



MINUTES

First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition Early Childhood Development Roundtable meeting – March 31, 2010 Held at United Way of the Lower Mainland, Burnaby

In Attendance:

Susan Papadionissiou, ECD, Learning and Care
Heather Hoiness, Mosaic Building Blocks
Steve Klein representing Mable Elmore, MLA,
Opposition Child Care Critic
Carmen Larsen, ELSA Net
JoAnne Mc Bean, Kids Child Care
Cathy Sales, St Barnabas Daycare
Crystal Janes, West Coast CC Resource Centre
Mike Clarke, B.C.G.E.U
Sheila Davidson, E.C.E.B.C.
Marg White, B.C.T.F.
Kim Adamson, United Way Success by 6
Allison Bledsoe, United Way of the L.M.
Lesley Richardson, First Call

Heather Naus, Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House

Mab Oloman, C.C.C.A.B.C
Adrienne Montani, First Call

On Phone:

Sandy Weeks, Ladysmith Children First

Regrets:

Erin Balmer, City of Surrey
Sue Graff, Caring Place
Dave Phillips, M.C.F.D
Susan Foster, Port Coquitlam Health Unit
Heather Armour, Public Health Agency of Canada
Sharon Strasdin, Northern Lights College

1. Welcomes, Introductions, Regrets

Alison Bledsoe agreed to chair the meeting, welcomed everyone and noted regrets.

2. Funding Issues Related to Full-School Day Kindergarten

Marg White, from the BC Teachers' Federation Research Department, provided an overview of funding issues and concerns arising from the introduction of full school-day kindergarten. The note taker is very grateful to Marg for providing an electronic summary of her remarks and the related tables. Please see the attached.

Some of the key points included the under-funding of the expansion initiative in some districts, the anticipated creation of more K/1 split classes (with implications for the play-based learning curriculum for the younger children), the need for additional in-service training in ECD for newly-assigned KG teachers, the availability of appropriate physical environments, and culturally appropriate learning resources and materials for Aboriginal children. Transportation, supervision and reporting requirements are also areas of concern.

Discussion:

It was suggested that the Ministry of Education should have some common expectations for School Districts and they should be made public because the introduction of full school-day Kindergarten is proceeding differently across the province. Not only that, but the relationships between the Districts and the child care centres and preschools that are

currently occupying school space are different... some welcome these services while others are not renewing leases.

A related discussion evolved. Roundtable participants have long been concerned about the government's compartmentalization (splitting) of early childhood development and child care. Now the focus is on early learning, "a component of a child's development and care". At the same time, child care, which provides a broader response to a child's needs and supports parental employment and thus the economy, is severely under-resourced.

In some places around the province, ECD planning tables and school districts are working hard to bring KG teachers together with early childhood educators and parent support services. Some are talking about ways to bring ECEs into KG classrooms. People are trying to draw lessons from the experience in Ontario implementing the Pascal report in relation to school-based early childhood programs.

3. BC Budget Impacts

Mab Oloman provided the following summary:

On the positive side.....

- additional \$26 million for child care subsidies, which offsets the costs of child care for about 28,000 children every month
- Full day kindergarten for five year olds is being phased in starting this September, and as it becomes fully operational, annual funding will rise to \$129 million by 2012. (In the coming school year, per pupil funding will increase to \$8,300.)

Concerns...

- This year's budget doesn't restore the community-based programs that have been cut since September's budget update...some relevant to families with young children and the planned \$10 million cut to programs funded by the Ministry of Child and Family Development was confirmed in mid-February.
- There is no plan to deal with the province's child poverty rate currently the highest in the country and has been so for six years running.
- While the \$26 million subsidy dollars for child care are welcome, there is simply not enough money here to improve access to quality care.
- The budget speech stated that the government would "work in partnership with the *private sector* to open new *preschools* for three and four year olds in neighbourhoods throughout B.C." What constitutes the private sector and does the reference to preschools refer only to part time programs?
- According to the 2010/11 - 2012/13 Service Plan, MCFD goals and performance measures have changed and there is little mention of children and youth with special needs, early childhood development, or child care. What happened to the intent in the 2008/09 Annual Service Plan Report MCFD which stated the following:

Goal 1: To identify and strengthen, or develop, effective child, youth and family development services in B.C. within a strengths-based, developmental approach

Objective 1.1: An effective child and family development system built on research-based good practices

Strategies:

- *Implement a five year Strategic Child Care Plan for B.C. that strengthens child care services.*
- *Lead the implementation of a coordinated, comprehensive cross government approach to initiatives and services for children and youth with special needs and their families.*
- *Provide regions and communities with tools, training and expertise for effective service delivery of programs for children, youth and families.*

Discussion:

Roundtable participants expressed concern that accountability on previously set MCFD goals is lacking. The social fabric to support early childhood development is fraying and the piecemeal nature of the cuts across ministries makes it difficult to assess the full picture of what is being lost.

It was noted that the federal transfer funds totalling \$95.5 M that were allocated to early years services as one-time-only funding in BC at the end of the federal-provincial Early Learning and Care Agreement, are now gone. They were never replaced by provincial investments.

Regional level decision-making affecting ECD is still a question mark for many. What direction is being given to Community Service Managers in MCFD around early years allocations?

Action: Participants requested that Chuck Eamer, Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for early childhood development and child care, and designated liaison to the First Call Roundtable, be invited to the next meeting to help us understand: the Ministry's scope and current terminology, the lack of attention in the Service Plan to children with special needs and the ongoing lack of an ECD or child care plan for the province.

4. Coalition to Build a Better BC

The Coalition to Build a Better BC is holding a rally to oppose provincial funding cuts. The new, broad-based, non-partisan coalition represents more than 30 groups from community and social services, the environmental movement, arts groups, seniors, students, women's groups, First Nations. The coalition is united by the belief that a better BC is possible, and the way to achieve it is to work together. The rally is being hosted by BC singer and actor Jim Byrnes.

Where: Vancouver Art Gallery (north side on Georgia Street)

Date: Saturday, April 10, 2010

Time: Noon to 1:00 pm

5. Federal Advocacy and Responses

In a letter responding to advocacy by Campaign 2000 for a national child care program, federal Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff replied that a Liberal government "would work to

implement one”. He also referred to the \$2.30 increase in GDP for every \$1 invested in child care and early learning, exceeding the return on a similar investment in construction jobs.

6. Roundtable Updates

ECEBC: The second leadership institute is starting soon. Sheila Davidson is stepping down and interviews will soon be underway for a new Executive Director.

Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre: Unfunded contract requirements, such as Municipal Pension Plan commitments, have resulted in the loss of 1 FTE. It is understood that other contracted services are in the same boat. The budget impact is considerable.

BCGEU: Agencies and organizations need to keep in mind their responsibilities for severance and holiday pay settlements if and when contracts are terminated or reduced. It has been reported that some agencies are struggling with how to handle staffing when they are not sure of their future.

Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House: Vancouver’s first new NH in 20 years. Heather Naus, new to the Roundtable, spoke about the activities at the DTES NH including the family child drop-in.

Surrey: The City did some research on child care and will be examining their role.

Farewell Steven Klein, and all the best with your graduate studies in Chicago. Steven has been attending Roundtable meetings for Vancouver-Kensington MLA Mable Elmore’s office.

7. Next meeting:

Next meeting is scheduled for May 26, 2010.