



National  
Children's  
Alliance

Alliance  
nationale pour  
les enfants

# Bulletin #2 : Winter

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December 2001

## Challenges for a National Children's Agenda

It is a time of change and opportunity for the development of public policy to meet the needs of children, youth and their families. Despite the 1998 Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA) to "reform and review Canada's systems of social services and to reassure Canadians that their pan-Canadian social programs are strong and secure", the networks of health and social services at the community level are fragile and insecure. The National Children's Agenda (NCA) agreement signed in May 1999 and the Early Childhood Development (ECD) agreement signed in September 2000, hold promise for a strengthening of community supports for children, youth and their families.

Governments in Canada have clearly indicated their collective commitment to improving policy and programs for children and youth through the NCA and ECD agreements. In the Fall of 2000 the federal government pledged 2.2

billion dollars over five years for four areas of priority in early child development programs: to promote healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy; improve parenting and family supports; strengthen early childhood development, learning and care; and strengthen community supports. The federal funding begins in April 2001 with the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) as the funding mechanism.

These agreements have critical implications for the delivery of services at the community level. The CHST is essentially a block funding mechanism for the transfer of federal resources to provincial/territorial jurisdictions in health, education and social services.

The use of the CHST as the funding mechanism for the ECD escalates the importance of the inter-governmental accountability regimes. It is only through the annual reporting from established baselines that governments can be held to account to ensure ECD funds are actually spent in the four areas of priority

identified in the agreement.

Within the ECD agreement First Ministers acknowledged the need for accountability through public reporting with their commitment to:

- Annual reports beginning in 2002 on investments and progress from an established baseline of expenditures and activities;
- A shared framework of agreed upon comparable indicators for the expenditures and activities; and regular reporting on child well-being using agreed upon common outcome indicators;
- Regular reporting on child well-being using agreed upon common outcome indicators.

One would hope to be able to expect to find a familiar basket of services to meet family needs within all communities in Canada. The ECD agreement holds provincial/territorial governments to spending in any or all of the four priority areas – it is a menu of services rather than a basket. For the development of social

**What questions should we ask of our politicians on the monitoring of the ECD?**

- ❖ **What baselines are you using for services and programs?**
- ❖ **Would you consider working with other governments to standardize the baselines so that they will be more understandable and consistent across Canada?**
- ❖ **Are you planning on additional investments at the provincial/territorial level to move closer to a “basket” rather than a “menu” of services at the community level?**
- ❖ **How can we work with you to develop indicators for children’s health and well-being that help us better deliver services and programs?**
- ❖ **What sustainable mechanisms would you consider so that we can work with no monitor “how well we’re doing for our children”?**
- ❖ **Are you putting in new resources for research and data collection?**

programs that are indeed accessible we need to encourage governments to invest in all four areas of the ECD.

Before the end of the calendar year, federal, provincial and territorial governments are committed to publishing baseline reports. The intent of the baselines is to identify current spending on all ECD programs and services for 2000/2001 prior to the new federal dollars entering the system via the CHST. It is critical that baselines are clearly articulated and easily understood so that communities and organizations can track funding by jurisdiction. There will be challenges in defining the boundaries of ECD. When governments make public their baselines we cannot expect to see any consistency in reporting across jurisdictions. This will make it difficult to hold governments to account concerning their ECE program funding and to make comparisons across jurisdictions.

Current knowledge of research on effective programming and best-practice in service delivery provides some tools for a systemic approach to assessing services and programs for “reasonable comparability”. Public dialogue on what works at the community level is needed to scope out what Canadians believe should be the core of public services.

The art and science of program evaluation can help us with short term

measures of effectiveness linked to client outcomes, but, we are still a long way from developing indicators that can link attribution for macro level outcomes to the mix of community services.

It is, however, absolutely critical that we track child outcomes at the community level as an important public policy tool. The ECD agreement and its commitment to child outcome indicators is an opportunity to continue the research and data collection that has begun. From the perspective of the voluntary sector, recognition that this work is in its infancy provides us with an opportunity to engage with governments in an ongoing process of development. It is time to push the debate beyond our collective reliance on crude negative outcome indicators towards an asset based approach.

Within these recent government agreements there are common themes of transparency and process. In the area of reporting to the public, the ECD agreement will set the standard for the future. As the levers for social policy at the federal level keep shrinking, the importance of public reporting cannot be overstated. As leaders and organizations in the voluntary sector, we have a role to play in gaining access to the decision-making processes.

As the third party in monitoring, we need to ensure that the indicators used are seen as “works in progress” that can be updated to respond to

new research and emerging issues. It is time for us to be at the table.

The implications of the ECD agreement extend well beyond services for early childhood. Next year SUFA will be reviewed and the ECD agreement is the major inter-governmental initiative under SUFA. Federal spending power and cost-sharing have been replaced by indicators and monitoring as the levers for national policy. If we hope to see sustainable national infrastructure for health and social services across jurisdictions now is the time to bolster the policy research capacity of the voluntary sector.

One of the strengths of the National Children’s Alliance is its capacity to mobilize diverse communities for dialogue, policy development and action on issues impacting on children, youth and their families. The monitoring of the ECD agreement will enhance our collective policy development capacity and expertise in order to participate proactively with governments. Monitoring the health and well-being of Canada’s children cannot be done effectively without the voluntary sector taking a leadership role. The Alliance is planning to make a contribution to the dialogue and knowledge base about monitoring how our children are doing and how are governments are doing to support them to reach their full potential.

## The Early Childhood Development Accord Update

The Early Childhood Development (ECD) recognizes the importance of the early years and the valuable role families and communities play in supporting children. Governments (with the exception of Québec) will report on baseline data outlining their disbursements of their allotted 2001-2001 ECD funding allocations. The provinces and territories report annually thereafter on the result of their investments. The total ECD funding allocation for 2001-2002 is \$300 million. While Québec is not obligated to report on spending, the province's child care and expanded junior kindergarten programs show leadership in providing services for children.

One challenge for third party monitoring of baseline reports is that the provinces use different reporting methods of spending allocations. But this process is important as the federal government is not likely to make further investment in the ECD until a process of financial accountability is in place.

The Alliance will be taking leadership in providing information about the monitoring process as baseline reports are issued. In September, 2001 representatives from each of the provinces and territories (with the exception of Québec) were

contacted to provide updates on status/stage of development of networks, ECD announcements/allocations and activities, and to provide feedback on next steps regarding network development for the Alliance.

The following provides a brief overview of issues emerging from discussions with representatives regarding the status of networks.

At this point in time, Manitoba and B.C. are the only provinces where Alliance structures have been developed. Ontario (ECDI Working Group) and the Northwest Territories (The Social Planning Coalition) have existing coalitions and/or committees that do serve as a mechanism for both information sharing and joint advocacy/activities. There are challenges even in the jurisdictions where groups have some means of collaborative action. For example, the B.C. and Ontario groups tend to have a very specific ECD focus, while the NWT Social Planning Coalition has a very broad focus on the full range of social issues. (The NWT Coalition is, however, intending to work on a strategic plan on children's issues). However, many provinces and territories lack any venue for broad-based discussion or action. In order for provincial/territorial

children's networks throughout Canada to become a reality and to function effectively, the National Children's Alliance will need to take a hands-on role in supporting the development of the networks.

While it is not surprising that little networking occurred over the summer months, it is of greater concern that, with a few exceptions (noted above), there has been limited progress in terms of sustainable network development since the March 2000 meeting. It is clear that while there is great interest in the potential of networks, many are struggling to find the time and resources to actually make the networks happen. Practical resources, such as the Alliance serving in a secretariat capacity, are necessary to aid in network development.

Many of the individual representatives work with a provincial/territorial organization of some kind, and while most are well networked within their particular sector, many are not connected to a broad range of organizations (e.g. health, education, child care, family/community support, special needs, recreation, poverty and social issues organizations). A small core group of individuals from a broad range of

organizations working together would greatly enhance the potential for successful, sustained networking.

Further information, training and discussion has to happen to encourage organizations and individuals to move to both a broader view and to embrace the opportunities that exist to move from a reactive to a proactive engagement around policy.

As we work towards monitoring and participating in the public policy process working with the provincial and territorial networks is critical. If you are interested in being a point of contact for your jurisdiction, please contact Dianne Bascombe at ([dbascombe@nvo-onb.ca](mailto:dbascombe@nvo-onb.ca)) or 238-1591 ext. 250, or the individuals listed below who have agreed to be contact persons in the provinces and territories. We have also provided a list of provincial/territorial government contact persons for more information on the ECD agreement and upcoming baseline reports.

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## Summarizes Announcements made by Provincial and Territorial Governments

The following summarizes announcements made by provincial and territorial governments over the past year concerning the allocation of Early Childhood Development initiative funds for the current fiscal year. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of this information, we encourage readers to check with government sources to ensure that their knowledge is current.

<b>Newfoundland</b>	
<b>2001-2002 fiscal year allocation</b>	<b>\$5,200,000</b>
Allocations:	
Regulated Child Care: subsidies	1,000,000
Regulated Child Care : educational supplements	790,000
Regulated Child Care: equipment	20,000
Regulated Child Care: ECE personnel	400,000
Family Resources Programs	845,000
Healthy Baby Clubs	325,000
Early Intervention Services	957,000
Early Childhood Literacy	356,831
Mother Baby Nutrition Benefit	210,000
Administration of ECD	286,586
<b>Nova Scotia</b>	
<b>2001-2002 fiscal year allocation</b>	<b>\$9,100,000</b>
Allocations:	
Regulated Child Care	6,000,000
Family Support Programs	1,600,000
Healthy Start Home Visiting Program	1,500,000

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**New Brunswick**  
**2001-2002 fiscal year allocation** **\$7,300,000**

Allocations:

Regulated Child Care	3,000,000
Child Witness of Family Violence Program	400,000
Community Capacity Building for Children & Families	225,000
Early Language for Preschoolers Program	450,000
Enhancements to the Early Childhood Initiatives (ECE)	1,400,000
Excellence in Parenting	25,000
Prenatal Benefit Program	1,800,000

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**Prince Edward Island**  
**2001-2002 fiscal year allocation** **\$1,200,000**

Allocations:

Early Intervention	710,000
Healthy Child Development Strategy	110,000
Kindergarten programs	500,000

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**Manitoba**  
**2001-2002 fiscal year allocation** **\$11,100,000**

Allocations:

Regulated Child Care	4,700,000
Baby First Program	1,100,000
Parent-Child Centred Activities	1,000,000
Early Start	94,000
Healthy Baby – Manitoba	4,100,000

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**Saskatchewan**  
**2001-2002 fiscal year allocation** **\$10,000,000**

Allocations:

Regulated Child Care staff wage enhancements	519,000
Direct operating grants for child care centres	350,000
Family child care equipment and programming grants	65,000
Training and supports	85,000
Early Childhood Intervention	370,000

Pre-kindergarten Enhancements	200,000
Infant Mortality Initiative	100,000
Kids First Program	8,400,000
Home visiting	4,500,000
Program development & supports	500,000
Early learning	1,400,000
Child care (spaces)	1,500,000
Early childhood community developers (10 positions)	500,000

**Alberta****2001-2002 fiscal year allocation****\$29,700,000**

No details available at this time.

**Ontario****2001-2002 fiscal year allocation****114,100,000**

## Allocations:

Early Years Challenge	15,400,000
Services for Children	20,000,000
Infant Development	3,400,000
Children's Mental Health	6,900,000
Learning, Earning and Parenting	1,000,000
Early Years Capital	6,500,000
Pregnant Women with Addictions	2,500,000
Infant Hearing	600,000
Fetal Alcohol Syndrome	1,400,000
Prenatal HIV testing	414,000
Sexual Assault Services	1,440,000
Nutrition Program	1,000,000
Community Health Centres	2,700,000
Injury and Family Abuse Prevention	4,000,000
Program Assessment Measurement	2,000,000
Child Outcome Measurement	500,000
Expansion of Early Literacy Agenda	5,000,000
Healthy Babies, Healthy Children	3,550,000
Prenatal and Postnatal	250,000
Early Childhood Resource Centre	500,000
Healthy Pregnancy & Child Development Promotion	2,300,000

Support for at Risk Women	70,000
Funding for Public Education and Awareness	175,000
Prevention of Neural Tube Defects	135,000
Breast Feeding	150,000
Electronic Record for Prenatal and Postnatal Health	135,000
Prenatal and Child Health Survey	2,000,000
Early Years Centres	30,000,000

**British Columbia**

**2001-2002 fiscal year allocation**

**\$39,700,000**

Allocations:

The provincial government is in the process of reviewing what dollars are available for expenditure in this fiscal year; the viability of planned allocations announced by the previous government; and, priorities for spending.

**Nunavut**

**2001-2002 fiscal year allocation**

**\$ 300,000**

Allocations:

No details available at this time.

**Northwest Territories**

**2001-2002 fiscal year allocation**

**\$ 400,000**

The Government of NWT has committed an additional \$2 million per year in each of the first three fiscal years of the ECD Agreement

Allocations:

While specific dollar allocations have not yet been determined, the following initiatives are priorities for spending: Nipissing Screen Tool; Home Visitation Program; Child and Family Resources Centres Northern Parenting and Literacy Program Family Literacy.



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**Québec****2001-2002 fiscal year allocation****\$71,600,000**

Allocations:

Québec has not signed the Early Childhood Development Accord and thus has not allocated the funds to specific projects. Nevertheless, the province has made major investments in early childhood programs and services.

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**Yukon Territories****2001-2002 fiscal year allocation****\$ 300,000**

Allocations:

No details available at this time.

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