

Lowering speed limits is important for child safety. We want to reduce the adverse impacts of transport.

Questions:

- Should the guidelines be only directed toward municipalities?
- Should there be one set of guidelines for all of Canada?

Discussion:

Transit systems are becoming more accommodating to bikes on buses.

Concern over lack of child seats in taxis. Richard does not think this is a huge issue. We don't want to discourage taxi service.

Lower transit fares – buses should be free. This benefits low income families.

Free transit can discourage walking and cycling. It's better to improve the transit system than reduce fares.

School bus travel is becoming a more significant issue due to school closures. Merging municipal and school transit might be a possible solution. The number of hours spent on school buses in Canada is greater than the hours spent on public transit.

Schools may be able to negotiate free transit for class field trips in the Lower Mainland.

The guidelines should use the language of municipal engineers so they will understand.

What about traffic calming and discouraging car use? It's been felt that the guidelines can't take an explicit anti-car position.

Is there a guideline to indicate success of this project? The Ontario guidelines include some data on child and youth transportation, however this data is hard to collect and we don't have it for Vancouver or BC.

6. Time and Date of Next Meeting: December 10, 2008, 9:00 – 11:30 am, BC Teachers' Federation building, 550 W. 6th Avenue, Vancouver. Telephone participation welcome.

Please note the November 12, 2008 First Call Coalition meeting has been cancelled. Instead we are urging all of our partners and usual participants to join us for the release of the 2008 BC Child Poverty Report Card on Friday, November 21, 9:30 am, at SFU Harbour Centre, 515 W. Hastings Street, Vancouver.