



# COALITION MEETING MINUTES

BC TEACHERS' FEDERATION  
550 WEST 6TH AVENUE, VANCOUVER

February 8, 2017

**PRESENT:**

Caroline Kent, Comp 3, BC Government and Service Employees' Union  
Charissa Patricelli, Family Physician  
Cheryl Mixon, First Call (chair)  
Chris Friesen, Immigrant Services Society of BC  
Christina Vasilopoulos, Kidsafe Project Society  
Debbie Henry, Single Mothers Alliance of BC  
Donna Martinson, Canadian Bar Assoc. Children's Law Section  
Fionn Yaxley, BC Aboriginal Child Care Society  
Fred Milowsky, Representative for Children and Youth office  
Gyda Chud, First Call/Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC

Joseph Abai, Kidsafe Project Society  
Lianne Carley, Vancouver Coastal Health  
Mary Johnston, Five Family Place Partnership/Eastside Family Place  
Patricia Grohne, University Women's Club Vancouver  
Stephanie Howell, Society for Children and Youth of BC  
Steve Bailey, BC Retired Teachers' Association  
Tara Wolff, Canadian Mental Health Association - BC  
Tina Dam, Inclusion BC  
Viveca Ellis, Single Mothers Alliance of BC  
Adrienne Montani, First Call  
John Kennedy, First Call  
Julie Cheng, First Call

**CALL-IN:**

Lana, Together Against Poverty Society

**REGRETS:**

Deanna Ogle, Living Wage for Families Campaign  
Debbie Anderson Eng, Pacific Community Resources Society  
Mab Oloman, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC  
Pamela Alcorn, Federation of Community Social Services of BC

## 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Cheryl Mixon welcomed everyone and acknowledged we are meeting on unceded Coast Salish territory, home of Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. A round of introductions was made.

## 2. FIRST CALL UPDATES

Thursday, Feb. 23, 2017 - Fundraising Gala with Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond

Individuals and organizations are encouraged to purchase tables or tickets. Former minister Mary McNeil, MLA Melanie Mark and youth Jess Boon are confirmed speakers.

Early Childhood Development Roundtable

The ECD Roundtable last met Jan. 18, 2017. A researcher has been hired to analyze the 420 survey responses about early years services access barriers and to write a summary report for this advocacy campaign.

**putting children and youth first**

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The table discussed the Inclusion BC and Canadian Action Plan for Children (CAPC) presentations from the [last coalition meeting](#) and are writing an op-ed for Family Day. (Update: The [op-ed](#) by Adrienne Montani, Faith Bodnar, Sherry Sinclair and Sharon Gregson was published on Feb. 11, 2017, in the *Vancouver Sun*.)

A [report](#) by an economist released by the Early Childhood Educators of BC says the \$10aDay child care plan is affordable and sustainable. The [four-pager](#) is excellent and easy to use for your own advocacy.

### Living Wage for Families Campaign

Port Coquitlam has been certified as a Living Wage Employer and Pitt Meadows has asked for a staff report. We're working behind the scenes with the City of Vancouver to implement the living wage.

The Living Wage for Families Campaign is launching a provincial election website that asks the provincial government to become a Living Wage Employer, to contribute to the solution not the problem, not to contract workers at low wages.

### West Coast LEAF CEDAW letter

First Call was a signatory to this [letter](#) to the premier and the leader of the opposition. Both the federal letter and the provincial letter are still open to endorsements. It asks both levels of government to step up to respond to the international critiques about gender equality in Canada by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

### Heart & Stroke report on marketing to kids

This [report](#), circulated in our recent newsletter, urges governments to stop marketing junk food to kids. There are a lot of shareables for you to use. Self-regulation by the food and beverage industry is a complete failure. Since the Stop Marketing to Kids Coalition was formed, advertising to children has increased and the companies participating in the voluntary initiative are the worst offenders.

The kids pressure their parents to purchase junk foods in response to ads. Chocolate bars and other candy should be removed from the check-out counters at stores.

### Coroner's inquest recommendations on fentanyl crisis

Recommendations from a recent coroner's inquest into the death of a 20-year-old man from a fentanyl overdose include providing treatment facilities for teens, to have education about substance abuse and addictions in elementary schools and to have Naloxone kits available in the schools system with trained personnel on site. There are reports from physicians that we need to address early childhood trauma that causes emotional pain.

### Guest for March coalition meeting

At our March meeting Bernard Richard, currently the acting representative for children and youth, will be joining us.

Canada's report on our compliance with the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child is coming up in 2018. We hope to talk with Bernard Richard about a more open process to collect information from front-line workers on how they've responded to previous UN comments of where we are deficient. The Canadian Bar Association is interested in collaborating with First Call on this, to look at the legal responsibilities and what's required from both governments.

Alex Gervais report the latest report from the RCY office is devastating and heartbreaking. Alex was traumatized and retraumatized in the system and deprived of connections to his family. The report talks about the business of the residential care system. None of the previous recommendations was acted on.

At age 8 Alex left his family care home, where he was funded with respite care, to live with his stepmom. But the ministry wouldn't give her respite, one-to-one support or child care.

There are stories where families cannot get respite and financial support but contractors can get this financial support from government. The NGOs also get funded more. The rationale is families are responsible and should fund this themselves. Grandparents are in the same situation. The issue of poverty layers in here. Members can share these stories through social media and ensure the public hears about them.

## Presentations and other publications

See the end of the minutes.

### 3. DR. CHARISSA PATRICELLI, SURREY PRENATAL CLINIC, STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINE

Charissa Patricelli is a family physician who works in a prenatal clinic, a methadone clinic and a women's shelter.

At Dr. Patricelli's clinic, patients can come in to see a doctor with no identification or housing. They see patients who get food from unsafe sources (like dumpsters), who are living under a bridge but this safer than where they came from; kids who have left unsafe homes, foster homes, group homes or have aged out.

What do kids need? Food, water, shelter, safety, love, strong attachment are basic minimums.

Poverty = incredibly high cortisol/adrenalin caused by stress. The opposite of stress: Happiness = normal serotonin levels.

Not enough money means difficult decisions: To purchase meat/protein or laundry soap, to go to your doctor's appointment or to the kid's appointment.

The most common pediatric surgery in BC is dental extraction.

Poverty because of race, leading to over-incarceration of Indigenous and black women, must be addressed.

How do we inspire people to be healthy when basic needs are not met? Dr. Patricelli told stories of some of her patients with their names changed for confidentiality.

Basic housing is needed. Jessie went from jail to recovery house to hospital ICU to recovery house. Surrey recovery houses are using patients like Jessie for profit but patients often have no other place to stay.

Medical coverage is needed. Ida at age 17 does not have medication coverage under Plan G, you must be 19 for coverage. She is not covered by Pharmacare either.

Harm reduction is needed. Self referrals are encouraged in pregnant women who are at risk. Prereferrals are needed to prevent child from being apprehended when they're just born. Women face invasive questioning, lack legal support and are fearful to disclose mental health, for example. Their clinic uses doula programs to provide pre- and post-delivery support for Aboriginal women in labour. Many women who don't identify as Aboriginal don't qualify for this support. You need to keep babies and moms together for the best outcome. Skin-to-skin contact increases breastfeeding and produces better cardio-respiratory stability. Babies cry less. This is part of attachment bonding.

It's important to empower mom, to meet with moms where they are at: what do you need, what can we do for you? The child welfare system does not look at this at all.

Why does it matter? We have transgenerational trauma.

Why not foster care? The system does not work, it needs to be redone. In Canada, 8% of Aboriginal children are apprehended, five times that of the national rate.

Because of poverty kids develop fear, a sense of shame, may be lonely and act out at school. The social welfare system is failing kids and families. Social workers change over again, no relationship there. MCFD involvement ends prematurely.

## DISCUSSION

Healthy, nutritious food is much more expensive than junk food. How do you function if you are undernourished? Kids are getting nutrition from schools.

Does Dr. Patricelli use the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth to provide advocacy for mothers and children who are involved with the ministry? RCY works closely with Four Square as an example. The advocacy is provided to the child but the position is to provide supports to have the child stay with mom. RCY is open to visiting Charissa's office and presenting to her staff. RCY is often successful in that type of advocacy.

On Feb. 1, 2017, there was a Champions of Inclusive Health stakeholders meeting, which relates to health outcomes of those with intellectual disabilities. The goals of the meeting included building a larger coalition of individuals and agencies to work together to tackle the reality that British Columbians with intellectual disabilities have lower life expectancies, live more sedentary lifestyles, and are hospitalized more frequently than the general population.

## 4. IMMIGRANT SERVICES SOCIETY OF BC – WELFARE RECOMMENDATIONS

- <http://issbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Recommendations-Govt.pdf>

Chris Friesen, the director of settlement services at the Immigrant Services Society of BC, gave a presentation on the state of immigration in Canada.

The federal government in fall 2016 accelerated higher levels of immigration to Canada to a baseline level of 300,000, which is a 50,000 increase. The number will increase by 10-15% every year.

Immigration is the main policy lever to replace population aging. This affects every institution and community across the country.

Operation Syrian Refugee was the largest resettlement movement in Canadian history. There are Syrian families settled in 69 communities across BC.

In the Lower Mainland, there are 1,900 individuals/560 families of which 82% are Syrian and 4% are Iraqi. 53% are under 18 years old. A significant number of youth who spent years in refugee camps now find themselves in the public school system after having disrupted education and untreated trauma. The majority (54%) are landing in Surrey, driven by affordable housing, and 10% are landing in Vancouver.

U.S. President Trump's executive order banning Muslims from seven countries and plans to deport Mexican migrants is expected to increase the numbers of refugee claimants across the U.S. border.

ISSBC has launched a new research project with UBC. They're mapping postal codes of every refugee in Metro Vancouver to give policy makers a visual map of where they live. They will provide information to Translink and to municipalities.

ISSBC's report *Syrian Refugee Operation to British Columbia: One Year In – A Roadmap to Integration and Citizenship* was a result of two consultations, including a youth forum, and a telephone survey in Arabic of 300 families. There is a one-pager with [key findings](#):

There are issues with federally-funded language class waitlists. The wait averages four months, sometimes as long as 10 months.

17% are working full or part time. This speaks to the refugees' resilience and determination to get on their own two feet. 64% are actively look for work, even without English language ability.

16% reporting emotional health challenges – a big concern.

Provincial recommendations focus on the Syrian refugees' experiences but also on bringing up all those on welfare. They have been sent to every elected official and ISS is doing a poverty series with the *Vancouver Sun*. [Provincial recommendations](#) include:

- Providing bus passes or cash equivalents (where there is no public transit) to all those on welfare.
- Allowing BC income assistance recipients to keep 50% of their earned income without clawback.

Private sponsors are discussing how they can give money to families without having clawbacks. Current welfare policy is preventing private sponsors from giving money to help cover basic expenses.

The average processing time for private sponsors is 51 months. There is a cap of 1,000 imposed on Syrian-Iraqi cases for 2017, which was already met by Jan 23rd.

In the first year, refugees are on federal assistance which is benchmarked at the provincial welfare rates, but the federal regime includes a transportation and housing supplement. This is a difference of \$348 per month, which drops off at month 13, a big hit for families.

The average size of the Syrian family was six and as high as 13.

The new ISSBC Welcome Centre on Victoria Drive is changing the way they deal with immigrants and refugees. All under one roof, refugees have access to private clinics and new targeted programs for children and youth, largely because of private donors. Teens have their own special orientation while they're in their transitional housing. Other services include support for housing, banking, trauma,

employment, refugee claims, LGBTQ, licensed child care, preschool and parenting. Much of the research supports recovery from trauma much quicker when all these supports are in place.

## DISCUSSION

The Single Mothers Alliance is doing the Single Mothers Listening Project and is looking at transit accessibility. For a single parent with two children the cost is \$500 per month. They are advocating for free transit access for children and youth, to make it their fundamental right to access school and their communities. This is a complementary ask.

There was consensus around the table to put free access to transit for kids in the First Call election toolkit.

Is there funding to finance a report to assess impact of not having access to transit how that impacts families? For example, **Vancity's report** on the economic benefits of refugees changed the way people thought about their value. RBC gives to child and youth mental health – can we approach them to fund the report? TD is environment, transportation might work well there.

Other ideas for the campaign: universal access for all forms of contraception. It's not covered under MSP and people deserve to have family choice. The CEDAW document criticized Canada on our high rate of abortion and points to lack of access to contraception.

KidSafe Project Society noted that their program provides bus passes to Grade 8s. Perhaps they can do a survey and ask them for impacts on alumni who received bus passes to help inform the ISSBC campaign.

We need to go back to rights of the child. Right to go to school, access to health care, access to healthy food.

## 5. RAISE THE RATES POVERTY FREE BC CAMPAIGN MATERIALS

- <https://nopoveritybc.ca/>
- <http://bcpovertyreduction.ca/campaigns/poverty-free-bc-action-week/>

Members were encouraged to visit the two links on the agenda and circulate the Charlie Demers video about poverty, the children's posters and the video about Fraser Stewart trying to get on disability assistance.

Poverty Reduction Campaign – There will be a Poverty Free BC rally on Saturday, Mar. 4 and a whole week before that of days of action. Please go to the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition [website](#) for more information.

## 6. REVIEW OF REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH ACT

- <https://consultations.leg.bc.ca/Submission/Create?cons=StatutoryReview>

The deadline for submissions on the review of the *Representative for Children and Youth Act* is Friday, Feb. 10. A draft submission by First Call was circulated. We emphasize that the RCY should remain an independent office. Other draft recommendations:

1. The first recommendation is to add an explicit reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in the mandate of the representative, and this includes rights for children to have a voice.
2. Extend RCY powers beyond currently 'designated services' to include services provided to children and youth by any agency of the provincial government.
3. Extend the definition of young adult in the Act to age 26.
4. Add provisions to require government to notify RCY in advance of proposed legislation or policy with a significant impact on children and youth and powers to assess impacts of proposed legislation or policy on children and youth, including the views of children and youth in these assessments.. (We drew on UNICEF Canada's previous child assessment recommendations).
6. Retain the RCY powers to monitor MCFD, and replace section 30 with a periodic general review of the Act, including public participation.
7. Communication with the child – add a new subsection to Section 26 to require that children and youth in care or other government facilities be informed about the RCY, how to contact the representative and of their right to have private contact with the representative without delay.

Please let Adrienne know if you have other thoughts. We will post the final submission on our website and send it out in our newsletter.

## 7. MEMBER UPDATES

**Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC** has released a [study](#) of the socioeconomic benefits of the \$10aDay Plan. The private-sector investor approached them to do this study and CCCABC was pleased by the positive results. Right now the CCCABC is drafting a letter to all BC MLAs and BC MPs to share the report with them to get provincial and federal governments to work together on creating a universal child care plan.

**BC Retired Teachers' Association** has published their provincial election toolkit – look for it on their website. They appreciate the research from First Call.

**Single Mothers' Alliance of BC:** There are spots left in their Equality workshop run by West Coast LEAF. SMA also has a listening campaign on the impact of legal aid cuts. They are working with BC Teachers' Federation and West Coast LEAF on this project.

SMA is planning an all-candidates meeting with SFU for April 1. They're always looking for allies to join their planning committee.

**Society for Children and Youth of BC** on Jan. 25 held a showcase in collaboration with First Call that featured art from youth in and aging out of foster care. There was a panel discussion, available on video soon, that focused on the value of youth voice and youth art.

They have received funding to deliver staff awareness training, facilitated by youth in and out of foster care, to Vancity branches and staff with a focus on building social capital in their communities.

SCY has received funding for a direct service project. They are also looking for new office space of about 2,000 sq ft.

**Canadian Mental Health Association – BC Branch** will be sharing an update on their [B4Stage4](#) campaign at the March coalition meeting. They will address how whole life spans are affected by early intervention, not just through a mental health lens, but including poverty and other factors as well.

**Inclusion BC** has completed their election toolkit, [You Can Vote](#).

This year they are asking for submissions on disability pride, on how to incorporate disability activities in our own activities. Go to [DisabilityPride.ca](#) for more information.

The Inclusion BC [conference](#) and AGM is coming up June 14-17. The Rick Hansen Foundation has accessibility funding for public locations.

**Canadian Bar Association Lawyers Education Society** is trying to get lawyers to learn more about child rights. Over the last couple years the Canadian Bar Association has created an online child rights toolkit that is about to be launched at a May child rights conference held with the Continuing Legal Education Society. Bernard Richard, the new BC representative for children and youth, has agreed to be one of the speakers.

**University Women's Club of Vancouver** has completed a project with the Federation of University Women BC Council and First Call with a grant from Vancouver Foundation. Their Study Circle Project involved four University Women's clubs and youth around the province. The results of their December action forum will be found on the Vancouver Foundation Fostering Change website. The action forum resulted in six big ideas, including calling for urgent systemic policy changes, addressing stigma and increasing permanency.

**BC Government and Service Employees' Union Component 3 Community Social Services** is launching a women's campaign to reflect how funding cuts have affected community social services and women's services. Their members will go out and present this as part of their pre-election campaign. They are also relaunching their child care campaign.

**East Side Family Place and Five Family Place Partnerships** have identified key issues for families, which include housing and food security, as well as a need to create public awareness of their work. Mt. Pleasant Family Place is holding their Savour Our Neighbourhood event on Mar. 9, which includes tasting from local restaurants held at Heritage Hall. Early bird tickets are available until Feb. 9.

**First Call** has invited all party leaders to come to coalition meetings and have received responses from the NDP and the Green Party but no firm commitments yet.

## 8. NEXT MEETING

The next coalition meeting will take place Wednesday, March 8, 2017. Refreshments are served at 9 am, meeting from 9:15–11:30 am. BC Teachers' Federation, 550 West 6th Avenue in Vancouver. Telephone participation welcome; please contact us by the Monday before the meeting at [info@firstcallbc.org](mailto:info@firstcallbc.org) if you wish to participate by phone.

# FIRST CALL OUT AND ABOUT

## Community Presentations January 2017

- Vancouver Community College Nursing students – Child Poverty Report Card and First Call
- CUPE 498 on the living wage in Port Coquitlam
- Wosk Centre for Dialogue on child inequality in BC & Canada
- Provincial webinar on child inequality in BC & Canada
- BCIT Nursing students – Child Poverty Report Card and First Call

## Media Hits

Prince George Citizen: [Poverty a barrier to child health, Northern Health finds](#)

Policy Alternatives: [Long Overdue: Why BC Needs a Poverty Reduction Plan](#)

Surrey Now: [Breakfast programs in Surrey schools feeding 1,500 daily](#)

National Observer: [Two Canadian billionaires as wealthy as almost a third of Canadians, Oxfam reports](#)

Tyee: [Baby Boxes: Too Good an Idea to Adopt?](#)

Tri Cities News: [Port Coquitlam city workers now earn a living wage](#)

Vancouver Sun: [Jan. 23: Poverty amid plenty in B.C. spurs call for action](#)