



National  
Children's  
Alliance

Alliance  
nationale pour  
les enfants

# National Roundtable: "Developing a Public Policy Agenda for Children Ages 6 to 12."

June 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, 2002  
Grimsby, Ontario



# Proceedings

## Table of Contents

<u>THURSDAY JUNE 20 2002</u> .....	4
<u>A. BACKGROUND</u> .....	4
<u>B. WELCOMING COMMENTS</u> .....	4
<u>C. THE CONTEXT OF CHILDREN IN THEIR MIDDLE YEARS</u> .....	5
<u>D. ROUNDTABLE SPEAKERS &amp; PANEL</u> .....	5
<u>D.1. A RESEARCH OVERVIEW OF MIDDLE CHILDHOOD: BUILDING ON THE EARLY YEARS, PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY LOUISE HANVEY, HANVEY CONSULTING.</u> .....	5
<u>D.2. DEVELOPING POLICY OPTIONS FOR CHILDREN OF MIDDLE YEARS, PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY MARCEL LAUZIÈRE, CANADIAN COUNCIL ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.</u> .....	7
<u>D.3. IMPACTS/INDICATORS OF HEALTH AND WELL-BEING, PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY DAWN WALKER, CANADIAN INSTITUTE OF CHILD HEALTH.</u> .....	10
<u>D.4 QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS TO THE PANEL OF SPEAKERS</u> .....	12
<u>E. "MAKING THE CASE": COMPELLING REASONS WHY ISSUES AFFECTING CHILDREN AGES 6 TO 12 ARE A POLICY PRIORITY. – SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS</u> .....	13
<u>F. "SEWING THE SEAMS:' RESEARCH ON EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS IN THE DELIVERY OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES," PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY DR. GINA BROWNE, McMASTER UNIVERSITY</u> .....	15
<u>G. FIELD TRIPS TO EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS</u> .....	19
<u>G.1. BEASLEY AREA KIDS CLUB</u> .....	19
<u>G.2. VIRTUAL YMCA SITE AT ROBERT LAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</u> .....	20
<u>G.3. HAMILTON EAST KIWANIS BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB</u> .....	21
<u>FRIDAY JUNE 21 2002</u> .....	22
<u>H. ROUNDTABLE SPEAKERS &amp; PANEL</u> .....	22
<u>H1. CHILDREN'S ISSUES AND SOCIAL POLICY: OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS TO CREATING GOOD PUBLIC POLICY FOR CHILDREN, PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY TORONTO CITY COUNCILLOR OLIVIA CHOW</u> .....	22
<u>H2. CHALLENGES IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM, PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY HARVEY WEINER, CANADIAN TEACHERS' FEDERATION</u> .....	25

<u>H3. INNOVATIVE MENTORING PROGRAMMING WITH PUBLIC/PRIVATE/VOLUNTARY SECTOR INVOLVEMENT, PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY MICHAEL MCKNIGHT, BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF CANADA</u> .....	30
<u>I. IDENTIFYING POLICY OPTIONS – PLENARY DISCUSSION</u> .....	33
<u>J. CLOSING REMARKS</u> .....	36

**APPENDICES**

APPENDIX A: LIST OF ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS

APPENDIX B: "MIDDLE CHILDHOOD: BUILDING ON THE EARLY YEARS," PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY LOUISE HANVEY, POWERPOINT SLIDES

APPENDIX C: INDICATORS OF HEALTH AND WELL-BEING, PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY DAWN WALKER, OVERHEAD TRANSPARENCIES

APPENDIX D: "'SEWING THE SEAMS:' RESEARCH ON EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS IN THE DELIVERY OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES," PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY DR. GINA BROWNE, POWERPOINT SLIDES

APPENDIX E: GROW PROGRAM PRESENTATION, PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY PENNY ROSS, POWERPOINT SLIDES

APPENDIX F: INNOVATIVE MENTORING PROGRAMMING WITH THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE/VOLUNTARY SECTOR INVOLVEMENT, PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY MICHAEL MCKNIGHT, POWERPOINT SLIDES

## A. Background

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The National Children's Alliance invited its members from across the country, together with representatives from the voluntary sector, health, education and social services, as well as representatives from the federal, provincial, territorial and municipal levels of government to participate in a two-day policy Roundtable. Ninety-eight participants attended the Roundtable in Grimsby, Ontario, to hear from researchers, visit exemplary programs and share their best ideas on the development of a public policy agenda for children ages 6 to 12. The participant list and slide presentations are available as appendices to this document. The Roundtable discussion papers are available on the Alliance website: [www.nationalchildrensalliance.com](http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.com):

- "Middle Childhood: Building on the Early Years," by Louise Hanvey.
- "From Precious Resource to Societal Accessory: Canada's Children Six to Twelve Years of Age," Executive Summary, by Bob Couchman.

During the two days of the Roundtable, participants heard presentations and discussed the societal trends that are having a negative impact on children, as well as what works in our communities to support them and their families. This Roundtable was a first step in exploring together what the members of the Alliance can do to make sure every child in Canada reaches his or her potential.

## B. Welcoming Comments

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Dianne Bascombe welcomed participants to the National Roundtable on behalf of the organizations that work collaboratively as the National Children's Alliance. The number of attendees combined with those that the Alliance was not able to accommodate spoke volumes about the interest and concern that is present across sectors about issues affecting this age group. This Roundtable was an opportunity to spend two days together to explore the particular issues facing children in their middle years.

For those new to the National Children's Alliance, Dianne provided a brief history of the creation and growth of the Alliance. In 1996 a small group of people met to discuss how working together, their organizations might be better able to develop public policy, and to relate their work on behalf of children with governments. Today this group includes forty-seven (47) national organizations. The Alliance has grown to include a broad spectrum of perspectives to pursue policy work with a cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach. The National Children's Alliance is not an organization, but an alliance, and thus tries to stay true to principles of being an alliance. Member organizations work collaboratively, based on consensus, with a model of shared leadership.

As Canada is a party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Alliance has a collective obligation to maintain a governmental focus.

For more information about Alliance activities, please visit the Alliance website at: [www.nationalchildrensalliance.com](http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.com).

## C. The Context of Children in Their Middle Years

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Since its creation, the Alliance's primary focus has been working with the federal government to move the National Children's Agenda (NCA) from vision to action and implementation. The Alliance strongly believes in the NCA vision and finding ways to work together to better serve families and children.

The Alliance has worked collaboratively with governments, the voluntary sector and non-governmental organizations during the past several years on the development and implementation of the Early Childhood Development Agreement. The Alliance celebrated when 2.2 billion dollars was allocated by the federal government for early years development programs and services. However, the new funding is inadequate for the changes necessary to address the issues of children ages 0 to 6; there is still much to be accomplished.

Nevertheless, now is the time to build on the work done on ages 0 to 6 and begin to address the policy issues associated with middle childhood. It is time that the Alliance begins a serious dialogue about what kinds of public policy and services are needed to address children of middle years. This need for dialogue and action has been prompted by current research, trends and indicators that are telling us that children in the middle years are not reaching their potential for personal health and well-being.

"This Roundtable is the first baby steps of a vision, and it is hoped that it will lead to, in two or three years, the announcement that 2.2 billion dollars - or more considering the talk of a Federal surplus - has been allocated for the care and well-being of children in their middle years." Dianne Bascombe

## D. Roundtable Speakers & Panel

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A number of speakers presented background papers and research overviews that helped to set the stage for the Roundtable discussions.

### D.1. A Research Overview of *Middle Childhood: Building on the Early Years*, Prepared and Presented by Louise Hanvey, Hanvey Consulting.

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Louise Hanvey has been working on children's issues for over 20 years - and as a consultant in the area of children's health and well-being for the past 11 years. She has been the Project Director for the Canadian Council on Social Development's *Progress of Canada's Children* for the past four editions. She was a principle author of the *Health of Canada's Children: A CI CH Profile, Editions 1 and 2*. Louise also facilitated the development of *Health Canada's Family-Centred Maternity and Newborn Care: National Guidelines*, and was the principal editor of that document. She has a Bachelor of Nursing from the University of Manitoba (1974) and a Masters of Health Administration from the University of Ottawa (1981). In addition to her consulting work, Louise is currently working with young people at the Sexual Health Centre, City of Ottawa.

*"Canada is a signatory to United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, and we have made a commitment to all our children. We need to look after them as they move through these critical years". Louise Harvey*

**The purpose of Louise's presentation was to:**

- Look at demographic trends that are affecting children in this age group and their families; and
- Look at families specifically, as they are one of the principal environments in the lives of our children.

Louise outlined some of the disturbing trends impacting children in Canada. Although child poverty remains our greatest challenge, there are substantive numbers of children from all socio-economic backgrounds who are experiencing difficulties. To address the urgent needs of all of these children we need to look beyond income measures to the myriad options of health, social, recreation, education and community supports. Her presentation included information about who children in their middle years are, where they are living, and what kinds of lives they are living (e.g. their family structures and relationships).

Louise's slides are available as Appendix B of these proceedings. Key points from her presentation about this age group are included here.

**Key Points:**

- In 2000, 2.7 million children were between the ages of 6 to 12 years old, representing 9% of the population. Approximately 5% of these were Aboriginal (First Nations, Inuit and Métis). Data from 1997 tells us that 32,800 children ages 5 to 14 came from other countries, this number having more than doubled since 1987. Ninety percent (90%) of these children were immigrants and the rest were refugees.
- Many children in their middle years are living in urban areas. In 1999, 66% of all children aged 5 to 14 lived in a 'census metropolitan area', such as Toronto and Vancouver.
- Although research data about children with disabilities is inadequate, it has been estimated that there are 315,000 children between the ages of 10 and 19 years of age with disabilities.
- Children with disabilities, aboriginal children and some immigrant children are at particular risk.
- Children in their middle years are developing no less dynamically than those 0 to 6. They move from being 100% dependant upon their families to becoming autonomous. They learn to make decisions and take responsibility for those decisions. They learn to reach out to new relationships, and to expand existing social relationships. In addition, their conceptual thinking increases, they experience physical growth and puberty, and they become more aware.
- Characteristics of families today include:
  - Families are on the move;
  - Families are smaller and more diverse;
  - There are more 'blended' families;

- There was a 35% increase in the number of lone-parent families with children in their middle years during the 1990s;
  - Many lone parent families are female-headed;
  - One in eight children aged 6 to 11 live in a household with very low income (under \$20,000);
  - There is an increase in work and family stress and the number of latch key kids (with implications for access to adequate childcare).
- The good news is that, while about one-third of children in their middle years have behavioural problems, two-thirds are doing well. Of note, the majority of children with behavioural problems come from two-parent families.
  - Ninety percent (90%) of children in their middle years live in families who function well. The majority of children live with parents who embrace positive parenting practices and often praise their children in their middle years, although this praise decreases with age.
  - Eight percent (8%) of children aged 4 to 11 witness violence (much of it between their parents and 70% against their mothers) in their homes. This percentage is equal to more than 245,000 children.

**In Summary:**

There are a large number of very different and diverse children in this age group. These children come from different places, cultures and experiences. Families today are facing increasing stresses and strains. However, most children ages 6 to 12 live with supportive families, and more and more children are reaching out to other environments.

It is important to note that statistics do not represent many aspects of the realities of this age group, as the data is simply not reported.

**D.2. Developing Policy Options for Children of Middle Years, Prepared and Presented by Marcel Lauzière, Canadian Council on Social Development.**

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Marcel Lauzière has been an advocate for social research for 15 years. Prior to his appointment at the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), Mr. Lauzière was Special Advisor to the President at the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). Before this, he was Executive Director of the Social Science Federation of Canada.

Over the years, Marcel has been particularly active in promoting stronger links between research and policy and practice, which is very important for our discussions here, and in developing and promoting mechanisms to foster collaboration between universities and communities. He has also been a strong advocate for better access to social statistics for research and policy through a number of national and international projects. He is currently spearheading, through the CCSD, the Community Social Data Strategy (CSDS). He is a member of the Steering Committee of the National Children's Alliance, a member of the Board of Directors of the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations, and a member of the Board of Directors of the London-based International Council on Social Welfare.

## **Key Presentation Points:**

Marcel discussed the policy context and the challenges and opportunities prevalent today, and asked the participants to think about social inclusion as a lens for developing policy options. Marcel discussed the following issues:

**Polarization:** Social and economic polarization is increasing in Canada, and our discussions about children need to reflect the gap between the rich and the poor. A recent study on poverty in Toronto shows that there is increasing polarization among neighbourhoods in that city.

**Economics are not enough:** It is a myth that a strong economy is a sufficient remedy to social problems. The economy has been in strong recovery for a few years now but child poverty is still very high. Substantial changes should have taken place to address this problem, but they have not.

**Housing issues:** Research has shown that unfit housing has negative effects on children. Canada used to be seen as a leader in social housing, however we are currently witnessing a major housing crisis in many Canadian cities and only modest reinvestments in social housing. A child growing up in an overcrowded, dilapidated motel room or apartment is at risk of ill-health, poor learning, abuse, and so many of the social ills that we are trying to address through other forms of social investment. We need to remind government about this issue. While, some improvements and funding have been provided, the erosion of availability of affordable housing continues.

**Work-home balance:** Balancing time between work and home is a difficult issue for families. Adults are spending more time on paid and unpaid work, and this increases when adults become parents. New data from Statistics Canada shows for example that parents spend an average of only four minutes a day reading with their children.

**Downloading:** Downloading of services from federal and provincial governments to municipalities has inhibited communities' abilities to respond to the increasing needs of children ages 6 to 12, and the challenges that are cited above.

**Aboriginal Children and Children with Special Needs:** Aboriginal children and children with special needs are at particular risk and need to be included in the policy discussion.

**Recreation:** Lack of access to structured recreation is a key piece that must be addressed for children in the middle years. Recreation has become a privilege for children this age rather than a right. Intervention in this area is crucial and thus far has been sadly neglected. Recreation is simply not taken seriously, and people forget about its potential to build social inclusion. Recreation can have positive impacts on confidence, self-esteem, willingness to take on challenges, and on physical health. These impacts can help kids to participate in society later in life. Also, recreation can be particularly important for social connectedness and for immigrant children, who are commonly in the midst of a huge cultural and social life changing experience. We know that participation in recreation varies with income levels and that many children are excluded from participation resulting from things such as economic polarization, and creeping user fees (CCSD survey of municipalities). Approximately 60% of children in poor families "almost never" participate in supervised sports.

Unfortunately recreation is not on the policy radar screen of our Government! The importance of access to recreation could be a good place for intervention.

## **What a Policy Framework Would Look Like for the Middle Years: Discussion Points & “Trigger Questions” for Roundtable Discussions:**

In creating a policy framework there are some key issues and discussion points that should be considered.

**Public Mindset:** Is there a public mindset for attention to be paid to these issues? If not, what can we do to create one? How can we change attitudes?

**Financial Accountability:** Where is the 6 million dollar surplus going to be spent? How do we monitor accountability for spending?

**Political Agenda:** How can we influence where the current government is going? The Liberal Government has provided some funding for important initiatives in the last years, however this funding has not been enough. In the last throne speech, social inclusion was mentioned many times. Unfortunately social inclusion was neglected in Finance Minister John Manley's address to the House of Commons Finance Committee this week. The new Minister consistently spoke of the productivity lens but was silent on the social inclusion lens.

**Political Context:** The Alliance must consider what is currently happening at the federal level. Can the current unofficial leadership campaign provide an opportunity to put our ideas forward? Will this be an opportunity to remind the Government of the children's agenda? The Alliance should consider how it can add its voice to policy discussion. There is a need from the Alliance perspective to retain involvement in the policy arena.

**Social Union Framework Agreement:** How do we deal with the SUFA (Social Union Framework Agreement) review? Will this review change anything?

**Provincial Front:** There is good and bad news on the provincial front. For example, British Columbia, is reneging on its child support, while Québec is continuing to invest in childcare programs. Universality is **back** on the table and the Alliance needs to think about universality during these discussions. Also, Québec has put legislation forward to tackle poverty and social exclusion. The proof will be in the pudding, but at least the issue of poverty is on the table.

**Social Inclusion:** Social inclusion is a new way of thinking. A conference on this topic last fall resulted in many people thinking that looking at social policy through a lens of social inclusion was a good way to move forward. Catherine Frazee spoke about the importance of inclusion for special needs, explaining that inclusion is about access to community - not just about ramps and parking spaces. At the recent annual general meeting of the CCSD, the guest speaker, Rabbi Dow Marmur stated that perhaps there is no more powerful exclusion than not to be allowed to break bread in the community.

**A Definition of Social Inclusion:**

"Inclusion is characterized by a society's widely shared social experiences and active participation by a broad equality of opportunities and life chances for individuals and by the achievement of a basic level of well being for all citizens." (Amartya Sen)

**D.3. Impacts/Indicators of Health and Well-Being, Prepared and Presented by Dawn Walker, Canadian Institute of Child Health.**

A prenatal obstetrical nurse by profession, Dawn Walker has many years of experience in community and child health. As Chief of Family and Child Health at Health Canada, Dawn led many maternal and child health projects such as *Nobody's Perfect*, the *Postpartum Parent Support Program*, and various national consensus statements. She also provided support on behalf of Health Canada to Canada's participation in the World Summit for Children (1990), and in the writing of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. She was a key participant in the design and implementation of the *Community Action Program for Children (CAPC)* projects in the *Brighter Futures* initiative. She has national and international experience in prevention and promotion strategies that address alcohol, tobacco and other drug use. As Executive Director of the Canadian Institute of Child Health, Dawn has been involved in policy and program development addressing the health and well-being of children and has made presentations at both national and international conferences on children's health and on developing networks to include grassroots organizations, professionals and all levels of government. She has co-chaired national and international consultations and fora on a wide range of child health issues, including knowledge translation. Dawn is an Institute Advisory Board member of the Maternal, Child and Youth Health Research Institute, and of the Directing Council, Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development.

Dawn's slides are available as Appendix C of these proceedings.

The Canadian Institute of Child Health has recently published a book called: The Health of Canada's Children: A CI CH Profile – 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. This book is the result of many years of monitoring, discussing, debating and consensus building by Canadians from every part of the country. It is available for order by email: [cich@cich.ca](mailto:cich@cich.ca), by the Internet: [www.cich.ca](http://www.cich.ca), or by telephone: (613) 230-8838.

The CI CH profile is the source of Dawn's information. A series of topical and provincial fact sheets have been generated based on the information in the CI CH Profile and are available through the CI CH website.

**How Are Our Children Ages 6-12 Really Doing?****Key Presentation Points:**

- The good news: Since 1975 the death rate by all causes for all children has declined. This is a result of more care and treatment, and prevention measure programs, for example, wearing seat belts and bike helmets.

- More children die in Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Labrador, the Yukon and Northwest Territories than in other provinces or territories. This is attributed to the larger use of all terrain vehicles and farm machinery in these regions.
- The leading cause of death for children ages 5 to 9 years old is external causes of injury, with the second leading cause being cancer. This means that the majority of deaths in this age group are potentially preventable.
- Children are often killed in traffic or pedestrian collisions. This speaks to the need for education on safety and transportation, i.e. the need for safer routes to school designed according to children's developmental abilities.
- The greatest proportion of injuries treated in the emergency rooms were injuries that occurred in residential areas as children are coming to and from their homes.
- Many parents have the attitude that accidents are not preventable and that they happen randomly. We know that this is not the case, and this represents a real disconnect. This fact gives the Alliance an idea of where it needs to go with programming.
- Hospitalization rates have declined and more kids are being treated in urgent care centres and doctors' offices. We need to pay more attention to outreach, education and other preventative measures.
- The leading cause of hospitalization is respiratory disease. However, brain cancer is alarmingly on the rise, due to environmental issues. The increase in cancer rates, and an increase of life-threatening allergies and asthma (which is underreported due to difficulties in data collection) are significant and are too great to be due to over-diagnosis.
- Seventy percent (70%) of our children are not participating in the arts and community programs. Too many children 'almost never' participate in such activities.
- Children left at home alone is a big issue. It is difficult to obtain data on this topic as it is illegal to leave children under twelve at home alone. On one hand, these children can become obese and feel disconnected from their families and their community; however they are at less risk of injury as they are often confined to their homes while their parents are at work.

"With diabetes and obesity on the rise, we have to address issues of healthy eating, however we have to be very careful of the message we are sending. The message used to be "Be happy in the body you are in." However, it is becoming "Be happy in the body you are in - just make sure it's smaller!" Dawn Walker

- Hyperactivity, bullying, family conflict, family structure and other things can nudge children towards destructive behaviour. Even with underreporting, there are too many children who are experiencing some kind of destructive behaviour. Some people say, "But it's *their* children!" This is another myth. While there are some children who are at greater risk than others, all children are having some difficulties now. Children with two parent families are also experiencing

problems! All children are living in the same world and they need more universal supports. One of every 4 or 5 children has behavioural problems.

- The Alliance also needs to consider environmental factors in terms of mental health issues. What children are eating, drinking and breathing has an impact on emotional and behavioural problems and learning behaviours. Furthermore, diabetes is on the rise, particularly Type Two Diabetes. Therefore, eating habits, environmental contaminants and their effects on children's bodies need to be addressed.
- Children with disabilities often need home care, close connections with the acute care system, and family supports in order to participate in daily activities. Unfortunately there is inadequate data available on children with disabilities.
- The Alliance needs to continue to remember the children of the Arctic as they are exposed to environmental pollutants (i.e. Persistent Organic Pollutants) and have lower literacy rates, lower life skills, and problems with smoking and drinking which need to be addressed.

For more information visit: [www.childenvironment.org](http://www.childenvironment.org).

#### **D.4 Questions and Comments to the Panel of Speakers**

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- Social inclusion is about connectedness, opportunities for all and finding ways of developing real relationships. It speaks to the value of universality.
- A concern was voiced that social inclusion and participation is not enough. Support needs to be in place to ensure actual participation is possible. The Canadian Coalition of the Rights of the Child, and the Alliance believe that inclusion and participation are rights, not add-ons or fringe benefits.
- Inclusion costs money therefore it gets cut, especially for children with special needs. Inclusion has become a numbers game instead of being a right. Supports need to be in place, and be focused on children, not on the system!
- Cities are important players because of the number of children who live in urban centres. Taking this into consideration, what roles can cities play?
- A comprehensive and coordinated system of support for parents is needed as was in place years earlier. Running recreation programs is not enough, as parents need to arrange for childcare, transportation, fees, etc. Instead there is a need for an informal supportive neighbourhood for childcare, extended families, and safety. Currently services for children are being fragmented, when they need increased support. Parents are expected to be the program coordinators and chauffeurs for their children, as well as working.

In summary, according to the Roundtable speakers, parents are doing a good job in spite of all odds. Parents are succeeding against the socio-economic context, climate and labour market pressures, without the kinds of community and social supports enjoyed by previous generations to help them. However, it is also evident that children in their middle years are not doing as well as they should be and the danger signs are becoming evident.

## Thursday Noon Hour Discussion

### E. "Making the Case": Compelling reasons why issues affecting children ages 6 to 12 are a policy priority. - Small Group Discussions

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We need to take policy action and we also need to tell our story. In small groups participants were asked to describe what they would want to say to a decision-maker such as a mayor, MP or MLA. Participants then reported back to the plenary.

#### Relating to Economics and Investment:

1. Active citizenship leads to economic prosperity.
2. By investing in prevention we are investing in the future health of our children. Sustaining gains from early on will allow us to maintain our momentum for phase two (6 to 12). We should consolidate our gains.
3. Investment in children has long-term benefits to the whole community.
4. Prevention is more cost effective, socially, and financially than "after the fact" interventions.
5. If we do not pay attention now, there will be greater societal and financial costs later.
6. Economics of the family are not the only determinants of positive outcomes for children. The stresses on families need to be addressed through coordinated community efforts.
7. How a society treats its children reflects the true values of the society.
8. There are severe consequences in not investing in this age group. For example, one participant told a story about the child robbing a house. There was an anti-theft sticker on the window indicating that the property was protected; the child was still 'helping himself'. A police officer caught the child in the middle of robbing the house. Given the security sticker the police officer asked the child *why* he had chosen this house? The child replied, "I can't read".
9. In the zeal to correct one deficit we have created another that will be much harder to fix. Education, health care, the environment and housing are examples and the list goes on. We cut services to children to save money in the short term despite the overwhelming evidence that this choice not only harms our children but also costs society more in the end. Investment in our children ages 6 to 12 is not only an investment in the healthy development of children but also an investment in the health of our communities and economy.
10. We have spent so much money on decreasing child mortality we should spend the same amount of money and effort to improve children's quality of life.
11. We need to care for children in their middle years, or we will regret it in our senior years, because they will not be contributing to pensions and other services.

#### Relating to Social Consciousness and Responsibility and the Importance of this Age Group

12. Help families help children.
13. It is in the self-interest of citizens of the country that our children be well nurtured.

14. We have a moral responsibility to nurture our children.
15. Changes in society have resulted in complex social issues. These changes require an integrated solution. The answer cannot be found in schools alone.
16. If all children had the resources and opportunities to reach their full potential, our society would sustain unimaginable growth and improvements.
17. Resiliency and vulnerability are temporary. We need more research and policy initiatives to identify and build upon resiliency factors.
18. The middle years are a critical period of development. Patterns of behavioural relationships are being laid, and these can alter the course children may take into adulthood.
19. Birth to 5 years old may be the foundation, but the memories begin at 6. Canada must provide those life experiences that will shape the future of children in a way in which we can all be proud.
20. Apply 'seven generation' thinking and leave a legacy.
21. 'A world fit for children' is the goal of the United Nations. We should make a "Canada fit for children" our goal. It takes a whole village and country to raise a child. Supports and specialized services must not neglect this age group. Helping children reach their full potential must be our social commitment. Canada's future, economy and social fabric depend on doing right by our 6 to 12 year old children.
22. This stage is the first opportunity for some children to be exposed to diverse programs, opportunities, and activities but there must be recognition of shared responsibilities and roles within the community for creating a safe, enriched environment.
23. We need to change the attitude that it is 'your child' to it is 'our children'.
24. What we do to our children and youth, they will in turn do back to society.
25. Draw the older generations to the issues of younger generations.
26. There is a necessity for coordination and provision of a seamless system of services for and with children in their early and middle years, especially considering children with special needs and disabilities.

**Relating to Health, Education and Recreation:**

27. Children ages 6 to 12 are not thriving. They are growing up without sufficient recreation, nutrition, etc.
28. The decreasing level of physical activity, and increasing obesity among 6 to 12 year olds will increase health care costs.
29. Healthy Children – Healthy Canada! Healthy and successful children are at the centre of a healthy civil society.
30. Balance in programming – build on the early years foundation – use the developmental model/continuum. Extend priorities of early years.
31. Uniqueness of this development stage (internal vs. external influences).
32. Supporting their creative and intellectual development (exploring the world and options).
33. If we want to have an impact on health in the long term, then we need messages that develop appropriate behaviours.
34. Key determinants of health – We are moving away from the things that promote life long health, such as: policy for recreation programs, physical education in schools, and community involvement.

35. Focus on the early years has been important, however, we need to focus on and understand the issues, needs, etc. of the 6 to 12 year olds (e.g. vulnerability and development issues). Looking at the early years places focus on parents and families whereas looking at 6 to 12 year olds brings focus to the community.
36. Participation in recreation leads to immediate and long-term benefits for children.
37. Prevent high school dropouts. More education leads to better jobs and better economic conditions for all.

**F. "Sewing the Seams: Research on Efficiency and Effectiveness in the Delivery of Children's Services," Prepared and Presented by Dr. Gina Browne, McMaster University**

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Dr. Gina Browne is founder and director of the System-Linked Research Unit based at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario. She is a Professor, Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics at McMaster University, Faculty of Health Sciences. The System-Linked Research Unit initiates, implements and coordinates studies of persons with co-existing problems simultaneously using health and social services. The studies test the effectiveness and efficiency of multisectoral and proactive service interventions provided through alliances between service agencies for vulnerable children, adults or seniors. Dr. Browne has a stellar record of disseminating findings from her research in interdisciplinary journals, through addresses to professional groups and policy makers and through the popular media.

It has been said that, "Gina often thinks the unthinkable, says the un-sayable and does the un-doable!" Dianne Bascombe.

Gina Browne presented some of her research about what works at the community level when people collaborate. This information should help the Alliance find ways of promoting multi-disciplinary approaches for the work it does in communities and policy development.

This work was commissioned by Ontario Ministry of Health. All the material is available is available at <http://www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/slru/projects.htm> under *Sewing the Seams* and under *Convergence*. Gina's slides are available as Appendix D of these Proceedings.

**Presentation Overview:**

To date, eighteen (18) studies have been presented showing that with every vulnerable age group more effective and less expensive services are created by proactive comprehensive care. With services for children, preventative care is the more effective approach.

Gina used a sewing analogy, which was quite appropriate as we are promoting seamless services for children! She spoke of the need to first find the seams that we are trying to sew. There are currently several seams in service delivery. Her comments included the importance of an economic perspective. Also, she provided a summary of findings from the 64 reviews of reviews of literature that met their criteria, and identified the strengths and gaps in innovative service research.

Her presentation included "finding the thread," which is the need for integration. In addition she discussed using different needles, which represents the level of interventions. Finally she outlined her proposal, called "Sewing the Seams."

The research strategy included viewpoints on:

- Children at risk literature;
- Evidence of effectiveness and efficiency;
- Evidence of effectiveness and efficiency sectors;
- Populations; and
- Quality evidence and systematic reviews of reviews.

### **Key Presentation Points:**

#### Finding the Seams:

- Why take an economic perspective? There is an increased prevalence of child/youth problems that go undetected and/or under treated. Many programs exist, but children still fall through the cracks. There is considerable fiscal cost to unmet human needs.
- We can improve the outcomes of our children at no further cost to society - in fact we can **save money**.

- **Summary of findings:**

#### *Enduring effective services:*

- Are broad in spectrum;
- Foster competencies;
- Cross traditional professional and bureaucratic boundaries;
- Are aimed at all components of a child's life;
- Emphasize:
  - The need for youth participation;
  - Intensity;
  - Use of peers;
  - The use of appropriate medications;
  - The need to be tailored for groups (e.g. minorities);
  - A basis of behaviour change theories;
- Enlist, reach out and link;
- Have multi level partnerships;
- Have flexible and seamless services;
- Are culturally relevant, respectful, and responsive;
- Adapt to client needs;
- Recognize the need for the staff to be supportive people;
- Recognize the need for services to be located on-site;
- Recognize the need to offer tangible aid - and to obtain the money from the bureaucracies (for example, contacting the Aids and Devices Department versus just stating the need for a simple pair of tennis shoes).

*What Works: Components of Exemplary After-School Programs:*

The common elements of successful after-school programs include:

- Goal setting, strong management, and sustainability,
- Quality after-school staffing,
- Attention to safety, health, and nutrition issues,
- Effective partnerships with community-based organizations, juvenile justice agencies (youth diversion programs), law enforcement, and youth groups,
- Strong involvement of families,
- Enriching learning opportunities aimed at skill development,
- Providing engaging opportunities to grow and learn,
- Linkages between school day and after-school personnel,
- Evaluation of program progress and effectiveness.

*Fostering an integrative system to reduce vulnerability: The problem is not the presence of stresses, it is the absence of resources. Gina Browne*

***Strengths of current research reviews:***

***We know that there is extensive evidence on:***

- Effectiveness
- Universal and early intervention for school-aged children
- Multi-domain of intervention strategies
- The etiology of positive youth development
- The prognosis of children/youth with risk/protective factor combinations.

The theoretical underpinnings of intervention research is well developed including prevention, protection, resilience and vulnerability as well as behaviour development and change

***There is an absence of information documenting:***

- The prevalence of co-existing behavioural, personal and environmental deficits and resources, which protect children in spite of risks by age, gender and culture;
- The lack of research on continuity of services with very few universal and targeted programs connected with professional clinical services, particularly medical services;
- The lack of evidence on public/voluntary/private sector financing and how investments in voluntary and private financial sectors can save public sector dollars;
- The lack of gender specific and cultural intervention research;
- The lack of studies on organizational, financial, governance, and policy mechanisms to foster integration within and between differently financed services which is why we need Intersectoral research (see slide 25 in Appendix D for a depiction of a system linked research unit integration model that demonstrates this point); and
- An absence of evaluation of costs expended or saved by levels of effect achieved by school-aged children in various jurisdictions distinguished by health, social, and education policies (with some notable exceptions).

***There is a need for research on:***

- Innovative combinations of behavioural, pharmacological and multi-modal interventions in real world community and school settings that: prevents or alleviates subsequent behavioural/emotional deficits; promotes competence in the face of deficiencies; and promotes behaviour change.
- The impact of early intervention with combination treatment on the prognosis and course of child/youth behaviour problems and competencies by age, gender, culture;
- Organizational and financial barriers and/or facilitators of the implementation of ecological, community-wide, universal and early intervention strategies by age and gender;
- The cost effectiveness of universal and early intervention ecological policies by age, gender and culture.

***There is a need for Coverage Research on:***

- The extent to which children (by age, gender, culture) have known access to universal and early intervention services with effectiveness; and Effective social/marketing strategies which foster the adoption of effective, ecological approaches to children and youth competence by local communities.
- **The Benefits of Recreation:**  
Recreation and childcare pay for themselves by reductions in the use of medical professional services, such as specialists, occupational therapist and psychologists, social workers, probation officers and 911 services. It is no more expensive to society as it pays for itself in the use of professional/probationary services. Recreation maintains the competence of children with emotional, conduct, hyperactive disorders to be equal to non-disordered children. This results in reductions in parental mental health problems such as sleep disorders and worry, and there is a 10% greater exit from social assistance, as shown in economic adjustment scores and the use of food bank services (see Slides 28 - 30 in Appendix D).

Government Services are slivers of the bigger needs. Gina Browne

**Finding the Thread**

There is a need for innovation, which speaks to the need for service integrations and collaboration.

- Service Integration is a “means to an end” that uses collaborative mechanisms to improve the match between single services provided and the multiple needs of clients and families and thus, improves the effectiveness and efficiency of the system (*Salhani, 2001*)
- Collaboration is joint planning, common goals, shared commitment, partnership, collegial relationships, and shared resources

**Defining Intersectoral Integration:**

A recognized relationship between part or parts of the **health sector and part or parts of another sector**, that has been formed to take action on an issue or to achieve health outcomes, (or intermediate health outcomes) in a way that is more effective, efficient or sustainable than could be achieved by the health sector working alone. (Harris et al. 1995: 7)

There are many pressures for service integration: the need to do more with less; children have multiple and complex problems as do their families; parents' experience of a fragmented service system; legislative changes in one sector create new demands for finite resources in health, social, and corrections sectors, evidence of effective programs suggest a whole child/family/community approach.

Also there are degrees and levels of integration across the spectrum from cooperation (affiliations) to coordination (federations, associations, and coalitions) to collaboration (consortia, networks, and joint ventures) to coadunation (mergers, consolidations, and acquisitions).

Whatever the relationship, networked organizations need to be fair, fluid and flat.  
Gina Browne

Gina spoke of the benefits and values of networked organizations, like the Alliance. The details are available on the website address cited earlier. There is also a need for awareness, communication, cooperation, collaboration and integration. The need for communication and involvement increases as you move from cooperation to consolidation.

**The Networked Organization is a grouping of agencies on a non-hierarchical basis around common issues or concerns, which are pursued proactively, and systematically based on commitment and trust. (Pedler, 2001)**

## G. Field Trips to Exemplary Programs

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### G.1. Beasley Area Kids Club

27 Elgin Street, Hamilton, ON. Phone: (905) 546-4042

For more information contact: Jill Detlor, Public Health Nurse, at [jdetlor@city.hamilton.on.ca](mailto:jdetlor@city.hamilton.on.ca)

This program was developed six years ago, in response to the need for both academic and social programs in this disadvantaged neighbourhood. The Beasley Area is classified as the fifteenth most distressed of 4180 urban areas in Canada, by Statistics Canada. The gravity of the situation struck a community organizer, when children who noticed that the lights were on in a community police centre wandered inside, asking if there was any food available. Additionally, in a survey of the 360 students attending the Dr. J. Edgar Davey School, **only three** reported having access to extracurricular activities after school. Academic performance of students at Dr. Davey School has been consistently low.

Community organizers recognized the need for after and before school programming, with an emphasis on providing nutritious food to these children. The Beasley Area Program began as a breakfast club, and has continually evolved since 1996. Each activity organized under this program includes the provision of healthy food, as a source of both nutrition and nurturing.

Over time, an after school program was created that focuses on academic and social skill development. The Beasley Area Children Club now serves as a homework club, a nutritious snack

program, a friendship program and a recreational program. It operates on multiple volunteer hours, minimal funding and an abundance of hard work.

Visitors to this site toured the community centre, and engaged in a mini-focus group with students who participate in the program. Jill Detlor, Public Health Nurse and Program Worker gave a brief presentation to site visitors about the success of the program and the many challenges faced by program organizers in keeping this program alive.

Through asking questions to the children, site visitors learned that Beasley Kids Club provides a Homework Club two afternoons a week, run by a teacher from Dr. Davey Elementary School. In addition, the Kids Club carries out after school programs including fine arts, martial arts, and dance classes. Also, kids participate in a breakfast club before school and receive recess snacks from the Kids Club. Some 20 children representing at least 8 different countries of origin and 9 different spoken languages talked about how much the Kids Club helps them with their homework, and with building friendships.

In her presentation Jill outlined some of the challenges faced by program organizers including a more than 100% turnover rate in the school, as families move in and out of the Beasley Area rapidly, and challenges in accessing the school facilities. Also, Jill discussed challenges in applying for funding with a lack of administrative support to help with grant applications. Visitors to this site discussed potential sources of support for the program workers, as well as potential partnerships with other organizations.

## G.2. Virtual YMCA site at Robert Land Elementary School

460 Wentworth Street North, Hamilton, Ontario, (905) 527-1563

<http://www.ymcahb.on.ca/index.html>

For more information please contact: Christina Martin, General Manager, School Aged Child Care Day Camp and Community Outreach Programs, YMCA Hamilton-Burlington at [Christina\\_Martin@ymca.ca](mailto:Christina_Martin@ymca.ca)

Established in Hamilton in 1856, the YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington was the first YMCA in Canada to provide physical activity programs. Today, the YMCA serves more than 48,000 people throughout the Hamilton/Burlington area.

The Virtual YMCA is a brand new initiative by the YMCA of Hamilton-Burlington. The Virtual YMCA is a literacy-based program aimed at building confidence and competence in youth. This after school program serves inner city youth ages 7 to 11. Participating youth engage in social and recreational activities, complete their homework with the help of teachers and receive a nutritious snack. Together these activities help to improve reading, writing and speaking skills, facilitate learning, help youth develop confidence and enhance participants' self-respect and their respect for others.

The Giving Recreation Opportunities for Wellness (GROW) program is funded through the National Child Benefit. This program serves over 2000 children in the Hamilton area by coordinating multiple recreation programs that would not otherwise be available. Participation in the GROW program has helped children and their families develop significantly better lifestyles, and has proven to assist children in terms of their academic, social and physical competence.

Visitors to this site toured the Robert Land Elementary School where the program takes place, viewed the classrooms where programming is carried out. Typically the after school Virtual YMCA recreation program is held in these classrooms. This program involves 45 minutes of homework activity and 45 minutes of recreational activities. Typically, students will engage in gym activities, computer classes, play board games, or do arts and crafts. On the day of the site visit however, all program participants were involved in a year-end assembly, which visitors were able to observe.

In meeting with the principal of Robert Land Elementary School and YMCA General Manager of School Aged and Child Care Day Camp and Community Outreach Programs Christina Martin, participants learned about day-to-day operations, and barriers to success, as well as successful outcomes and future directions for the program. In addition, participants were able to experience first hand the strength of the partnership between the Robert Land Elementary School, the YMCA and the Rotary Club, who run this program together.

Participants then received a presentation on the GROW Program, from Program Coordinator Penny Ross. Penny gave a brief history and overview of the program, and discussed its results to date and future planning (See Appendix E). Participants then shared comments and asked questions about elements of the GROW program.

### G.3. Hamilton East Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club

45 Ellis Avenue, Hamilton ON. Phone: (905) 549-2814

<http://www.kboysandgirlsclub.com>

For more information please contact Duane Dahl, [duane@abchamilton.com](mailto:duane@abchamilton.com).

For over fifty years, the Hamilton East Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club have provided recreational and social development programs in east Hamilton. The Club's membership currently exceeds 4000 children, youth, adults and seniors.

The Boys and Girls Club's services are available to all young people. The organization believes that children and youth need special support to overcome disadvantages. Young people naturally seek excitement, friendship, and support. The chance to offer encouragement, direction and counselling comes as a result of gaining their trust.

The primary mission of the Boys and Girls Club is to encourage each member to develop to the fullest of his or her potential. The Club provides an atmosphere whereby members can be given a chance to help develop self-esteem, a sense of belonging, a concern for others and a desire to be responsible and productive citizens.

Visitors to this site toured the Boys and Girls Club facilities and observed a number of different programs in action. These programs included the nutritious snack program, computer classes, and a water polo program.

Following their tour, visitors received a presentation from Duane Dahl, Program Worker, who outlined some of the Boys and Girls Club's other programs. Visitors heard about the many outreach programs offered, including the Teen Zone Program, which involved turning a vacant storefront into a safe area for teens to hang out. Duane also discussed a number of the social skills, education and

youth at risk programs that are run by the Boys and Girls Club. Through the presentation material and by asking questions, participants were able to learn about the successes of this program, and share ideas with each other about implementing similar programs in their own organizations and communities. Furthermore, local participants discussed the possibility of future partnerships between their respective organizations.

**Friday June 21 2002**

## **H. Roundtable Speakers & Panel**

### **H1. Children's Issues and Social Policy: Opportunities and Barriers to Creating Good Public Policy for Children, Prepared and Presented by Toronto City Councillor Olivia Chow**

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Voted best city councillor by Now Magazine readers five years running, Olivia Chow's pace shows no sign of waning. Her accessibility, sincerity, and well-earned reputation for getting things done fosters dynamic grassroots support within the boundaries of her downtown ward, as well as with individuals and community groups across the city.

For the last 17 years, Olivia has represented downtown communities in public office. In 1985, in her first position in public office, Olivia was elected Public School Trustee. Following that, she was elected Metro Councillor for the downtown ward in 1991, and has since been the City Councillor for Trinity-Spadina East. Since its creation by City Council in 1997, Olivia has been Toronto's Children and Youth Advocate. Olivia is dedicated to issues of public safety, social services, children and youth, equity and accountability.

#### **Key Presentation Points:**

- "We know that we have a large national surplus. We have discovered the importance of exercise and nurturing children. You'd think with these two things they would be healthier. But we know this is not the case for many children. Report after report talks about the return on investment of funds into children's programs. We know that investment means a healthier society. So how is it that we are seeing cuts in education, more smog, more asthma, type 2 diabetes, and obesity?"
- It is clear that we know what steps need to be taken, we have to ask why we are not taking them.
- It is important to examine why children are not receiving the attention they need. Some possible explanations include the fact that children are non-voters, and therefore their voices are silenced, or because families are so busy working they are unable to concentrate on children as they should. Councillor Chow explained a key problem that she believes is at the root of this neglect. That is, the prevalent public mindset that children are a family responsibility rather than a state responsibility. According to Councillor Chow this mindset makes the citizenry reluctant to challenge their governments about children's issues. This ingrained cultural and social perspective must be overcome to properly deal with children's issues. Children are the collective responsibility of the government, the community and the family alike.

## **The City of Toronto Project: Tracking, Monitoring and Developing Programs**

The City of Toronto tried to ensure that while children are in school they receive breakfasts and snacks. One dollar that was raised in city taxes leveraged five dollars. This is clearly a good investment, and should become part of a formalized policy. The City tracked where programs were being conducted, and discovered gaps in services. Then, attempts were made to fill those gaps, whether the need be for snacks or other program provisions.

The City realized that sometimes children have mental health problems and they have taken steps to track these problems so they can help to promote mental health. There is also a Children At Risk Mentoring Program in about 20 schools. The importance of role models for young children has made this program very successful.

The City is trying to educate trainers and after school childcare workers about engaging children in fun physical fitness activities as part of before and after school childcare. Parks and recreation staff were trained in a similar way. Furthermore, a recreation program was developed for ethno-cultural communities. Sensitivity training was provided for staff members of these programs to assist workers in involving children in these regions, despite cultural barriers. Also, school age physical activity programs, for example drop in clubs, are being expanded.

"Latch key children" are also beginning to be monitored by the city, hopefully this will provide a basis for future programming for these kids. Last year approximately 39,000 children were reached and tracked altogether.

The City also provides library programs, such as the 'Leading to Reading' program. It is believed that including an element of fun is an important component of these programs. Teenagers have been hired to read to young children, which has been very effective. We also help English as a Second Language (ESL) children ages 9 to 12, and we have ESL programs in 12 libraries.

In addition to recreation programs the city is tracking children with health problems. For instance, the City is tracking the 30% of children in the middle years who have tooth decay. In addition, through monitoring it has become evident that asthma attacks are affecting children in the northern part of Toronto because of wind and smog.

Also, children in care are tracked so that the City understands the relationship of their investment in various programs with the amount of school absenteeism, the child protection workload or the level of care needed. This is so that the report cards can demonstrate where the successes and the gaps are, as well as identify the outcomes (e.g. academic performance, better health, where children are performing better). These outcomes are displayed in a major mapping exercise that shows where children are performing well and where they are not.

When the different areas of the city were mapped and compared, it was noticed that there were areas where children experienced lower academic achievement. However, in areas where the City invested in programs, the children's academic performance was raised to the level of children who reside in more average areas.

The mapping is difficult and time-consuming, as it requires engaging the support of a number of agencies. Report cards are produced outlining what services and programs are needed in which areas. These report cards prove relationships and gaps versus successes in serviced areas. Action plans are then developed based on the report card results. A "shopping list" is produced that includes where there is a need for various activities (e.g. sport & recreation, library, child care). This shopping list also includes how many programs are needed, how much each of the programs will cost and the number of children that will be reached and will benefit from the services.

These reports are presented to city councillors, enabling them to determine the relative 'health' of their riding. The report card has become a useful advocacy document for citizens, helping them to pressure decision-makers. The report card is also useful for documenting and highlighting successful programs.

The final punch:

"After budgets are allocated the city writes another report card that shows what they asked for and what they got. This keeps people honest." Olivia Chow

#### **What does this mean for the Alliance?**

Participants are here to discuss a national agenda, because no amount of work from the local level is going to do the job. For every \$100 paid in taxes, \$5 goes to city. The remaining \$95 goes to the federal government, yet the federal downloading goes on unabated! Local community groups manage multiple services and these municipal and local level people are not at the national table to participate in the funding allocation process.

For example, when the National Children's Agenda agreement committed funds over three years, the agreement was signed without municipal or local representation. Funds were given to the provincial governments, which may or may put the money into areas meeting children's needs. There are accountability issues.

For example, based on our calculations, the City of Toronto should have received \$23 Million under this initiative, however it actually received only \$6 Million. Despite the fact that services are delivered at the municipal level, the ultimate destination of the other \$17 Million was never revealed to the City. It is therefore critical that local representatives, and NGO's are at the table to ensure that funds are spent in a way that is comprehensive, coherent and that follows policy.

#### **What is the hub of the basket of services?**

The one thing that all children have in common is that they must attend school therefore the school must become the hub of the basket of services. The concept of a seamless, comprehensive day is critical for children. It is key to gain coordination among agencies to move children to and from school and other activities. The second hub is the childcare piece. Childcare needs to be included and lobbied for.

When Olivia became the Child Advocate, she conducted a contest. She asked children: "If you were mayor for a day, what would you do?"

*Having children participating in identifying their interests and needs is important. Children need to be connected to the decision-makers. When the city brings children into the picture, it makes a difference to the decisions made. Olivia Chow*

The City of Toronto now has an Early Learning and Child Care Commission chaired by two outside allies, Charlie Coffey, Executive Vice President of the RBC Financial Group, and the Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain. Together they have issued a report card and they also advocate from the economic return perspective. The government listens to them!

**In summary:**

- Once policy is developed, an action plan must be developed. Children should be involved from the beginning of the process, and other outside allies should be sought to strengthen the position.
- Determine the political course desired, determine which level of government should be doing what, and what kinds of national programs are relevant.
- Keep the program honest with reporting and report cards. Evaluation is critical.
- Then bring allies in and they can help to carry the message!

**H2. Challenges in the Education System, Prepared and Presented by Harvey Weiner, Canadian Teachers' Federation**

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Harvey Weiner has been Deputy Secretary General of the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) since 1988. The former teacher, negotiator and federation leader in Québec is currently responsible for expanding CTF's advocacy work with the federal government and liaison with labour, with the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), the Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA), with NGOs, the voluntary sector, parent organizations and the business community on issues of mutual interest.

Mr. Weiner has a wide range of experience in, and extensive knowledge of, federal and provincial/territorial legislation on a wide range of issues related to education and the health and well-being of children and youth. His dedication to learning is exemplified by a project he initiated aimed at improving literacy among children and youth. The "Hit the Books" program, conceived and developed by Mr. Weiner in the early 1990s, is a partnership between CTF, the National Literacy Secretariat of Canada, and Canada's two major league baseball teams. The materials produced helped motivate young readers to develop their literacy skills and are used by thousands of schools across Canada.

Harvey's presentation material includes references from the "School Plus: A Vision for Children and Youth," Task Force and Public Dialogue on the role of the School: Summary of the Final Report. This report was published by the Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit (SI DRU), Faculty of Education, University of Regina, in March 2001.

**Key Presentation Points:**

Teachers face a series of complex multi-layered challenges in trying to provide all students with the best possible learning opportunities, due in part to:

- Changing demographics (rural, urban, multi-culturalism);

- Context and sources of funding for public education combined with multiple, sometimes contradictory and often unreasonable expectations and demands; and a
- Dramatic societal shift from collective to individual responsibility.

“The impacts of these socio-economic factors within school environments, which are microcosms of the broader society, are increasingly becoming critical determinants of effective teaching and learning.” Harvey Weiner

Adding to the challenge are the endless turf wars in which various levels of government scramble to retain their sovereignty or, alternatively, to avoid responsibility for addressing issues of concern. This leads to a lack of policy coherence at the various levels of government, creating a silo effect. All levels of government can and must interact in a comprehensive and holistic manner if they are truly to meet the needs of all Canadian children.

“A prime example is that of school age children who seemingly disappear from the federal radar screen until they graduate or drop out of school. At age 5 or 6, when they enter school, they suddenly become the exclusive responsibility of the provinces/territories that, in turn, download some of that responsibility to school boards and municipalities, more often than not without transferring the required resources to do the job.” Harvey Weiner

**Current issues that are challenging schools include:**

1. Increased and diverse societal expectations
2. Demographic shifts
3. Globalization and the information society
4. Family stress
5. Changes in students' attitudes and behaviour.
6. Violence, for example bullying, etc.
7. Privatization initiatives - \$30 billion is spent in bringing foreign students to Canada for profit - this creates issues of capacity and unfair competition for Canadian children.
8. Poverty
9. Special needs children
10. Rural depopulation
11. Curriculum reform
12. Human resources services integration

**Major considerations and factors include:**

1. The lack of policy coherence on issues affecting education between various levels of government in Canada at the federal, provincial, municipal and school board levels, as well as the impact of international influences on domestic policies, in particular, those dealing with trade in education services.
2. Teachers have considerable contact and opportunity to work with and for the interests and needs of children - sometimes even more so than their parents. Challenges include providing all children with appropriate learning opportunities; dealing with the diversity

of children's backgrounds and experiences, funding issues, as well as unreasonable and sometimes contradictory expectations of what schools are meant to achieve.

3. Finding ways of overcoming the turf wars between the various levels of government and, in consequence, the conflict between sovereign control versus policy coherence. Because of the control issue we often end up with a lack of policy coherence, and negative effects at the program and services level.
4. Children's needs are not neatly divided up. We need more holistic approaches. Poverty, family instability, media and societal violence are key elements. They have tended to generate a seemingly endless stream of ill thought out reform initiatives.
5. The integration of profoundly challenged special needs students into regular classrooms, under the guise of inclusion, but more often as a cost cutting measure without appropriate resources and support, also creates stressful situations and forms part of the daily experience of teachers in Canadian schools.
6. Canada's immigration policies do not take the educational needs of newly arrived children into consideration. Lack of policy coordination between various levels of government is also at the root of this problem. In addition, the specific education needs of refugee children also tend to be ignored in public policy debate.

**How the role of teachers has changed dramatically in recent years:**

- They are increasingly becoming surrogate parents;
- Funding cutbacks often mean they assume responsibilities previously designated to specialist staff including, librarians, psychologists, guidance counsellors, nurses, and those qualified to teach music, art and physical education;
- They are increasingly helping to provide for children's basic needs and often through out-of-pocket expenditures.

These changes in role clearly indicate the need for a different societal approach. The collaborative model developed, piloted and promoted by the NCA within the NGO and voluntary sector during the past few years to address early childhood development needs offers promise in that regard. The trust and cooperation we have built among member organizations of the National Children's Alliance demonstrates that there is a better way. It is now time to extend that successful model to include children and youth in the six to twelve age group and beyond. Partnerships that are expanded to include all levels of government and the school boards are essential to make a difference.

"The work of the Alliance is the most promising and enriching work I have been involved with. The degree of collaboration and the results speak for themselves. We owe much to a number of key people who have stepped up to the plate and are doing so much work on behalf of Canada's children and youth." Harvey Weiner

The collaborative model of the Alliance to address early childhood issues and building a platform for 6 to 12 is a better way to pursue change and gain support. If we can succeed in improving our access

and involvement with the different levels of government we can be even more effective and successful.

The collaborative model to be considered and developed is not a one size fits all. Nor is it without challenges and cautions to be addressed. It is however, the avenue to meet the needs of all children and youth in Canada.

### **What are the implications of the collaborative model for the education sector?**

First of all this approach would re-focus the professional role of teachers away from non-educational needs. Many of the tasks that teachers are currently either obliged to perform, or assume out of necessity, to meet non-educational needs, would become the responsibility of school-linked or based health care, social services or justice professionals.

The teacher would be a member of the team, working and spending more time with parents and others in the community, contributing specific expertise and knowledge and sharing a common goal with other service providers to provide a '**seamless day**' for each student.

To that end, "The School Plus - A Vision for Children and Youth" Task Force Report prepared for the Saskatchewan Government and released March 2001 presents a number of unique and innovative ideas for the school as a hub. The report proposes the school as the venue for all children's services; the community benefits from all these resources and would identify additional essential resources and work to obtain them. In this way, needed resources are collectively pursued. All agencies, organizations, businesses, trades and churches are seen as potential resources for the school. The model is developed based on the concept of providing integrated services that are school-linked or based. Each community would benefit from all available resources, and would identify additional essential resources on an as-needed basis and work to obtain them.

Providing Community Leadership implies an expanded role for Principals:

1. Developing collaborative structures that involve staff, parents, and the community in school related decisions.
2. Building teacher capacity to work and participate in the new environment by sharing leadership and power with them.
3. Building a shared leadership capacity in the community that includes parents and others in the community.
4. Working with teachers and the broader community to develop diverse educational programs to meet a variety of student needs.
5. Developing the leadership capacity of students.
6. Providing in-service to staff on the delivery of services.
7. Communicating with parents and the community about interagency initiatives.
8. Making constructive use of the school building after school hours to serve community needs.
9. Soliciting feedback on school programs from parents, the community, students, and teachers, and using data collaboratively to plan for change.

"The Saskatchewan Task Force rejects the current trend of asking schools to contend with more issues: to deliver more and more services; and to meet more and more needs that schools were never intended to meet; and this, more often than not, with fewer resources". Harvey Weiner

The approach would take a developmental rather than a deficit approach to children. The school itself is seen as a community resource to be shared outside of school hours under appropriate supervisory conditions.

It bears repeating that collaborative models are the key to success. However, collaboration requires capacity building, and capacity building requires time and resources. This cannot simply become another add on to a teacher's already heavily charged workload. To accommodate these changes, either the teacher's workday would have to be extended or the amount of instructional time would have to be reduced. Harvey Weiner

On-going evaluation and school-based research on the pedagogical and sociological implications of the changes introduced are also a requisite. The leadership role of school principals will be essential to the success of this process. In fact, leadership is required at all levels for this approach to work. Jurisdictional issues must be set aside. The sole objective must be to do the utmost for *our* children and youth ... not *my* children, or *your* children, but our children.

Concluding remarks:

"There are many obstacles to overcome. They should not be underestimated. The challenges are huge, but we have an enormous opportunity to seize the moment and work to develop a comprehensive and integrated model for children aged 6 to 12. Calculated and collaborative risk taking is a requisite for all partners, but the potential rewards for children, youth and Canadian society are relatively untapped and well worth the effort. Each and every one in this room needs to share the responsibility to make this happen. If we don't, be assured no-one else will."

#### Questions and Comments for Harvey Weiner

**Q1.** There are barriers to getting into schools between 3:00 and 6:00 pm for recreation programs. Is the Teacher's Federation doing anything to deal with this?

**A1:** The Federation does not work directly with teachers. We work through member organizations. We try to put forward ideas and models to allow the issues to move forward, and we help to create fora for discussion. The challenge is the control issue mentioned earlier in my presentation. School boards determine who can access schools and under what conditions. There are some success stories of collaboration, where the school has become the community hub. However, finding the balance between sovereignty, which various institutions continue to insist upon, and the broader interests of the wider community is a continuing struggle.

**Q2:** Who would have the responsibility of coordinating all the resources if we moved forward with the school model as the hub for 6 to 12? From a public health point of view the principal is the gatekeeper, and they definitely need to be committed to the vision for anything to happen. However, principals are inevitably overwhelmed with administrative duties. A teacher could be the "champion"

that could do the job better, however teachers already experience a very full day. Freeing up teachers' time is a huge challenge. Therefore, do we need to seek funds for an onsite coordinator, someone who understands community building and community mobilization process?

**A2:** To build this type of capacity critical and radical shifts in responsibilities are needed. Personally, I don't believe the coordinator needs to be the principal. It can be any person who the group sees as a leader, and who is able to take on this responsibility. This will inevitably require an infusion of some resources, and perhaps additional staffing. However, we must strive to break down the bureaucracy and sovereignty impulses within our own communities and organizations. If we are unable to do this at the local level, we will never be able to do it. This is a critical issue that needs to be addressed in evaluating the education system and the role of the school as a hub.

**Q3:** Regarding the idea of the school as a hub, one of the problems in Ontario with this model, is that many of the things that are happening from a government perspective are antithetical to this model. Funding cuts have meant less space for community groups to use, and user fees to access it. Silos are being intensified by our current funding structure. We made progress in the late 1980s and early 1990s towards the school as a hub, however we've gone backwards in the past ten years. Can you comment on that?

**A3:** We are definitely facing more difficulties today than we were 10 to 15 years ago. There are considerable variations provincially, unfortunately more on the negative than on the positive side. The fact that this taskforce report came out about a year ago shows that at least in Saskatchewan, major stakeholders were able to get together, discuss these issues and propose models for the future.

"Local initiatives offer the best prospects for success. We are trying to grow flowers in fields of weeds." Harvey Weiner

**Q4:** Do we need to find coordinators to facilitate the partnership and development and implementation process?

**A4:** Yes. More resources are needed, and it could be a teacher who would be released from teaching to coordinate the initiative. We need to shift our thinking about current staffing and break down the sovereignty impasse within organizations in our local communities.

Closing Comment: While there are a lot of things flying in the face of schools becoming a hub, the Saskatchewan Report shows us there is potential for it to work.

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**H3. Innovative Mentoring Programming with Public/Private/Voluntary Sector Involvement, Prepared and Presented by Michael McKnight, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada**

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Michael McKnight is the National Executive Director, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, and he has worked in the field of children and youth for most of his career. He began as a child welfare worker with the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa. After seven years in this position he left for a position in technology and adult instructor training. Just prior to his current position as Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, he spent four years in Human Resources

Development Canada where he worked in a program funding national voluntary social service organizations and child welfare research.

Michael has a B.A. in Communications from Carleton University, a B.S.W. from York University, and is currently completing a Masters in Management (National Voluntary Sector) from McGill University. He sits on the National Children's Alliance and the sub-committee focusing on the implementation of the National Children's Agenda, the National Youth Serving Agencies Coalition's Executive Committee and the sub-committee developing a national youth agenda, and has recently agreed to sit on a panel for Industry Canada making recommendations on amendments to the Canada Corporations Act section on Director's and Officer's Liability.

### **Mentoring Program Background:**

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada (BBBSC) was having difficulty in recruiting male volunteers as traditional Big Brothers. It was discovered through research that they would be more successful in their recruitment if there were opportunities for shorter time commitments available that involved relationships that are less intense than the traditional Big Brother relationship. The organization repositioned the volunteer experience to match this need, by adapting a Hamilton in-school mentoring program. Today, seven years later, there are about 7,000 to 8,000 young people matched in 125 local member agencies in 700 to 1000 schools across Canada.

In school mentoring evolved as a partnership between a school, a school board, businesses, funders and Big Brother Big Sisters of Canada. Rather than creating traditional Big Brother/Big Sister relationships, in the mentoring program volunteers go into schools where they are matched with one student for one hour a week. For volunteers this requires only a short time commitment that is spent during daytime hours, instead of during the evening when they could potentially be spending time with their families. For kids this means that they spend one hour a week outside of class with their mentors.

The mentoring program is not a formal education program. This program does not focus on literacy or tutoring, instead it is about improving academic performance through developing positive attitudes about being in school. Thus far, the program has been very successful. Luckily, it hasn't taken a great deal of effort to get started.

Each one of us is interdependent on each other to develop healthy communities. No one is 'self-sustaining.' Michael McKnight

### **Partnerships:**

The mentoring program runs on the generous monetary and in-kind contributions of its multiple partners:

- A grant of \$110,00 from Human Resources and Development Canada allowed the organization to develop the materials (poster, brochures, the manual and video) to launch the program;
- The McConnell Foundation now provides 2 grants of \$150,000 to local agencies as seed money;
- Nokia has provided eleven grants of \$5000.00 over the last three years for local seed money;

- The school identifies children for the program;
- BBBSC conducts the screening, trains and supports the mentors;
- Local businesses give employees time off;
- Around \$7 to 8 million has been generated for this program annually from many sources (United Way, Manitoba provincial government).

This is a program to help kids in our communities, and it is truly a partnership between public, private and voluntary organizations. Michael McKnight

**Profile of Children in the Mentoring Program:**

Children in the Mentoring program are mostly boys who are experiencing behavioural problems and school attitude issues, at school, and are specifically referred by their teachers. They are almost exclusively of elementary school age, and are mostly in grades 1 through 4.

**Profile of Volunteer Mentors**

Volunteer mentors are mostly women who tend to be a little bit older. Volunteers tend to have lower levels of formal education and have only limited time available.

**BBBSC has carried out a great deal of research on mentoring, and the results say that:**

- Children who participate in mentoring programs are less likely to be involved in violent behaviour, smoke, drink or be involved in drugs;
- 78% of boys who experienced mentoring programs, who came from families on social support do not now depend upon social support themselves;
- 64% develop more positive attitudes towards school;
- 60% develop better relationships with parents;
- 64% develop higher levels of self esteem; and
- Un-excused absences from school dropped.

**Studies with the Volunteer Mentors indicated that:**

90% said they saw positive changes in their children in increased confidence and literacy levels. 92% of the mentors said they were more productive at work and worked longer hours. Consequently, employers can be advised that this program acts as an investment in their employees. This rationale works as a positive recruitment tool for Big Brothers Big Sisters.

**Challenges:**

- Educating school boards
- Negotiating 'who owns the kid'. This has been a struggle around collecting research. Schools do not have the resources to participate in research with Big Brothers Big Sisters.

**In a nutshell: From the beginning BBBSC has been able to:**

- Use market research in our communities to find out what volunteers would respond to;
- Find the niche where kids can be helped, which is through schools, where resources were diminished to help kids;
- Attract an initial funder and obtain the material produced to kick start the program across the country;

- Access individual funding to create some critical mass in programs, which then opened doors for additional funding, and recruitment of mentors.

#### **The Impact of the Program:**

The organization had to look at programming from a new lens, and this has resulted in 70% organizational growth and expansion over five years. It has created a momentum for the organization with the volunteers, staff and Board. School boards have been phenomenally supportive.

Ontario's Promise has helped Big Brothers Big Sisters to leverage resources in the corporate community to build new programs. One such program that Big Brothers Big Sisters has just kicked off in collaboration with Ontario's Promise is e-mentoring. While there is a bit of resistance, the organization's philosophy is 'let's try it' and see what an impact we can have, what other partnerships will evolve out of it and hopefully in three to four years Big Brothers Big Sisters will have experienced 70% growth again!

#### **Question and Answer Period:**

**Q1:** Is there an ideal age for mentoring?

**A1:** Elementary school age is the preferable age range. However this is only because high school children don't necessarily want an adult in their school, regardless of the potential benefits. A program that is being run in Windsor has been very successful, and the sentiment from that community is that the optimal age was eight years old.

**Q2:** Are there any plans to tap into retired teachers and principals for the mentoring program?

**A2:** Yes, some communities are doing brown bag lunches to recruit more senior age volunteers.

**Comment:** While the remark was made that children belong to the school, they also belong to the family. It is very important to have participating children's families sign off on the mentoring program. This not only provides parental permission but also provides a venue for involvement in the lives of children for parents.

## **Friday Afternoon**

### **I. Identifying Policy Options - Plenary Discussion**

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The roundtable is the first key step in identifying the Alliance collective policy options for children ages 6 to 12. Input into this process is key, as is the commitment to stay with the Alliance to help participants remain involved beyond today's discussions.

Participants were asked to focus their discussions on three points:

- Identifying barriers to good public policy for Children Ages 6 to 12
- Reflecting on the "Making the Case" points from Thursday
- Identifying policy options:

- o If you could make changes in three critical ways, what would you do?

### **List of Policy Options developed through the discussion:**

#### The importance of community based initiatives/municipal involvement in the policy process:

1. Develop a national process and a supportive conceptual framework by which individual communities can establish their own vision for a healthy community, then build specific focus on children ages 6 to 12 within that context.
2. A national framework is needed with local implementation so communities can determine the way to meet the needs of their own citizens. The first step might be to approach the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) to build a partnership and help implement these policy recommendations within the healthy communities framework.
3. Develop a strategy that will empower local governments and people working at the local level to become the deliverer of programs and services. This means that NGO's and municipalities need to participate, not just be consulted, in future planning processes.

#### Integration of services:

4. Funding criteria must be adapted to require and support the delivery of integrated services for children ages 6 to 12.
5. Provide infrastructure dollars (e.g. renovations, enhanced programming) to require and support renovations, enhanced programming, and building of new schools which also function as wellness centres, where services are coordinated and provided for children.
6. Be sure of the values we need to promote. Are we creating silos by splitting 0 to 6 and 6 to 12? Do we need to re-position and advocate for a continuum of needs for ages 0 to 18? This would inform the vision to promote intergovernmental integration to be in alignment with community integration.
7. Explore other models for coordinating and integrating service delivery. Pursue funding to pilot applicable models.

#### Creation of a mechanism to monitor and evaluate the implementation of public policy for children:

8. Advocate for the creation of a Children's Ministry with provincial/territorial equivalents. Policy would be coordinated based on the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child.
9. Work towards strengthening accountability mechanisms through things like report cards and outcome documents that are honest, comprehensive and transparent. Create an Office of

the National Children's Commissioner, whose role would be to produce and monitor these reports.

Funding structure:

10. Advocate for a different funding structure. Current funding structures pit organizations against each other and creates fragmentation within the sector. The structure also inhibits innovation and exploration
11. Advocate for policy change using funding formulas based on needs not just per capita ratios.
12. Use an economic model to sell and educate these policies. Focus on the long term economic benefits of creating healthy communities.
13. Advocate for policies that will reward success and savings. Savings then need to be re-invested into programs and services, such as recreation and justice.

Use a lens of social inclusion for all policies:

14. Focus on children with special needs and abilities to ensure that there is a supportive transition to school life. There is also the need for a supportive developmental transition for children between pre-school and kindergarten as well as for adolescence (between elementary and high school), for potential school dropouts and especially for children with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). Use the middle years health and well-being needs as the 'lens' for the development of all issue and policies. Their health needs must be a marker for policy decisions. For example, when developing policy, it is important to use a regulatory framework based on children's development standards. Using the impact of smog levels as an example, policy should be developed from a perspective of a 60-pound child not a 200-pound football player!
15. There is a need to keep a focus on the issue of access for Canada's northern remote communities. There is a huge need for children's programs in this region, as children often have to leave their families for care.
16. All levels of government must stop planned tax cuts and significantly increase investments for programs and services affecting children 6 to 12 years of age to enable communities to improve social inclusion.

Return to a social policy agenda:

17. Advocate for the government to make a commitment to end child poverty, as part of a national action plan. Poverty and economic equality are key determinants of health, however within Canada there is insufficient public awareness and commitment to ending child poverty.

18. There are great plans for land use and transportation, but what we really need is a three to five year plan for children, a 'living process' of community involvement with a vision and goals, an iterative loop for input and feedback, and a broad range of outcome and indicators to track progress and savings. Depending upon feedback, the plan would remain a dynamic road map for children's service delivery.
19. Advocate for federal involvement in social housing.
20. Advocate for more decision-makers to return to the social policy agenda as the public policy driver rather than the financial agenda. Urging that the social needs of children should become the centre point of decision-making. Building on that, it is important to counteract the 'cult of self-sufficiency' and advocate for more "family friendly" policies and programs.

Involvement in the policy development process:

21. Engage citizens through public education and awareness. Children are the clients, but they are also citizens.
22. There is a need for broader public dialogue in developing policy options. Canadians can develop an informed opinion on possible frameworks that can be used to develop policy for children ages 6 to 12.
23. The recreation sector needs to be at the table.

Social Union Framework Agreement:

24. Leverage the principles of the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA). Rather than create something new, focus on the already implemented Agreement, and add transparency and accountability.

**J. Closing Remarks**

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Marie Pierce from the Canadian School Board Association provided some insightful comments to wrap up the two days of learning and collaborative thinking.

I am really optimistic. I think the passion and commitment in this room is giving everyone the needed boost to go back in the trenches and try and make real change in the communities in which we work - whether it's at the national, local or provincial levels. Marie Pierce

Summary:

- We know that children are at risk and the risk is increasing.
- We know that children need integrated services.
- We know that real change occurs at the community level. (However, this is not an excuse for downloading!)

- We need to remove roadblocks. The primary criteria for policy and funding should be: " Does this serve children, or does it create barriers to development and implementation for communities?"
- We know that there are innovative programs out there working with few resources but many committed people.
- We know that the politicians are not listening (or we are not giving them the right messages).
- We have learned many good reasons why children in this age group are a policy priority, and that there are key barriers to good policy creation for them. The key is to develop and engage in collective policy options for change.

**Our road to Success:**

- ☑ We need to expand our allies. For example, we should include seniors, the corporate sector, and youth. We need a coordinated approach and we need to agree on some common strategies and messages. When we lobby we need to have a clear picture about what it is we are trying to achieve.
- ☑ We need to rebuild trust with politicians and bureaucrats, who are not necessarily our enemies.
- ☑ We need to advocate about the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA), and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- ☑ We need to discuss how to facilitate an integrated service model process. We need to provide tool kits, resources and look at capacity building. The integrated service model seems to be accepted as a given. But we need to discuss how to facilitate integrated approaches and what this really means. It is fine to say we need to integrate and work collaboratively, but communities need tools and models. One model does not fit all communities.
- ☑ We need to be clear about and tailor our primary messages. We need to disseminate them in a coordinated fashion. We need to strongly position the importance of the developmental model, from birth to adulthood. We need to talk beyond ourselves to the non-converted. We need to get other groups involved.
- ☑ Social inclusion is a model that has been discussed during these two days. As an association we are very supportive of that approach, but we also need to be clear about what this means, and how it might be implemented.
- ☑ Over the last two days there has been a lot of focus on the fact that real change takes place in the community. This gives me a lot of hope, but also a little bit of concern. Sometimes the "community-based approach" is a euphemism for downloading, the idea that communities can be left to implement programs, but are given insufficient resources to do so. If we really mean that we should use a "community based approach" we need to look at resources, tool kits and capacity building. However, one model doesn't fit all; a program that is successful in Prince Edward Island should not necessarily be piloted in Toronto. However, if we look at enough programs, we can find common elements that help ensure a greater possibility of success in looking at community based approaches - and this is a role that the Children's Alliance can play.

- ☑ Another clear message has been that community development needs to happen in the schools. We need to define what is meant by community-schools. This term has been around for years, and it is now time to explore what community schools might mean. Moving towards community schools also means that school boards, teachers, municipalities, and other agencies will all have to give up 'turf'.
- ☑ We have good principles in play and these don't need to be rebuilt. We need to agree on these and create a common base from which to act and provide messages.
- ☑ We have to look at universality and targeted services and funding. We need to clarify which of these approaches the Alliance supports.
- ☑ We need to remove road blocks. Advocate for a change in legislation for policies from the perspective of ' Do they enable or inhibit communities from making real change?' So many pieces of legislation put barriers in place that don't allow communities to be innovative. Yes, we need accountability and general parameters for decision-making, agreement on governance, but let's examine some mechanisms to facilitate this change.

Leadership is about passion - there is a lot of passion in this room! I am very pleased that over the last day and a half I have had my passion rekindled, with the discussions that we've had. I really am optimistic that the National Children's Alliance can help work with other partners to facilitate some changes. Everyone is welcome at the Children's Alliance. We are really truly trying to build a national, provincial and local movement, which will benefit the youth and children in our communities, and I think that the discussions we have had today and yesterday are a really good starting point. Marie Pierce

**Closing Comments: Dianne Bascombe**

The Alliance is linked with the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children, and on the World Summit, so we are not working in isolation. The Alliance will continue to forge partnerships with municipal governments, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and others.

Finally, the Alliance really does try to work with the model of shared leadership and work with the model of making a contribution, as a facilitator and catalyst of change. To that end the Alliance thanks, and looks forward to hearing from all of the Roundtable participants.