



## Briefing Note

### **SUBJECT/ISSUE:**

The BFI Ontario executive members would like to address the recent media releases regarding the death of Florence Leung, and the perception that the Baby-Friendly Initiative pressures mothers to breastfeed.

### **BACKGROUND:**

From recent media coverage, we know that Florence Leung was a mother of a young son and also struggling with postpartum depression. Florence Leung went missing in late October and her body was recovered by police on November 16, 2016 in the waters near Bowen Island, B. C. No evidence of foul play was suspected.

Florence's husband, Dr. Kim Chen, posted messages on Facebook regarding the pressures to exclusively breastfeed and how mothers can feel guilty and perceive themselves as a "bad mother" when they feed infant formula.

On January 25, 2017, the CBC program, "The Current" aired a podcast about Florence Leung, titled "Breastfeeding 'lactivists' may be doing more harm than good, says author". The podcast and story can be found at the following link: <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-january-25-2017-1.3950080/breastfeeding-lactivists-may-be-doing-more-harm-than-good-says-author-1.3950089>

### **COMMENTS:**

BFI Ontario wishes to express our sincere condolences to the family and friends of Florence Leung.

The Breastfeeding Committee for Canada (BCC) is aware of this tragic situation and the associated media coverage regarding Florence Leung, and are prepared to provide a statement if requested. BFI Ontario will provide notice to the membership if the BCC makes a public statement.

The British Columbia Lactation Consultant Association has issued a news release that articulates the key messages and addresses concerns around shaming and pressuring mothers to breastfeed, and their commitment to "support access to services that are tailored to the unique needs of each mother-baby pair". This news release will be posted on the BFI Ontario website.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

BFI designated organizations and organizations pursuing BFI designation can be confident that the Baby-Friendly Initiative supports all mothers, regardless of their infant feeding decision.

Submitted by:

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