



COALITION MEETING MINUTES

BC TEACHERS' FEDERATION
550 WEST 6TH AVENUE, VANCOUVER

March 8, 2017

PRESENT:

Audrey Hobbs Johnson,
Canadian Federation of
University Women – BC Council
Barb Ryeburn, BC Teachers'
Federation
Bernard Richard, Office of the
Representative for Children and
Youth
Blair Mitchell, Office of the
Representative for Children and
Youth
Caroline Kent, Comp 3, BC
Government and Service
Employees' Union
Dianne Heath, BC Association of
Social Workers
Dylan Falconer, PLEA
Gyda Chud, First Call/Coalition
of Child Care Advocates of BC
(chair)
Ingrid Kastens, Pacific
Community Resources Society
Joel Kaplan, BC Council for
Families

Lama Mugabo, Carnegie
Community Action Project
Lisa Young, SUCCESS
Mary Johnston, Five Family
Place Partnership/Eastside
Family Place
Mike Clarke, BC Government and
Service Employees' Union
Patricia Grohne, University
Women's Club Vancouver
Rachel Malek, University
Women's Club
Vancouver/Vancouver
Foundation
Sheena Ashdown, Help Foster
Kids Now
Sonia Bhatia, BC Society of
Transition Houses
Stephanie Howell, Society for
Children and Youth of BC
Steve Bailey, BC Retired
Teachers' Association
Sue Irwin, North Shore
Community Resources/Child
Care Resource and Referral

Tara Wolff, Canadian Mental
Health Association – BC
Valery Ross, Canadian Mental
Health Association – BC
Tina Dam, Inclusion BC
Tunde Getaneh, North Shore
Community Resources/Child
Care Resource and Referral
Adrienne Montani, First Call
John Kennedy, First Call
Julie Cheng, First Call
Deanna Ogle, Living Wage for
Families Campaign

CALL-IN:

Fainula Rodriguez, First Call

REGRETS:

Mab Oloman, Coalition of Child
Care Advocates of BC
Pamela Alcorn, Federation of
Community Social Services of BC

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Gyda Chud welcomed everyone and recognized International Women's Day and this year's theme: Be Bold for Change. She acknowledged we are meeting on the unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. A round of introductions was made.

2. FIRST CALL UPDATES

First Call Fundraising Gala

The members extended their gratitude to the First Call team for organizing a well-attended fundraiser. We made \$56,000, the most ever. Thanks to all the coalition members and supporters around the table for attending, donating, buying raffles and bidding on the silent auction. **We couldn't have done it without your participation and contribution.** It was a beautiful tribute to Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond.

putting children and youth first

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Find the [videos](#) of the speeches on YouTube (thanks to the work of BC Teachers' Federation's Leslie Harrington) and the [photos](#) on our Facebook page.

Provincial election toolkit

The first draft of the First Call election toolkit was distributed. It includes input from coalition members. If you have anything to add, please [let Adrienne know](#) in the next few days. We will be sending questions to political parties from the toolkit.

What's new includes raising BC's child benefit to age 18 from the current age six and increasing the benefit amount; providing access to bus passes; questions about reducing violence against women and children; and acknowledging the Supreme Court order to restore funding for teachers.

Other groups who have produced their own provincial election toolkits so far include BC Retired Teachers' Association, Inclusion BC, BC Society of Transition Houses, Federation of Community Social Services, Canadian Mental Health Association BC and BC Association of Social Workers.

Living Wage for Families Campaign update

Deanna Ogle, campaign organizer, reported that they are doing a lot of campaigning around municipalities. There was a unanimous vote for the living wage at the Vancouver Parks Board. All Parks Board procurement now will fall under the City of Vancouver living wage policy. We will continue to raise the issue of living wages at community centres, which are independent associations.

There are now 7 municipalities who have committed to becoming LW employers and we are working with the City of Vancouver to certify. Richmond and Port Moody have requested LW information reports.

Deanna clarified that the City of Vancouver does not certify any city-run agencies that have their own board. These have to certify on their own: PNE, Easy Park, Vancouver Police Department, Vancouver Public Library. VPD and VPL will certify. The PNE is looking at what steps they can take.

For the BC election, we are calling for the provincial government to become a Living Wage Employer. The BC government has substantial contracting for services that are paid below the living wage, for example, support staff at hospitals, kitchen staff and cleaners.

We have created a kit and a website goodjobsbc.ca. Folks who are organizing events or all-candidates meetings can set up a photo booth and share images of people holding the word bubble message about what the living wage means to them or load their photo on our website. There are prizes available for those who set up photo booths at an event.

Poverty Free BC Week of Action (Feb. 25-Mar. 4)

We are part of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition and we want to acknowledge their work during the week of action and the rally. Kudos to the people who put their time and effort into a great week.

Presentations and publications (see end of minutes)

3. BERNARD RICHARD, REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Bernard Richard brings greetings from Fred Milowsky and Dawn Thomas-Wightman, the deputy rep, and introduced his colleague Blair Mitchell, executive director of advocacy and youth engagement. He

enjoyed the First Call gala and our tribute of Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond. He appreciated the opportunity today to meet so many people in the child and youth sector.

Bernard's father has had a tremendous influence on his life. Bernard is a father of four and grandfather of eight. He is Acadian and French is his first language. Acadians make up one third the population of New Brunswick. Some 10% of Acadians are of Mi'kmaq heritage, including Bernard.

He is a lawyer and has been the minister of education in New Brunswick. In 2003 he was appointed ombudsman and added the mandate of child and youth advocate in 2006. He has chaired the Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsmen and the association of the French-speaking ombudsmen. He is a strong supporter of independent oversight of government and has learned from colleagues all over the world.

His many volunteering activities include PLAN Federation, youth mental health initiatives and helping to establish the First Nations Futures Fund in New Brunswick. He has worked with First Nations chiefs in New Brunswick promoting stronger focus on prevention and early intervention to support cultural connections for kids in care and families and employees.

In BC, he has been holding open houses and working hard to meet stakeholders and all the wonderful people who are being bold about making change.

BC is the richest province in Canada but along with that comes with tremendous responsibility to lead the way to social innovation and change and address the issue of poverty. First Call does a great job at calling that out every year and reminding us that there is a lot more work to be done. In New Brunswick all parties in a non-partisan way have committed to a poverty reduction plan. It is striking that BC does not have a poverty reduction plan.

The recent Alex Gervais report talked about the importance of cultural connections. In the Indigenous world there is a great deal of diversity of culture and language. It requires a real focus to do the right thing and connect kids to their culture, particularly in BC where 70% of First Nations kids live off reserve.

Ten years into their mandate they are considering ways to increase the impact of the Office of the RCY. Among their advocacy, monitoring and investigation roles, investigation reports get most of the attention, but the unsung heroes are the staff doing daily advocacy work with families and youth who are in crisis and trying to access services.

The monitoring staff work to ensure RCY report recommendations are implemented. The Standing Committee on Children and Youth will be making recommendations on whether to keep this mandate in the RCY Act. Coalition members and supporters around the table are encouraged to share their views with the Standing Committee if they are concerned about maintaining this monitoring role for the RCY.

Bernard is pleased with the restored funding from the government and a new focus on family support for children in care. The percentage of Indigenous children in care has continued to increase to 62% even though the population is only 9% of BC children.

RCY has three priorities:

1. Reducing the over-representation of Indigenous children in care (see above).

2. Ensuring youth have access to services after they age out of care. Hundreds of the most vulnerable are not accessing any existing services. This was the experience of Alex Gervais and the young woman who died homeless in Surrey. They need wrap-around services.

3. Mental health services for youth – they are investigating the suicide death of a young boy who was trying to access mental health services.

They will be releasing a new report on delegated Aboriginal agencies and the challenges they face due to underfunding.

They are also working on a report on educational outcomes for children and youth in care. We know the gaps are high and greater for Indigenous and special needs children in care.

He is blessed that Mary Ellen has built a strong, dedicated team. They are moving into a new strategic planning process on how they operate and collaborate on initiatives with various ministries, for instance on how to collaborate on tracking recommendations, and reviewing case plans and contracted residential services.

DISCUSSION:

Comment: There is also a big issue with transitions out of care for youth with developmental disabilities to community living (CLBC). Bernard has met with Faith Bodnar of Inclusion BC and she sits on their advisory committee on children with disabilities. They have received a report on the committee's work and want their staff and stakeholders to contribute to revisions on how they can have the greatest impact.

RCY: They get a lot of calls regarding youth in transition from MCFD to CLBC services and increasing their advocacy profile with this community is a priority and three advocates are now assigned to reach out to let people know they are there to help.

In BC, Bernard came across an immigration issue that was not part of his mandate, whereas in New Brunswick it would have been. He is interested in a project to develop indicators in early childhood development indicators related to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Canada was a prime mover in the adoption of the UNCRC in the late 1980s and some of Canada's reports to the UN committee are pitiful.

Comment: Funding for residential care was dismantled in 2003. We need to assess the quality of child welfare contracted services. Bernard has proposed that the auditor general and the Federation of Community Social Services of BC sit on a group working on residential care review.

Comment: The Alex Gervais story is not the norm. There are amazing caregivers working hard in non-profit organizations to provide wrap-around care, saving kids' lives. But frontline ministry social workers are understaffed and have little time to develop relationships with children on their caseloads. If we give the youth support they are going to succeed. One of the biggest issues is youth on wait lists for two years to get mental health assessments.

Comment: Social workers are also being traumatized by systemic underfunding and not being able to help children and families.

Bernard sees strengths in BC that will allow him to address his priorities:

- Strong leadership and advocacy voices in the non-profit sector and among First Nations leadership for vulnerable children and youth.
- Government finances are currently in surplus and this presents an opportunity to fund solutions. It's a window that may not always be present. Investment and social workers having the time are required.

RCY was urged to do research into the gap between policy and actual practice, e.g. between care plans on file and the failure to act upon them.

Comment: The performance measures in the MCFD service plan have important omissions and some have underwhelming targets to achieve. However, making sure children are connected to their culture and planning for permanency are required under legislation.

Ignite Your Spirit event – RCY and McCreary Centre Society are hearing from 25 youth in care or just out of care. Blair is in charge of youth engagement with a particular focus on Indigenous children in care.

We were very happy to have Bernard Richard come to the coalition meeting and Adrienne invited him to attend annually.

4. BC BUDGET IMPACTS AND INFORMATION

First Call's [response to the BC Budget](#) will be published on CCPA's [Policy Note blog](#) and we will put this on the agenda for the April coalition meeting.

5. B4STAGE4 CAMPAIGN, CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION, BC DIVISION

Tara Wolff and Valery Ross described a successful November 2016 conference called b4stage4 hosted by CMHA-BC. Out of the conference came their [manifesto](#) and campaign.

B4stage4.ca is a campaign to Get Loud. Take Action.

Campaign goals:

Immediately the campaign wants to engage 1% of British Columbians in the five-point [manifesto](#). That's about 40,000 people. CMHA-BC wants people to think about their recommendations and what they want the plan to look like. The focus is on prevention and early intervention and the rest of the points follow from that.

Some 50% of people will develop one mental health condition in their lifetime. Half of those will get it before age 14. One in eight children are diagnosed with a mental health condition but 70% don't get the help they need. What we're really doing is not supporting our future population.

They launched their new website this week, which includes the petition and a short video, and there are other ways to take action at B4stage4.ca. They have almost 2,500 signed petitions right now.

How organizations can help:

Raise your hand and say, "I want to be a champion for mental health."

Organizations are encouraged to endorse the [manifesto](#). Endorsers' logos will be featured on the website and they receive communication tools to spread the message.

Organizations are also encouraged to attend or lead community events, reach out to elected officials and share personal stories.

Go to b4stage4.ca for more ways to take action and toolkits.

There was consensus around the table for First Call to endorse the manifesto.

6. MEMBER UPDATES

Canadian Mental Health Association BC was positively impacted by the provincial budget increase to child and youth mental health service funding. CMHA-BC has a telephone-based program providing coaching services to caregivers who see their children 3-12 years demonstrating mental health challenges. The budget for this program has doubled. Look for a link for the job posting for 10-12 new coaches to serve more families and reduce the six-month wait time.

BC Teachers' Federation - This week teachers will be voting to ratify the restoration of funds as ordered by the Supreme Court of Canada. By September 2017 there will be 2002 levels of teacher funding and restored contract language regarding class sizes.

They've developed four new infographics from their poverty research. Please take some postcards about funding BC public schools, fill them in and send.

Carnegie Community Action Project is researching the correlation between homelessness and mental health.

Five Family Place Partnership has written a letter celebrating International Women's Day, March 8. It's found on their website and on Facebook (West Side Family Place).

BC Government and Service Employees' Union Component 3 will report to their executive meeting on all the campaigns and initiatives across the province we've discussed at this coalition meeting. They have just kicked off their [child care campaign](#). They will reach out to BCGEU members to support the \$10aDay plan.

University Women's Club Vancouver - Their [Study Circles](#) project has been completed and a link to the reports will be found on the Canadian Federation of University Women BC Council website. *On Your Own, In Your Community and Across the Province* is a new brochure that gives ideas for action to support youth aging out of care.

BC Society of Transition Houses has produced a BC election toolkit that includes template letters and good stats on violence against children and women. This is a useful resource at election time. Find it at bcsth.ca

Society for Children and Youth of BC is hiring an office manager. Look for job posting out this week on social media and the website. They have a new Early Childhood Education booklet for practitioners that focuses on early care for Aboriginal children now downloadable at scyofbc.org under Child and Youth Friendly Community Resources.

BC Council for Families has an end-of-year sale of resources ending March 31. They have several trainings for staff through the end of the summer available on their [website](#). Their infographics on BC family demographics for the 29 districts have received a good response for downloads. The infographics are related to family size, family type and challenges faced in individual districts. The statistics are useful for planning.

They're translating up to 15 resources to Arabic and Farsi through their United Way cultural grant. They are looking for Arabic and Farsi readers to review for literacy level.

BCCF has a job opening for a part-time contract for the My Tween and Me program. BCCF has moved to 1859 West Broadway.

Metro Vancouver Alliance is holding an all-candidates [Provincial Election Accountability Assembly](#) on April 4 at the Italian Cultural Centre. Attendees must be a member of an MVA organization. They ask candidates specific questions related to housing, transit, poverty and health care.

Inclusion BC and the Family Support Institute are putting on a [public forum](#) March 16 at the Croatian Cultural Centre about inclusive education in public schools.

BC Association of Social Workers – March 12-18 is Social Worker Week. It's a great time to recognize the work that social workers do.

BC Retired Teachers' Association's election toolkit has been printed and will be brought to next month's coalition meeting. BCRTA has donated \$22,000 in grants through their charitable foundation.

First Call – There is a forum on public education funding tonight hosted by the Institute for Public Education at the downtown Simon Fraser University campus, with a panel of experts. .

8. NEXT MEETING

The next coalition meeting will take place Wednesday, April 12, 2017, 9:15–11:30 am. Refreshments are served at 9 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 if you wish to participate by phone.

FIRST CALL OUT AND ABOUT

Community Presentations February–March 2017

Health Sciences Association: First Call advocacy campaigns

HiVE: Promoting Living Wage Employers

Amalgamated Bank: Living Wage campaign and Poverty Reduction Coalition

Webinar on living wage communities across Alberta

CLC – Winter School: Living wage presentation to labour council executive

City of Richmond – City Hall: Living wage and poverty reduction presentation to planning committee

Federation of Post-Secondary Educators: Post-secondary education telephone town hall

Media Hits

CBC News: [Poverty hard on B.C. students and teachers, educator says](#)

Maytree: [Securing fair employment and income: Where Living Wage and the Fight for \\$15 and Fairness intersect](#)

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

Vancouver Metro News: [Making a 'stink': B.C. welfare rates have 'bean' too low, say fundraiser protest planners](#)

Vancouver Sun: [Opinion: Time to make investing in B.C. families our top priority](#)

Huffington Post: [Poverty Violates Human Rights. Canada Must Do More to Defeat It](#)

Tyee: [BC Best Province for Low Taxes? Uh, Not for Poor Families](#)

CBC On the Coast: Live broadcast – Adrienne Montani provincial budget commentary

Northern Sentinel: [Northern Health looks to address poverty](#)

Vancouver Courier: [Fred UnLEEdshed: Feb. 27, 2017: Fred Lee celebrates with women entrepreneurs, First Call B.C. and Best of the City](#)

Tyee: [Raw Logs and Lost Jobs: How the BC Government Has Sacrificed Forest Communities](#)

FCSSBC: [Life in BC Snapshot: 2017, Poverty & Inequality](#)

CCCABC: [\\$10 a Day Child Care: A Key to Ending Family Poverty](#)

Vancouver Courier: [Mayor blames province for 'war on the poor'](#)