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**First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition
Minutes of September 10, 2008
BC Teachers' Federation Building**

In attendance:

Jennifer Scarr – Vancouver Coastal Health
Sheila Davidson – Early Childhood Educators of BC
Chris Harris – Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association
Adrienne Montani – First Call
Ruth Fahlman – Consultant
Andrina Perry – First Call
Lesley Richardson – First Call
Glenn Hope – BC Council for Families
Ginny Gonneau – Society for Children and Youth of BC
Julie Norton – BC Council for Families (Chair)
Susan Harney – Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
Mab Oloman – Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
Darryl Quantz – Vanc Coastal Health, Population Health
Colleen Bob – Red Cross RespectED Violence and Abuse Prevention
Steve Kerstetter – First Call
Jean Moore – Canadian Mental Health Association
Rebecca Siggner – SPARC BC
Anna Cavouras – SPARC BC
Lynn McBride – BC Aboriginal Child Care Society
Bill Pegler – CUPE
Susan Kennedy – Early Childhood Learning Agency and Ministry of Education
Patti Bacchus – Vancouver Parents for Successful Inclusion
Corinne Durston – Vancouver Public Library
Rachel Douglas – Public Health Agency of Canada
Heather Armour – Public Health Agency of Canada
Carol Anderson – Westcoast Family Resources Society
Lorette Tataryn – Independent
Fred Milowsky – Representative for Children and Youth
Lila Murao – Hospital Employees' Union
Lynell Anderson – Human Early Learning Partnership
Mariam Bouchoutrouch – Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House
Yvonne Hii – Child Development, City of Vancouver
Pippa Rowcliffe – Council for Early Child Development
Jeff Calbick – United Way of the Lower Mainland
Alison Bledsoe – United Way of the Lower Mainland
Noralea Pilgrin – School District 42, Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows
Paula Tait – Fraser Region Aboriginal ECD Network
Debbie Jackson – BC Association of Family Resource Programs
Jean Woodcock – Mount Pleasant Family Centre
Jane Thornthwaite – BC School Trustees Association
Tricia Millman – Service Canada
Jim Iker – BC Teachers' Federation

Jason Chan – SUCCESS
Dr. John Millar – Health Officers Council
JoAnne McBean – K.I.D.S.
Cathy Sales – St. Barnabas Daycare
Irene Lanzinger – BC Teachers' Federation
Hillel Goelman – Human Early Learning Partnership/CHILD Project
Donald Robert Shaw – Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society
Shairoz Merani – School District 36, Surrey
Deann Skjaveland – School District 36, Surrey
Susan Papadionissiou – Surrey Office of ECD, Learning and Care
Margaret White – BC Teachers' Federation
Lisa Chapeskie – Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion
Kim Lau – YWCA Early Childhood Program
Karen DeLong – BC Association for Community Living
Gyda Chud – First Call
Kate Sutherland – VCS Co-op
Nancy Smith – Canadian Federation of University Women, West Vancouver

On phone:

Michael Goldberg – First Call
Lynn Yule – Chilliwack Community Services
Darby Wilkinson – Chilliwack Community Services
Barb Pousseau – Chilliwack and Fraser Region CCRR's
Laurie Fisher – Queen Alexandra Foundation for Children
Alanna Robson – Ministry of Children and Family Development
Valerie Janz – Make Children First and Understanding the Early Years
Brent Craig – Creston and District Community
Kathy Basaraba – Children First, Prince George
Chris Gay – Children First
Coco Shau – Success by 6, Terrace

Regrets:

Jane MacNamara – Canadian Federation of University Women
Elva Reed – Canadian Federation of University Women
Louella Vincent – Hospital Employees' Union
Wanda Gendron – Western Society for Children
Kathleen Shiels – Western Society for Children
Hannah Varto – Vancouver Coastal Health
Carol Matusicky – Consultant
Ruth Annis

1) First Call Reports and Updates

The coalition was introduced to Julie Norton, who is First Call's new Provincial Chair. Ruth Annis (not present) was also introduced as the Coalition Meeting Chair. Julie chaired the meeting in Ruth's absence.

The Living Wage Calculation Report will be released on September 25 – partners are invited to attend the press conference, and download the report from our web site.

First Call submitted a budget brief to the Federal Finance Committee, which is available on our web site.

First Call submitted recommendations to the federal government for their next report to the UN on implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. An alternative report process will be led by the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children.

First Call's fundraising dinner is coming up October 29, and you can buy your tickets now! We would also appreciate the donation of items for our silent auction and we have volunteer opportunities available.

We have launched our federal election kit, and it is available online along with a number of links to further resources and information. Make sure that candidates know what child and youth issues are important to you!

We encourage partners to write to their MPs about the campaign to eliminate the refugee transportation loan repayment requirement, as the government's reply to date has been unsatisfactory. More information and a sample letter are available on our web site under Increased Economic Equality. Please help build support for removing this burden of debt from refugee families.

BC Budget Committee hearings are coming up – check the budget committee's web site for dates in your area.

See: <http://www.leg.bc.ca/budgetconsultations/participate.htm#PublicHearings>

First Call will present on September 15 and submit a full brief by the October 24 deadline.

2) Update on Ministry of Health Core Public Health Services Review – Where are we at?

Jennifer Scarr of Vancouver Coastal Health presented this Review framework that emerged as a response to the SARS outbreak. It was determined that public health must be better structured and resourced. The review includes the following categories of public health: health promotion, health protection, preventative interventions, and health assessment and disease surveillance.

3-5 core programs are being reviewed every year, and the documents reporting on these reviews will be available on the Vancouver Coastal Health web site as they are completed. Programs relating to children and youth include: mental health, reproductive health, healthy development and unintentional injury prevention.

No funds are tied in to the review process – the process will demonstrate where increased funding is needed. The review has been shifted in the recent cabinet shuffle to the new Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport.

3) Introductions – of those present and on the phone.

4) Expanding Early Learning in BC - Panel

Hillel Goelman, Human Early Learning Partnership:

We need to get better at responding to headlines such as “National Institute of Child Health and Human Development study shows children in daycare are more aggressive.” This is a disturbing sound bite that is not accurate. The study actually shows that good quality child care works. The study includes all non-maternal care, and includes only infants up to 12 months who are in care for over 30 hours a week. The study also shows that any aggressive effects disappear later in the children’s lives.

Robert Pianta has a book examining half-day and full-day Kindergarten.

It’s the quality of the child care that makes the difference. Another sound bite we hear is that the positive effects of quality ECD programming fade out – this is not always true. There are some great longitudinal studies showing otherwise. Of course, even quality ECD programming is not an inoculation against all problems.

HELP has a major event coming up with Steven Barnett and Ellen Frede October 24. They are the leading US researchers on ECD and are both activists and advocates (find out more at www.earlylearning.ubc.ca).

Irene Lanzinger, BC Teachers’ Federation:

BCTF policy resolutions are inconsistent in terms of their support for all day K. They support fully funded all day K for 5 year olds, and believe that pre-school should be a part of the public system. They also support funding affordable child care in non-profit centres which is accessible and universal.

BCTF will be having an issue conference to review their policies. 5 year olds is an easy choice – this expansion would help vulnerable children. Primary teachers are powerful advocates who will insist that the curriculum match their experience of K children. Primary teachers believe that children should be taught in the way that best suits their learning needs.

3 and 4 year olds need a different kind of expertise. Any child with good health care and access to early diagnosis, who is not living in poverty is ready to attend kindergarten. We need to advocate for the social supports that these kids need. There is also the child care component and meeting parent’s needs when it comes to all day K.

There are lots of jurisdictional issues around unions and qualifications, which the BCTF does not yet have a position on. The current K-12 system must be adequately funded.

Susan Harney, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC:

The Coalition is the child care policy watchdog. Their principles haven’t changed for 30 years, so the question is always if the programs match the principles.

An all day K program provides the necessary time for children with special needs to adjust to the environment. The learning is spread out over the day.

There is an artificial divide separating learning and care. 65-70% of Canadians have deemed child care as an issue in the next election. Why don’t we improve what we already

have? It seems to be a fundamental value of government to not support families in a community setting. Child care needs to be in legislation, and children need to have a seamless day where they are not carted from one facility to another. People working with children must be adequately compensated. Pockets of program funding don't work. We need supports for working families.

Sheila Davidson, Early Childhood Educators of BC:

Her focus is on the EC educator. ECEBC's submission to the consultation stressed planning and delivery values such as universal entitlement and access.

There is no early childhood education system, which is a huge disservice to families. Educators have also been struggling. It is not right to build new programs and ignore these educators. ECE's are the people qualified to work with 3 and 4 year olds. ECE should become a bachelor degree program.

The child to staff ratio is important in a setting for young children; 18-20 in a class doesn't work. The day should not be broken down into clear components. Care and learning must go together. Early learning and care does not have to be school based. Diversity is important, including Aboriginal culture.

Physical space is also an important issue – with young children there are different needs for playgrounds, washrooms, access to water.

Jane Thornthwaite, BC School Trustees Association:

Jane is a school trustee in North Vancouver.

BCSTA supports full day K for 5 year olds, though we can't assume that all children will benefit from this expansion. The kindergarten curriculum should not be pushed down into earlier years. Kindergarten and grade 1 split classes are becoming more common – split classes won't work for 3-5 year olds.

In terms of physical space, an expansion could have negative impacts on current classrooms. We need to ensure adequate funding for the existing system. There would need to be additional funding for playgrounds and proper fencing. In rural areas there would be the issue of young children needing to take buses to get to kindergarten. 3-4 year olds need to be taught by ECE's.

There must be new funding to support an expansion. Expansion could be directed to the highest risk children to close current achievement gaps.

Chris Harris, Kindergarten Teacher:

Chris has taught kindergarten and grade 1 for the past 10 years. He was excited to get a job teaching half day K, but finds that there is a lot of time and curricular pressure within the school system. Kindergarten teachers often discuss the expectations of children's learning outcomes when they complete kindergarten. Lots of time is spent doing administrative tasks, reporting to the Ministry, greeting kids and settling them in. Play is a very important part of kindergarten.

Teachers have a lot of autonomy in deciding what is best for their students. Children see the inherent unfairness in some kids having access to all day K. There are misconceptions in the community and with parents about who can access the all day program.

Discussion

How much reporting is required for kindergarten teachers? Increased expectations have filtered down to K; they erode what works.

It is already difficult to find ECE staff – At current funding levels, there is no business case for running before and after school care that would be needed for 4 – 5 year olds.

If the expansion is done well we won't have these issues to consider. It could be a no-brainer if it is properly funded.

3-4 year old care should be community based, but equitably funded.

New York has standardized testing for 5 year olds – watch out!

Children with special needs often miss time at school when there is not enough support staff for them.

What about the potential of neighbourhood learning centres? Government is planning to roll out new community schools over many years. In the 70's community schools with seamless days were common.

We need to be clear about the terms that we apply to programs. Kindergarten used to be considered the transition between care and learning. Now K is much more focused on learning.

The community talks about what is good for children, while government focuses on school-readiness.

The attitude that a teacher is a teacher and can teach any level is a problem. Half day K jobs are hard to fill with K teachers.

While teachers can be moved around to some degree, qualifications for particular positions are important.

We are assuming that boards of education will be on the side of expansion, but there can be tension between education and in-school ECE programs.

It's important that child care is not put out of business – community needs to be involved.

Those that are doing the ECE seem to be left out of the consultation.

5) Time and Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday, October 8, 2008, 9:00 – 11:30 am, BC Teachers' Federation building, 550 W. 6th Avenue, Vancouver. Telephone participation welcome.