



COALITION MEETING MINUTES

BC TEACHERS' FEDERATION
550 W. 6TH AVE, VANCOUVER

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2020 9:15 TO 11:30 AM

PRESENT:

Derek DeBasio, Foster Parent
Etti Goldman, Center for Israel & Jewish Affairs
Jim Staton, Family Services of Greater Vancouver
Joseph Dunn, BC Council for Families
Katarina Jovanovic, Vancouver Community College
Katherine McParland, A Way Home Kamloops
Lisa Meneian, Deaf Children's Society of BC

Marlene Adam, University Women's Club of Vancouver
Maseeh Dhir, MOSAIC
Meagan Sutton, Social Venture Partners
Mike Lally, DIVERSEcity
Samantha Gambling, Coalition for Healthy School Food
Sarah Rush, Society for Children and Youth
Adrienne Montani, First Call
Becky Kelly, First Call
Emily Chan, First Call
Helesia Luke, First Call
Leila Trickey, Living Wage for Families

Susan Russell, First Call, Fostering Change

CALL-IN:

Calum Scott, Pacific Community Resources Society
Jaime Matten, Health Sciences Association of BC

REGRETS:

Caroline Kent, BC Government and Service Employees' Union Comp 3
Gisele Haines, Child Care Options Resource & Referral
Nicky Bowman, BC Society of Transition Houses

1. WELCOME, RECOGNITION OF INDIGENOUS LANDS, INTRODUCTIONS, AGENDA

Cheryl Mixon, chairing, acknowledged we are meeting on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh and Squamish Nations, followed by a round of introductions.

2. FIRST CALL UPDATES/ CALLS TO ACTION

First Call Fundraising Gala

We want to thank everyone who volunteered, donated, and supported the 2020 First Call Fundraising Gala. It was a successful evening for fundraising for the coalition and a great opportunity for people to connect and hear how fracking and the climate crisis affect BC children and youth. Check out [photos here](#) and [videos here](#) in case you missed the event and are interested in watching the speeches from the evening.

Cheryl thanked Emily and Becky for their work organizing the gala. She also noted that this is Emily's last meeting and thanked her for all her work with First Call.

Fostering Change Campaign- Youth Services Meeting Report

There has been some good media coverage recently. The [CTV W5 interview](#) last weekend showcased the Fostering Change campaign and Alex Gervais' harrowing story. This week, the Tyee released an article, "[The NDP Promised Big Changes for Child Protection. Did They Deliver?](#)" by Katie Hyslop. Upcoming, we have a Fostering Change Community Organizers meeting later this month, and on April 20, our first of six workshops that will focus on advocacy literacy and our campaign timeline. We also released a calendar of core events that announced important dates including May 22nd Listening Event, July 24th 19th Birthday Party Event, and a date TBC in October for our 4th Annual Policy Solutions Day.

putting children and youth first

Living Wage for Families Campaign

We are currently in the process of hiring for the new Living Wage for Families Campaign Organizer. Thank you to Becky Kelly and Living Wage Advisory Committee members for their work in keeping the campaign running over the past month.

Leila Trickey, Research Coordinator: As a reminder, I am working on [Making Ends Meet](#), a research project on precarious work. We hosted the project launch event last Saturday and it was a good turnout, given the COVID-19 situation. A lot of people are interested in participating in the research. We also hired a graphic recorder for the event who made a beautiful graphic for our event that we are excited to share. There are project books available for you on the back table, or email leila@livingwageforfamilies.ca for more information.

First Call and Society for Children and Youth's Child Rights Review Roundtable – Report

Margie Sanderson of Society for Children and Youth (SCY) reported on the February 12th Child Rights Review Roundtable co-hosted with First Call, which brought together 25 different organizations. Ten different authors each took on writing different sections for the report. The report is now submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and is on the [SCY website](#).

Campaign 2000 Conference in Toronto

In the first week of March, Campaign 2000 hosted their first face-to-face meeting of the national steering committee since 2014 in Toronto. There was also a 2-day conference with community partners. Adrienne attended and reported that there were some good strategic discussions and powerful presentations, including one from a new member of the Campaign 2000 Steering Committee who lives in a small Inuit village in the Northwest Territories.

City of Vancouver Motion in Support of School Food

This week, First Call [sent a letter](#) to the City of Vancouver in favour of the [motion](#), "Taking Steps Toward a National Cost-Shared Universal Healthy School Food Program." Learn more at the [Coalition for Healthy School Food – BC Chapter](#) website. The City of Vancouver is voting on this motion tonight.

The Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman Meeting

In the beginning of March, First Call staff met with Canada's [Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman](#), along with two of our partner organizations. The Office sent a warning to the Canada Revenue Agency and is now beginning an investigation to understand why some families are not receiving the Canada Child Benefit (CCB). One thing we are hearing is that the CCB requires proof of residence, and many families are living in illegal suites that aren't documented. Missing out on this benefit is pushing families into precarious work conditions and homelessness. Families that don't file tax returns are not receiving the benefit.

Meeting participants commented that they are seeing scenarios in their organizations where families are denied the benefits because of administrative errors or unfair requirements.

3. KATHERINE MCPARLAND, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, A WAY HOME KAMLOOPS SOCIETY

Katherine McParland presented her report, [From Marginalized to Magnified, Youth Homelessness Solutions From Those With Lived Expertise](#). Her goal is to eradicate youth homelessness in BC. She originally founded [A Way Home Kamloops](#) which brought youth together with community organizations and the City of Kamloops to create this charitable organization dedicated to eradicating youth homelessness in Kamloops. [A Way Home](#) is now a national organization, building on the Kamloops model.

In 2016, A Way Home Kamloops organized Canada's first youth-specific homelessness count. They collaborated with the School District to survey all grade 10 students, among other more youth-friendly methods.

Katherine met with Bernard Richard, the past Representative for Children and Youth (RCY), and he offered her the opportunity to complete her Master's Degree at the RCY to write a youth-led homelessness report. This report involved 40 organizations and 16 youth leaders who created forums and consultations to engage youth across BC.

She explained that there are five pathways to youth homelessness: Unsafe family home experiences, unsafe & non-responsive foster system, substance use & mental health, affordability crisis & lack of affordable housing, and discrimination & stigma. Katherine elaborated that these pathways are interconnected. Some examples shared were: Indigenous youth experiencing intergenerational homelessness; youth moving into substance abuse after being homeless; and discrimination in finding housing because a youth was previously in care.

Homeless youth may experience many impacts on their well-being, including physical health risks, mental health risk, education/employment challenges, unsafe housing situations, vulnerability for exploitation, increased substance use for coping, and increased risk of death.

Barriers to accessing housing can include gaps in emergency supports (i.e. youth shelters), shortage of youth-specific housing options, waitlists, and discrimination. Shelters are paternalistic, and there is no provincial or federal youth homelessness funding stream. The screening assessments to receive supports through agencies like BC Housing can be problematic and painful to navigate.

Youth experience a multitude of barriers when they try to access supports. These include waitlists for services, inflexible/restrictive eligibility requirements, lack of information about programs, lack of identification, lack of transportation, lack of wraparound holistic services, and barriers to cultural services. Youth are moving municipalities and then being put at the bottom of waitlists, faced with transit fines, and are missing a clear definition of what age constitutes "youth."

The report has just one recommendation: that the provincial government develop a plan to end youth homelessness in B.C. This plan should be developed and begun implementation by January 2021.

Housing is a key need for youth. This could look like creating a youth-specific homelessness funding stream, rental subsidies to bridge the affordability gap, or shelters specifically for LGBTQ2S+ youth. Youth mentorship models and transition housing need to be flexible to meet youth where they're at. Katherine shared a scattered site housing program through A Way Home that provides a wrap-around housing continuum.

Katherine is currently in the process of hiring 8 youth advisors to develop a youth-led homelessness conference that will bring together 30 youth, 30 government staff and elected officials, and 30 community partners.

Katherine's presentation slides will be posted to the First Call website.

Question: I have a question about coordinated access. The original model in Calgary was community-based, but the organization grew so much that they're now the primary funder and also trying to coordinate coordinated access. What if the Ministry or large funders controls housing in BC and then you lose the ability to support youth? How can we mitigate this and make coordinated access work for youth aging out of care?

Answer: I believe in community-based coordinated access. In Kamloops we have 2 tables, one adult and one youth, and are able to focus on housing the most vulnerable people, as well as preventing youth.

Question: Did you hear about mental/vision/hearing loss and other special support needs as a major barrier?

Answer: Yes, when discussing physical and mental health a lot of young people talked about not being able to access the services.

Q: What about different definitions of age ranges. Is there work being done to help define one age range of 'youth'?

A: That's provincial government's jurisdiction. Some local youth organizations have increased youth age support, such as the Boys and Girls Club. My suggestion is to move the age of adulthood up to 30.

4. BC BUDGET 2020 DISCUSSION

Adrienne Montani, Provincial Coordinator, presented on the BC Budget 2020. (slides will be posted on the website) Both Adrienne and Helesia Luke, Communications and Development Coordinator, attended the budget lock-up in Victoria.

One graph (slide 2) that compared the 2019/2020 budget with the 2020/2023 3-year estimate for Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) funding. The largest increase was 14% in Early Childhood Development and Child Care Services between 2019/20 and 2020/21.

Focusing on MCFD goals, including consistency with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, improved outcomes to support families, strategies for a universal early care and learning system, youth transitions support, and needs-based foster care placements. Generally, we are glad to see that the government is being transparent in tracking goals, although many goals have modest aspirations for improvement.

Comment: We are hearing that youth are approaching MCFD and are given minimal supports, but then keep going back to ask for more support. There needs to be wraparound supports to ensure youth who have aged out of care are receiving their Agreement with Youth Adult funding instead of income assistance.

Comment: The Deaf Children's Society of BC's funding for preschool is being cut. The number of children accessing our services has doubled, yet we have received the same amount of funding for 10 years. The Government has not cut their funding for individualized and school supports for older deaf children.

In the Ministry of Education, there are goals that focus on students becoming educated citizens and supporting healthy learning environments. Again, many of the targets are flat. We were interested to see that private school funding has increased more than public school funding (by approximately 2%). Measurements for high school completion rates now include children and youth in and from care.

In the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, there is a goal of creating a seamless, accessible, and culturally-safe mental health and addictions system of care. The Ministry is looking to expand the [Foundry](#) program and provide more multi-service wrap-around supports in schools around mental health and wellness. The Ministry announced small increases in funding, but most of the changes to procedures, etc. were announced before the budget was released.

Question: Do we know where the new Foundry locations will be assigned?

Answer from participant: The decision on the six new locations will be decided next week. I know that organizations in Surrey and Langley are lobbying to get a Foundry location.

Comment: We need to redo the Child and Youth with Special Needs Framework, but we know that the framework will see a \$0 investment. Therefore, we know that there won't be an increase of funds in this area for 2 years.

First Call: In June, the BC Finance Committee will start to accept feedback for the 2021 budget. First Call will create a document with robust recommendations so that other organizations can include our feedback in your submissions. We will bring these recommendations to the May Coalition Meeting.

5. MEMBER UPDATES AND ISSUES FOR FUTURE COALITION MEETING AGENDAS

The Society for Children and Youth (SCY) are hosting a consultation on Monday March 16 for young people aged 12-18 regarding the voting age. They are collaborating on a potential court challenge. They have \$25 honourarium available for youth who attend.

SCY also has two free legal clinics every week, please pass on the opportunity to your networks. Our clinics service ages 9-19. Our lawyers are based in Vancouver but can support anyone across BC.

The **Deaf Children's Society of British Columbia** is struggling, as their preschools are no longer receiving funding. Lisa explains that they had to update their license as group child care. But seeing how they are licensed

as child care, parents who can't work can't access the Affordable Child Care Benefit because the Ministry thinks they don't need child care.

BC Council for Families are training professionals who are supporting families, and continuing to offer diverse trainings around home visiting, supporting relationships, etc.

6. MEETING ADJOURNED

Time and date of next meeting

The next coalition meeting will take place Wednesday, April 8, 2020, 9:15–11:30 am. Refreshments are served at 9:00 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.