



National  
Children's  
Alliance

Alliance  
nationale pour  
les enfants

# National Symposium

## "Building Momentum"

March 22/24 2002

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## **A. BACKGROUND**

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The National Children’s Alliance invited its members across the country to participate in three days of strategy development around the Alliance priorities for the next two years. Sixty-five plus representatives of the membership came to Ottawa to share their best ideas and thoughts in the discussions.

The participant list, slide presentations and the four Symposium discussion papers are available on the Alliance website: [nationalchildrensalliance.com](http://nationalchildrensalliance.com). The discussion papers included:

- “The National Children’s Alliance Strategic Priorities” by Dianne Bascombe
- “From Precious Resource to Societal Accessory: Canada’s Children Six to Twelve Years of Age” by Bob Couchman
- “Monitoring the Early Childhood Development Agreement and Child Outcome Indicators” by Karen Kidder and Karen Scott
- “An Intervention Strategy for the Health Care System Reform: A Draft Submission to the Romanow Commission” by Shelley Callaghan.

## **B. SYMPOSIUM PROCEEDINGS**

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### **B.1. Welcome & Symposium Overview**

The Chair of the National Children’s Alliance, Dianne Bascombe welcomed the participants and provided an overview of the three-day agenda.

The theme chosen for the Symposium was “Building Momentum” as it was a timely opportunity to create the collective strategies that will facilitate implementation of the Alliance’s key priority areas. The objectives established for the Symposium were four-fold.

1. To develop a strategy that will address the implications of monitoring the Early Childhood Development Agreement (which is the enhancement and expansion of services through expenditures made by provinces with the federal investment), and the well-being of children through child outcome indicators.
2. To develop policy directions for the Alliance for children ages 6 to 12, leading towards a national agenda.
3. To develop a strategy that will provide Alliance members with recommendations for their participation in the current regional consultations of the Romanow Commission on Health Care System Reform.

4. To develop communication and advocacy strategies to promote the key priorities and the work of the Alliance and the national organizations with the federal government, and the participants with their respective provincial/territorial governments.

## **B.2. The Alliance Strategic Directions: Presentation & Discussion**

*Presenter & Facilitator: Dianne Bascombe*

### **Presentation Key Points**

The purpose of the presentation and discussion was to inform members of the thoughts and progress of the consultations to date in the development of the Alliance strategic priorities. The Symposium brought the work of the Steering Committee to the larger group to open it to dialogue, debate, revision and further development. There was much discussion from the fall through December, including a retreat to pull together a framework for presentation to a larger group in February. The Steering Committee took the results of the retreat and synthesized the strategic directions into the document presented during the Symposium.

There remains a strong commitment to try to drive the National Children's Agenda (NCA) back to a higher profile on the provincial and territorial government agendas. The rationale of the Alliance was to get the issue on the public agenda by framing it through the NCA and retaining a holistic and multi-sectoral approach.

The objectives of the discussion with members present at the Symposium was to check-in and make certain that the work of the Steering Committee was on track and moving in the right direction, and to ensure that all the pieces that needed to be included had been identified. The Alliance would then be able to put 'some meat' around the strategic directions developed through this process. All of the discussions during the Symposium will feed into their continuing development.

The presentation and the subsequent discussion were framed around six draft strategic directions.

1. Promoting the vision of a National Children's Agenda
2. Supporting the ECD Agreement, including work on monitoring and child outcome indicators
3. Developing a national strategy for children ages 6 to 12
4. Working with regional constituent groups
5. Promoting the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child through closer ties with the Canadian Coalition on the Rights of Children (CCRC)
6. Addressing youth issues with National Youth Serving Agencies (NYSAs).

## **Presentation Questions:**

### **1. What is the status of the National Youth Serving Agencies (NYSA)?**

*Response:*

Many of the youth serving agencies are members of the Alliance and there is a fair crossover of membership. They are not at the point of having a concrete policy agenda, as they are currently engaged in creating networks with youth serving agencies. The NVO acts as the Secretariat for the NYSA.

### **2. What are the indicators that point to the need to re-vitalize the Early Childhood Development Agreement?**

*Response:*

There seems to be a loss in the excitement, momentum and policy development processes with the federal government and there are varied degrees of uptake in the 'torch' for active policy dialogue and action among the provinces and territories.

### **3. Is it wise to divide kids into age groups (re: 0 to 6 and 6 to 12)? What is the benefit or value of doing this versus taking a more holistic approach?**

*Response:*

This is a continuing discussion for the Alliance, and begs another question: "How much does the Alliance align itself with the government agenda and priorities?" The other concern is that the converse would be that 0 to 6 is 'done/over' but this is absolutely not true. The Alliance therefore needs to keep the 0 to 6 focus while it expands into the 6 to 12 age group. The participants resoundingly agreed that the job was not done yet for children aged 0 to 6. The ECD Agreement is the first step, but the 0-6 issues are absolutely not finished. The key message for the Alliance is: "Stay nimble and light". The Steering Committee will re-frame this strategic direction to ensure that this does not become the perception.

Members were invited to submit their comments after the Symposium. It was also a hope that during the three days of discussion and the development of communication and advocacy strategies would provide the direction needed to move forward.

A request was made to ensure members that the process is iterative in that:

- It will take into consideration changes in the environment and remain responsive and flexible
- The strategic directions can be added to, as some felt that time is needed to reflect on the language used, for example, and to develop a national strategy for children.

It was noted that it is important to spend more time on lessons learned about the EDC Agreement before the Alliance carries forward.

### **4. Where is Quebec?**

*Response:*

A concern was raised about Quebec's lack of participation in the process. A delegate raised the question: How does the Alliance feel it can or does represent children and youth living in

Quebec? In response, a delegate speaking on behalf of a national organization felt that Quebec is at the table through the voice of national organizations as they represent their regional, provincial and territorial counterparts. It was noted that a number of individuals from Quebec had been invited, however they and others from other provinces and territories were not able to attend for a number of reasons.

The developmental process of the Alliance is also a factor. It has been working for the past five years mainly at the federal level, but it is now beginning to reach out to provincial and territorial groups and networks.

**5. How does the Alliance work with regional, provincial and territorial groups who want to work in collaboration?**

*Response:*

The Alliance as a group needs to talk about what is the most effective way to work on some of these issues with the regions, provinces and territories. The Alliance has no membership fee or structure and currently only national organizations are members. It was reiterated that the volunteer Steering Committee and all Alliance committees are open to volunteers and that there is a rotating Chair.

The Alliance currently works through national organizations, but as a group, members are here for three days day to determine what the Alliance is to do. Capacity is a factor in the scope and reach of its activities as the Alliance is resource 'lean'. This determines the degree of outreach and the amount of activity possible. Members must be cognizant of building expectations about what the Alliance can deliver. For example it does not have a national database. Activities move forward depending upon the capacity and contribution of its members, as currently the members are the Alliance's connection to the regional, provincial and territorial and groups and networks.

**6. How can the Alliance be supportive of regional, provincial and territorial networks in a way that is helpful but not top down? Do the national members believe that these groups are informed and are receiving the information they need?**

*Response:*

There is a clear need for the Alliance and these groups and networks to link. It was noted that the connections are becoming stronger. National members send Alliance information to their members and boards and they use the information about the Social Union Framework and the Early Childhood Agreement.

This is the context and content that the Alliance struggles with as it attempts to 'hear' what is happening on the ground. The Alliance really has a huge challenge with the design of health and social services in Canada. How it can help the regions, provinces and territories and share resources and developments are topics for discussion and development during the Symposium and beyond.

## **Positioning the Discussion**

The participants were given three key questions and some criteria for developing strategic directions to guide the table discussions.

### ***The three (3) key questions:***

- What are the collective strengths of the Alliance and what works?
- What are the challenges in realizing the Alliance's agenda? What are the strategic directions of the Alliance for the next two years?

### ***The Criteria:***

- Organizations cannot effectively "go it alone"; a collective voice is needed.
- The strategic directions fill a gap in the current policy dialogue.
- They have the potential to 'fit' the agendas of government.
- They are consistent with the Alliance vision.
- They have the potential to 'excite' constituencies and mobilize communities.

In general, the participants supported the strategic directions presented.

## **C. DEVELOPING AN ALLIANCE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN AGES SIX TO TWELVE**

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*Presenter & Facilitator: Harvey Weiner*

The discussion paper "*From Precious Resource to Societal Accessory: Canada's Children Six to Twelve Years of Age*" was the basis for the presentation and as a springboard for discussion to develop Alliance policy directions for children ages 6 to 12, leading towards the National Children's Agenda.

Following the presentation, table discussions worked through the issues and challenges of this age group, and on Saturday, policy statements and directions were developed.

### **C.1. Key Presentation Points**

The purpose of the paper was to stimulate dialogue, to raise questions and to jar the public, government and our children's services system into finding solutions. The paper was not 'a rant' against organizations or institutions rather its intention was to get people thinking.

Approximately 2.7 million Canadian citizens are 6 to 12 years of age, which is a substantial part of the population. The paper noted that the social and educational development of children is affected by three distinct influences, and these are in order of importance: (1) the family; (2) the community; and (3) governments.

A key point of the paper is that a key determinant of well being for children includes the love and resilience of families and the support of one important adult. As Couchman noted: "*All children require someone in their life who is absolutely crazy about them.*"

Couchman feels, and this is a feeling shared by many, that the situation for children is getting worse in our country, not better. The ECD Agreement is one success, but cutbacks across the social fabric far outweigh the investment of the ECD Initiative. As long as government sets the pace, and until the public values and sees children as our most precious resource, there is not going to be much progress. The voluntary groups and organizations have to assume a leadership role.

Couchman listed what children need and how their needs can be met.

***Needs:***

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Safety                             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Health care          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stimulating education |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cultural & recreational enrichment | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sense of empowerment | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nutritional food      |
|  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Literacy support     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Healthy environment   |

***Meet Their Needs by:***

- Being conscious of all the proven determinants having to come together in a holistic manner
- Providing seamless services
- Integrating and co-ordinating services.

The paper comments that all children should experience normative programs. Cutbacks have had an impact on health promotion and prevention through a declining access and level into sport, cultural and recreation activities, the school and community support services. There is a need for tertiary programs for youth with special needs, mental health services, child welfare, mentoring, specialized family support, health care services and home and respite care.

***The paper discusses the current major trends and issues.***

- Increasing child poverty
- Family insecurity
- Under-funding of voluntary sector agencies serving children
- Lack of critical services such as mental health programs for children
- The perception of unsafe communities
- Bullying
- User fees for normative programs
- Cutbacks for tertiary programs to support special needs
- Fragmentation of services and programs
- Increasing health issues such as obesity, asthma & diabetes
- “Latch-key” kids.

**C.2. Key Discussion Points**

Table discussions and report backs addressed the following key questions posed for discussion during the 6 to 12 sessions. Participants were asked to try to look as much as possible from a children’s lens in their discussions.

1. What are the key determinants of health and well being for children in the age group 6 to 12?
2. What are the major current trends and issues affecting the health and well being of our children?

3. What external services and programs address the needs of children and enable them to realize their full potential?
4. How might the Alliance address areas of policy development and practice to insure that the system works for children?

### **What are the key issues for children 6 to 12?**

#### **1. Diversity**

- There is still a lot of discrimination and some participants noted that this is on the rise.

#### **2. Health**

- Eating disorders, obesity, fast food and poor nutrition are a growing concern.

#### **3. Universality & Access to Services**

- The lack of an integrated approach by groups ties into shrinking resources and the decline of the role of government in social welfare
- Universality of professional services and community-based programs that support child activity in communities (e.g. recreation, sport, culture and child care)
- Question: Are the determinants of health different for children? Does this need further discussion?

#### **4. Technology**

- The increased sensory input for children to manage, such as the Internet, TV, videos and video games
- Rising technology and the increasing divide between the have and have-nots

#### **5. Self Esteem**

- Children need to be taught to make healthy choices.
- Children need to have lots of people loving them. They need champions to care for them.

#### **6. Education**

- The education system works as a universal program and it is a vehicle for the Alliance to move forward.

## **7. What ‘the child sees and what people are seeing’**

- What is the role of teachers when they see kids who are not learning? Will they help? Will neighbours or family members help?
- What does a child see? What are the good things, what are the bad things, and what and how can the Alliance influence these?

## **8. Economics**

- The effect of a low income, e.g. lack of resources for food, housing, recreation and sports
- Job losses, industry collapses and labour market issues
- Socio/economic pressures upon families, such as working parents and the fallout of increased stress on parents emotionally and financially
- Poverty issues related to money and the lack of time, housing and special needs
- Again, the gap between the have and the have-nots

## **9. Screening**

- There needs to be more screening in terms of mental health, at-risk children and nutrition.

## **10. Safety & Fear**

- This is a key issue in the home, school and community, from the playgrounds and streets to sexual exploitation.
- Child victimization and violence is an issue. There is a much higher rate of rape and abuse of children than of adults.
- Safe and caring communities are needed for all aspects of childcare and other needs.

## **What are the societal causes or barriers that face children ages 6 to 12?**

- The ethnic and cultural composition is changing and there is a need for new services when current services are already lacking.
- The Aboriginal population is growing but not their services. For example, in Manitoba services are limited to school hours.
- Support services are not meeting societal needs.
- Faster supports are needed and fewer are available. There is more money in the justice system than in prevention.
- There is a lack of real understanding about child development needs and issues.
- There is a perception that children are commodities of the parent. Education is needed about social responsibility.
- Consumerism and increasing marketing is creating pressure on children. Children are not taught to use information well and to make informed decisions.

- The family support structure is changing as it is held that the family should look after their own family problems and needs. People feel lonely and more isolated.
- Community strengths are not acknowledged. They are perceived as being unsafe which make schools and families more inward looking.
- Decreasing volunteerism and burnout is an issue.
- Lack of parenting skills, work and home balance, and the lack of support for children in care are added barriers.
- The capacity of the community to support children's' needs is decreasing.
- 'Professionalizing' everything and looking for interventions are having a negative impact upon communities to deal with their own issues.

### **What are the policy challenges?**

- The widening gap between have and the have-nots
- The decrease and burn out of volunteers
- The lack of child friendly workplaces and support for parent (workers) to visit or volunteer for a child's school activities
- The lack of 'seamless services' to families due to the silo approach of government resources and processes
- The question of public will and waiting for government to set the pace
- The public's lack of education about social responsibility (i.e.: walking kids to school)
- National child benefits and minimum wage
- Jurisdictions for policy development
- Children not being valued
- Lack of community capacity to provide community based solutions

### **General Comments and Questions**

- Ours is not a caring society. It is important to help parents establish a better relationship around the child.
- There is a continuing issue about family economic insecurity and the impact of labour market issues on families.
- The lack of integrated approaches means there are gaps and holes all over the community. Parents do not have the supports they need.
- School is major mind-set center of children's lives and they set up children's view of the world.
- The impact of technology is another discussion.

- Work, family balance and stress are growing.
- There is a lack of affordable family housing.
- Barriers at the community level are an issue, such as safety at home and in the community, loneliness, and intentional and non-intentional injury.
- The demographics are changing, including Aboriginal and multi-cultural populations.
- There are continuing federal versus provincial jurisdictional issues.
- The limitations of the ECD Agreement as a model for social policy are a concern.
- Other issues include special needs (children in care, foster and adoptive children) and environmental issues (green spaces and community spaces).
- Myths to address include:
  - Investment: That the devotion of energy to raise children in this age group sacrifices something in the future or other resources
  - Privacy in the home and between agencies: That everything that happens behind closed doors should stay there
  - Power: That government leads only when citizens give them the power
  - Asset-based Approach: That the cup is half empty, rather than half full

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## SATURDAY, MARCH 23

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### **C.3. Policy Statements & Directions**

*Facilitator Mike McKnight*

Dianne Bascombe framed the discussion by reviewing the issues and challenges identified during Friday discussions that need to be considered for 6 to 12 policy development.

#### **Summary List of Issues Identified for 6 to 12**

1. Promoting social responsibility
2. Pursuing an asset based approach
3. Major trend towards kids with problems
4. Changing attitudes to valuing kids as a sacred trust
5. Children living in families and universal access
6. Fear, loneliness and safety
7. Lack of family security
8. Avoiding the shopping cart approach on how we make policy change and moving towards a community planning mechanism
9. Using the school as entry point (seamless)
10. Children with special needs

Mike then presented the current Alliance policy and action positions to help determine the starting point. The purpose of a review of the Alliance policy positions was to ensure that the

participants did not develop contradictory policy directions or statements during the Symposium discussions.

### **Alliance Policy Positions and Actions**

As Mike noted, there is the power of a single list, and the Alliance list gets longer as work progresses. The Alliance 'team' will make a difference. It is, however, a challenge to create powerful and focused policy statements. There is research and data about the issues but the Alliance still needs to put forward clear policy solutions to politicians. It needs to find a way to promote the research through communications and to show the value to those who hold the purse strings.

After September 11th, the Alliance recognized that national security issues needed to be on the agenda. However, it is important that investment into economic and social development continues. The Alliance also recognizes the need for the federal government to work with Aboriginal governments, organizations and communities with programs destined for Aboriginal youth and families living on and off reserves.

### **Alliance Policy Positions & Actions:**

#### **1. Standard of Living for the Well-being of Children & Families**

- Work with the provincial and territorial governments to expand the NCB to all low-income families.
- Invest \$2,000 per child through a tax credit.
- Review the impact of tax policy on families with children who have special needs.
- The federal government should increase parental leave from 55% to 75% of earnings as well as eliminate the waiting period. The Alliance should recommend an expansion of eligibility to include others such as the self-employed and part-time workers. Reducing processing time and improving conditions of entitlement would stabilize income support.
- The federal government should show leadership as it did with the establishment of the ECD Agreement and extend the implementation of the National Children's Agenda, and establish a partnership with governments and the voluntary/NGO sector to address the urgent needs of children of youth ages 6 to 18.

Examples of needed programs include:

- Literacy
- Stay-in-school
- Community-based after-school programs to reach children and youth at risk
- School to work transition
- Preventative mental health services
- Recreation

- Special needs
  - Family support and preservation.
- It is important to recognize the rights and responsibilities of youth to participate in public policy decisions that affect them. Also important is support for the voluntary / NGO sector to work with youth across Canada in a process of youth engagement to develop a national youth agenda.
  - In the context of future enhancement to the current ECD Agreement, the federal, provincial and territorial governments should work collaboratively on a coordinated national plan to address the urgent childcare needs of children and their families.
  - Establish a national housing plan with additional resources for social housing.
  - The federal government should maintain its position not to make commitments concerning public services, health and public education at the upcoming (GATS) negotiations.

## **2. Citizen Engagement and Accountability**

- Fund third party monitoring of expenditures of the ECD Agreement.
- Create sustainable mechanisms to engage the voluntary / NGO sector in the policy development processes at the federal level, particularly within the context of federal/provincial/territorial decision making about the National Children's Agenda.
- Develop and implement a national policy and funding strategy to enable capacity building in the Voluntary / NGO sector to develop comprehensive indicators to measure child well being.
- Fund third party monitoring in the 2002 review of SUFA.
- Develop an integrated public education campaign on the determinants of child health and support awareness and monitoring of the United Nations Convention of the Child.

### **The Results of the Discussions: Policy Development**

Participants were asked to review the policy challenges identified Friday and to add other they felt important to the discussion. They were asked to select two or three that they felt were most important and develop a strong policy direction for each of the levels: federal, provincial/territorial and municipal. Participants were asked that their policy suggestions be clear in jurisdictional focus, that they indicate if they had public support, that they were reflective of communities, and that the policy directions were defensible through research.

The issues selected for discussion and the input from the table discussions are summarized below.

<b>Issue# One: Promoting Social Responsibility Through Education</b>
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Change from meeting the needs of 'my child and my family' to meeting the needs of 'our children and our families'. Policy needs to be integrated with a long-term plan, comprehensive strategy and a policy framework. The Alliance needs to address seamless, non-competitive policies for all children ages 0 to 18.

***Policy Directions:***

**Federal:**

- Accept social responsibility as a Canadian value and fund a 'massive' public education campaign to counteract popular media. All four levels need to work together to coordinate and integrate social responsibility.
- The federal government needs to show leadership for broad child and family policy with appropriate funding.

**Community:**

- An appropriate tax break is needed.
- Because of the effects of globalization, many key employers are no longer connected to their community. Decisions do not take the community into account.

**Volunteers:**

- All levels of government need to formally co-create a policy for volunteerism that significantly increases the quality and quantity of volunteers that support families and children.

<b>Issue # 2: Pursuing an Asset-Based Approach</b>
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- Children are the hope for the future. Between the ages of 6 to 12 children are moving away from the family towards independence and self-confidence.
- It is recognized that families living in supportive and adequately resourced communities are essential to the healthy growth and development of children. Best/effective practices need to be identified and supported in the area of community capacity building.
- Families must have universal, adequate and timely access to programs, support and information. As a society we need to recognize that effective parenting is essential and requires specific skills, and that information programs must respect the diversity of families.
- Meaningful inter-sectoral collaboration, cooperation and communication are essential to build healthy communities that support children. One way to achieve this is to have more dialogue supporting joint policy development between ministries and sectors.

***Policy Direction:***

- Provide support to parents.
- Provide public spaces. There is a lack of resources for sport, recreation and cultural activities.

**Issue # 3: The major trend and focus is towards kids with problems, such as mental health, obesity, teen pregnancy, failure and dysfunction.**

***Policy Direction:***

- To get an agreement among all levels to allocate a fixed percentage of resources to preventive services.

**Issue #4: How do we as a group change the attitude that kids are an undue burden to that of being a sacred trust?**

***Policy Direction:***

- Change the word commitment to ‘give in trust’.
- Refer to the two paragraphs of pages 23 & 24 of Bob Couchman’s paper: re: The United Nations Coalition for the Rights of the Child, National Children’s Agenda and the CRC.

Federal level:

- Take what’s already there and implement!
- Increase the NCB to \$4,000.00.

Provincial /Territorial:

- Extend the NCB to all low-income families.

Community:

- Help kids develop independence through support systems that provide opportunities to develop.
- Mobilize existing resources
- “Open” Public Spaces.

**Issue # 5: Children live in families and all families do not have access to services.**

***Policy Direction:***

All levels:

- Look for urban planning and transportation solutions as many activities are outside the home and neighbourhood.

## Federal:

- Develop a comprehensive strategy with funding to communities rather than providing a menu of programs.
- Create a national agenda for all children that includes the following criteria.
  - ☑ The agenda is entrenched in legislation and therefore not subject to changing political will.
  - ☑ It has accountability mechanisms that reflect overall performance as well as unique differences.
  - ☑ It is developed with communities that are assured of stable resources to support the development, coordination and evaluation of a continuum of service.
  - ☑ An independent, inter-sectoral and non-governmental body that operates with a best practices approach should be responsible for establishing a strategic plan to move the NCA forward.
- Implement a national skills and training strategy that includes:
  - ☑ A childcare, and a before and after school care strategy with national standards and resources for each province/territory
  - ☑ Flexible accountability mechanisms
  - ☑ Sustained funding for integrated service delivery
  - ☑ Third party monitoring
  - ☑ Education of public regarding safety issues such as risk behavior, safe environments (home, school, sports), and domestic violence/abuse (physical, mental and sexual)
  - ☑ A comprehensive family policy (e.g. European models)
  - ☑ Increased education and screening for people in the system that are involved with children 6 to 12 (e.g. coaches, recreation personnel and teachers)
  - ☑ An urban planning and transportation strategy developed through the child's lens with supports for children and families that live outside their immediate communities
  - ☑ Look at models that work, for example having policies that require collaboration as criteria for funding.
- There is a leadership role for government to ensure equitable access to all. There needs to be a 'coming together' of broad government and community initiatives to make it happen in a sustainable manner.
- Increase the child benefit for age 7 plus rate of tax back income; ensure that families receive the total amount in a timely manner and that it is independent of other income.
- Increase social assistance.
- Increase the minimum wage up to livable wage.
- Provide support to all programs for low-income families to keep parents in the labour market.

- The corporate community needs to understand its responsibility to have a family-friendly workplace.
- Decrease income gaps.
- Return to a progressive tax system instead of overall tax cuts and “hiding” taxes.
- Address workforce issues such labour codes and legislate part-time benefits.

#### Provincial:

- Increase knowledge in schools about the issues of peer safety and social discrimination.
- Ensure the tax benefit is not seen as additional income and not taken away from low-income families.
- Social assistance rates need to be raised to an acceptable level.
- Increase the minimum wage to a livable wage.
- Vision and dental care is key for this age group and needs to be provided.
- Provide home care for special needs families.
- Address poverty among Aboriginal communities.

#### Municipal:

- Provide safe areas for playgrounds, street sports, hockey and skateboarding.
- Provide affordable and available services and support for after school activities (e.g. physical activity, recreation, arts, culture, history and drama) that can help support low-income families to keep working.

#### Community:

- Ensure the roads and park areas are safe from predators and drugs.
- There is a corporate responsibility to lessen the gap between the working poor and executive positions and to provide family-friendly workplaces.

<b>Issue # 8: The Risk of Using a Shopping Cart Approach</b>
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- The Alliance needs a mechanism for policy change that avoids the ECD shopping cart approach and moves towards a community planning mechanism. It also needs communication and planning.

#### ***Policy Direction:***

- Engage in causing a shift of values to meet the needs of our kids and our families.
- Elevate the level of “caring” beyond the voluntary sector to government.
- Re-activate the National Children’s Agenda for ages 0 to18 in a seamless manner.

- Change funding policy so that it goes to support an integrated planning approach that ensures equity of access so that collaboration is a pre-condition for funding (multi-level).
- Government has a leadership role. The federal government needs to assure equitable access.
- There is a need to integrate the government policy framework with communications.

Federal

- Develop a comprehensive strategy rather than one of specific program scope.

<b>Issue # 9:      Entry to School as Transition</b>
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- There is a need to identify what are the universal school entry issues.
- Children of this age group are developing their potential. It is necessary to establish and provide the culture and environment to enable them reach to reach their potential through the schools, neighbourhoods, workforce, parents and families.

***Policy Direction:***

Municipal/Community:

- Provide green and public spaces for activity, fun, recreation and development such as library access for all families in their neighborhoods. Green spaces and public spaces for families are important, rather than having to transport families outside their neighbourhood.
- The issue of attitude is a community responsibility.
- Support services need to be available and affordable.

<b>Issue # 10:      Children With Special Needs</b>
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- Policies need to be developed for the issues of disability, in care, foster or adoptive homes, and environmental issues such as pollution, respiratory problems and green spaces.

***Policy Direction:***

Federal: (Equal Access to services)

- Decrease NCB after age 7.
- Initiate tax reform to promote progressive policies.
- Develop labour codes and regulations for non-standard jobs.
- Provide vision, dental and home care.
- Increase the minimum wage.

## **D. DEVELOPING AN INTERVENTION STRATEGY FOR THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM REFORM PROCESS**

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*Presented & Facilitated by Janet Davies*

The Romanow discussion paper was prepared and presented during the Symposium to allow participants to respond with their perspectives and to review and provide input into twelve (12) recommendations drafted for discussion. The task for Symposium participants was to think about the draft and where it is going.

### **D.1. Presentation: The Context & Overview of the Romanow Document**

#### **Context**

The Prime Minister announced a commission to review health care in Canada April 2001. This Federal initiative complements (and duplicates in some views) the work going on in the provinces: for example: the Quebec Clair Commission Report; the Saskatchewan Fight Commission Report; and the New Brunswick and Alberta reports. All have proposals or recommendations to improve the health care system, including sustainability, delivery modes, expansions to programs and services, integration and prevention. However how these might be paid for is a bit less positive.

Also referenced was the work completed by the 1999 Senate Committee who have the mandate to look at health care in Canada in an international context. Their mandate includes looking at best practices, human resources, and corporate sector activity, all within the absence of disease parameter.

The Romanow Commission has created a lot of research activity; as well thirteen national stakeholder groups were invited to submit a paper on four issue areas by November 1<sup>st</sup> 2001. The four issue areas are: Canadian values; sustainability and funding; quality and access; and leadership, collaboration and responsibility. From these submissions and the Commission's very active website, Romanow produced an Interim Report in February that was to reflect the consultations. However the consultations are not complete.

In the consultations to date, there are some consistent key messages.

- There is not enough money going into health care. The public is well ahead of the governments in this issue.
- The public is willing to pay taxes as long as it is a dedicated tax, as long as the public can be assured that the money will improve health care, and as long as there is accountability back to the taxpayer.
- The public do not want a parallel private health care system in Canada.
- The public is also making comments about prevention (mental and physical health or determinants components).

The Romanow final report is due in November 2002, and this report is seen to be or expected to be a real milestone in the Canadian health system debate.

### ***Overview of the Romanow Discussion Paper***

It was suggested that if the Alliance wanted to get attention on kids, it needed an independent paper to the Commission that focused on the health service system through the lens of children, youth and their families. The discussion paper was developed by the Alliance in consultation with members of the Health Action Lobby (HEAL) to position this core approach. The paper addressed the four main points outlined in the Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada's Interim Report as they related to children and youth issues, needs and priorities.

#### **Point One: Canadian Values**

1. It is clear that Canadians want and need more for their children. Research conducted by the Canadian Policy Research Network has demonstrated that across the country, Canadians feel that:
  - Children are a high priority for public spending
  - Healthy child development in the early years requires a sustained high investment by all stakeholders
  - Health care and education are essentials that should continue to be the backbone of Canada's universal social programs.
2. Another important Canadian value is access to timely and appropriate care. Based on this the health system needs to recognize the special developmental needs of children and youth.
3. There is a great deal of interest among health professionals to work together in teams to provide the best possible care for their patients. This team approach is particularly important for children and youth who often have many professionals involved in their care.

#### **Point Two: Sustainability & Funding**

The current health care system operates in silos. One in particular is the funding allocation to education, health and social services. Each group works separately and competes for funding, often vying around similar, complementary initiatives. This silo approach creates unnecessary competition for funds as well escalating a lack of understanding about how groups can work together to improve the circumstances.

Working together from the beginning will decrease overlap and integrate services. By having integrated health, education and social services available to children, youth and their families, there would be greater collaboration among professionals and greater ease for families to use the system.

As part of health care system reform it will be essential that long-term funding commitments be made to allow groups to plan for the future. It will also be important that this process is transparent about how much, who, on what basis are funds being spent, and the results. Monitoring of results will be essential to determine future spending priorities. National child and youth health goals need to be determined through multi-disciplinary collaboration. These goals

will contribute to the framework of accountability. Health funding specifically allocated to children and youth should come with conditions to ensure governments are accountable for spending health funding on improvements that have an impact on health outcomes for children and youth.

### **Point Three: Quality & Access**

What is currently being funded through the Canada Health Act is not adequate to meet the needs of children. Home care, long-term care, rehabilitation services, pharmacare, public health and primary health service delivery are all essential services for children and youth. There are many issues, including:

- Costs
- Mental illness
- Geography
- Medication
- Environmental health
- Paediatric home care
- Waiting lists
- At-risk populations
- The health and status of Aboriginal children

### **Point Four: Leadership, Collaboration & Responsibility**

To create a model based on best practices, common wisdom and mutual support the transfer of knowledge must be supported by a proper infrastructure at the community, regional and national level. It must also be remunerated as a legitimate function of the service delivery system. Building alliances requires unprecedented transfer of knowledge among all players. NGO's play a critical role and are in a unique position to bring it all together. Systematic health related data collection is imperative.

## **D.2. The Alliance Recommendations**

1. Establish a protected, long-term budget for universally accessible child and youth health care programs and services.
2. Expand and re-distribute essential health care services within the Canada Health Act to ensure equitable access for children and youth.
3. Initiate integrated health human resources development.
4. Develop increased accountability within the health system based on national goals for child health outcomes.
5. Create integrated systems among health, education and social programs/services with the child as the central focus.
6. Explore alternative models of service delivery to promote cost-effectiveness integration and coordination of the broad range of health services.
7. Develop disease prevention and health promotion strategies to address determinants of health through the public health system.
8. Exempt health care from the rules of international trade.
9. Increase funding to support the design and management of research, surveillance, data collection systems and regulatory frameworks.

10. Support the delivery of technological advances in geographically, socially and economically isolated communities.
11. Recognize the role environment plays in child/youth health and include health environmental health strategies within the health reform system.
12. Expand health services to include mental health diagnosis, treatment and care.

### **D.3. Discussion & Feedback**

The participants held table discussions on the recommendation of their choice. There were two over-arching comments made. One, that identifying outcomes would strengthen the Alliance response, and two, that the voice of children is critical.

#### **Recommendation # 1:**

Establish a protected, long-term budget targeted for universally accessible child and youth health care services and programs.

#### *Comments:*

- Change wording to: Establish a protected, sustained, comprehensive, timely, long-term budget targeted for universally accessible child and youth health care services and programs. If these were added, all other recommendations would be realized.
- Add: 'funded regardless of the family income'. This was originally in the goal statement and the Steering Committee will look at re-inserting this piece.
- The concept of a child's voice needs to be identified within a separate recommendation.

#### **Recommendation # 3:**

Initiate integrated health human resources development with health matters specific to children and youth.

#### *Comments:*

The country is seriously short of medical and health care professionals. Training slots have been decimated by government policy, and as a result we need a new generation of professionals. The Alliance needs to stress the lack of health professionals as a result of training shortages and government policy.

**Recommendation: #5:**

Create integrated systems among health, education and social programs/services so that the child is the central focus.

*Comments:*

- There needs to be better understanding and capacity to:
  - ☑ Help meet the needs of the child
  - ☑ Ensure more efficient and effective use of service provider time and resources
  - ☑ Develop a more comprehensive approach to the issues and problems identified, resulting in less duplication
  - ☑ Affect more and better recognition and understanding by the community resulting in more support for the programs and being offered.
- There needs to be a clear identification of the gaps in the services being offered and what is required to fill these gaps more effectively. There would be more focus on prevention if the three levels of government worked together to provide their services.

**Recommendation # 7**

Develop disease prevention and health promotion strategies that address the determinants of health for children and youth through the public health system.

*Comments:*

- A broader support for the programs offered is needed.
- Delete the words “determinants of.... as a separate recommendation inclusive of what they actually are, as drafted below:

- 
1. *Development of disease prevention and health promotion strategies that address children and youth through the public health system*
  2. *Implementation of policy and programs to address the determinants of health, including:*
    - ☑ *Economic policy to address mal-distribution of income*
    - ☑ *Policy to support community capacity building*
    - ☑ *Environmental protection policy to protect children’s health*
    - ☑ *Universally accessible child development services*
    - ☑ *Nutrition and food security policy*
    - ☑ *Housing policy*
- 

This recommendation would:

- Result in reduced disruption of children’s lives and lengthy health treatments

- Allow vital resources to be maximized and reallocated towards need, providing a broader support for the programs offered
  - Improve literacy levels because of a sense of self-esteem
  - Allow for an incremental shift of emphasis to prevention
  - Reduce dependence upon downstream resources as the child matures
  - Improve long-term economic benefit
  - Wellness, not illness would become the focus, emphasizing the positive side of health and the long-term health benefit.
- The brief should make the primary point that addressing the determinants of health will have health impacts, but the health care system has a relatively small contribution to health.
  - In the framework given to the Commission, the response needed to be within these parameters.
  - Through the child's lens:

**As a seven year old and within one year.... if the recommendations were implemented:**

- I would not be hungry.
- I would feel safe at home, at school, and in public places.
- I would not need a puffer.
- I would be happy and would have a happy family.
- I would be learning new and fun recreation and sport things and doing fun activities.
- I would have lots of friends
- I would know my neighbours.
- I would not worry about getting sick because I was immunized.
- I would not be fat.

**Recommendation #11**  
 Recognize the role environment plays in child and youth health and include environmental health strategies within the health care reform system.

*Comments:*

This recommendation is part of the safety issue and preventative ideology. It focuses the strategy on food and nutrition and places the initiative on government and industry to recognize child health.

Fewer allergies, asthma, better health and sleep would decrease health costs down the line. Implementing this recommendation would force integration of policies beyond funding among health, industry, and transport.

**The Next Steps:**

The Alliance will revise and improve the document, add the anecdotes that you and make it available electronically for Alliance members to use as a basis for a submission where they are yet to occur or to submit to the Commission website.

*A sustainable health care system starts with an investment in children and youth.*

## **E. THIRD PARTY MONITORING OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE AND CHILD OUTCOME INDICATORS**

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*Presenters: Karen Scott and Karen Kidder, Canadian Institute of Child Health (CICH)*

The Symposium was a fitting forum to develop a better understanding of monitoring and its challenges and considerations while meeting everyone's diverse needs. As well, it was the opportunity to:

- clarify issues around the ECDI;
- facilitate a dialogue nationally and regionally among various sectors and bring a local/regional perspective to bear on ECDI monitoring;
- create an inclusive policy and program development process; and to
- assist communities in designing community-based monitoring initiatives.

The paper was prepared and presented during the Symposium to generate discussion on how best to monitor the ECDI from the perspective of non-governmental, voluntary organizations serving and advocating on behalf of Canadian children and their families. It is hoped that the paper will stimulate discussion, beginning with the Symposium and beyond.

The presentation included setting the context for the discussion, a discussion on the use of indicators in monitoring, a review of monitoring models, and a proposed process for monitoring the ECDI. Following the presentation, participants engaged in table discussions about the paper and its implications for the Alliance.

### **E.1. The Discussion**

The Steering Committee is looking for direction and advice to set the direction, and the discussions will help inform the communication and advocacy strategy.

## **1. *What does it mean to be a third party monitor?***

- Government cannot be its own watchdog. As a third party monitor, the Alliance would be in a stronger position to hold governments accountable to their commitments and to advocate for the appropriate use of money. Third party monitoring is important to ensure that the ECDI does what it says it will do. The Alliance would be in a position to influence provincial and territorial governments, as the monitoring could be a tool to ‘discomfit’ them if they do not meet their commitments.
- Being a third party monitor means being a holder of social values. The process raises awareness of issues and increases the profile of Alliance organizations.
- The Alliance could clearly demonstrate that current efforts are not enough and could place pressure on governments and others to meet the actual need, not simply to increase expenditures.
- The Alliance needs to develop a third party vision of early childhood development services and supports (the basket and also the context for the basket).
- Monitoring would hold services accountable as well. There might be a better understanding of the services and their impact, although this would definitely depend on the type of information collected. It could also equalize the relationship, in that the group that has traditionally been monitored will be monitoring the group that has traditionally done the monitoring!
- The Alliance can develop a model with which it is comfortable and can select critical indicators. This is about meeting Alliance needs in the sector. Perhaps government expenditures are the place to start. There would be a responsibility to report back to all community-based stakeholders.
- Some participants wondered if the Alliance should become involved in third party monitoring of the ECDI. Others wondered, if not us, who? This group felt strongly that monitoring needed to be conducted. It would be too easy to not sustain the ECDI without substantial documentation of what was done and what was achieved.

## **2. *What is the value to the sector?***

(Assuming a multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral approach)

- Monitoring would help inform how and whether the National Children’s Agenda is being advanced.
- Third party monitoring is crucial to inform advocacy and to develop more powerful core and specific messages.
- Third party monitoring could be a process for developing national consensus and consistent messages regarding what the Alliance wants in the basket.
- The monitoring could become a source of credibility and shore up advocacy efforts.
- The monitoring could be a tool for identifying needs.
- It could also provide the information needed to inform community development.

- With the right kind of indicators the Alliance could find out whether the initiative was effective. It could also feasibly lead to expansion and improvement!
- Third party monitoring might help to understand which services are most successful. On the other hand, this might be more the role of scientific evaluation.
- Through the monitoring process, knowledge would be gained about what is working and what is not, what are the gaps and what are the emerging needs.
- This process might allow service providers to focus on service delivery with the knowledge that advocacy support would be provided. Not everyone would have to spend so much time in advocacy work.

### 3. *What are the strengths and weaknesses of the sector?*

- Objectivity was described as one of the strengths of the sector. It is arms-lengths from self-interests or political agendas. There was some argument about voluntary sector objectivity as organizations do have their own agendas. The government should not be evaluating their own process with parties who have a vested interest.
- The Alliance is an independent body that has an interest in ensuring that resources are allocated appropriately. Evaluation was identified as important.
- The sector has a strong knowledge (experiential knowledge as well as some program evaluation) of what is working in the community.
- The holistic, multidisciplinary approach is a strength and a weakness. There is the danger that individual organizations will be held up by ideological differences.
- A strength is the connection between Alliance organizations and the community, its diversity and wide range of advocates.
- There are already established outcome indicators (a variety of models at the national, regional and municipal levels). New work by Clyde Hertzman and others such as the Early Childhood Indicators mapping project may be useful. This process can focus on service indicators.
- It will be necessary to develop the capacity of the sector in its expertise in data and databased advocacy. It is not clear right now who within the sector would be taking on this role, whether it would be a shared activity across a broad spectrum of organizations or whether a few organizations would take it on. Where is the expertise needed?
- As a third party monitor, there is the potential to influence the direction of future data collection and to put pressure on governments to develop the capacity to collect data.
- A role in third party monitoring might place some organizations in an awkward position vis-à-vis their funding organizations. Would funding be jeopardized?
- It means finding the time, resources and staff. This will not happen unless the sector is funded to take on this role.
- A danger would be setting unrealistic expectations in scope and timelines.
- What would be the changes in the role of volunteers? It is important not to have unrealistic expectations.

- Could there be a risk of creating another bureaucracy? No “new body” should be created.
- Dissemination of information might not be as effective.

#### **4. *What about shared monitoring?***

There would be the comfort of being forthright with government and funding for voluntary sector participation. The question was raised: “Would the government be prepared to share information”?

#### **5. *What are the unresolved questions?***

- What is the Alliance role as the third party?
- Could the Alliance do this?
- Who among us would take the lead?
- How would the Alliance support it?
- Should the Alliance take this on or should it look to government to do it?
- Where would the resources come from?
- Is there a strong enough interest in the sector to sustain it? If this is believed to be essential, there is a selling job to do.
- What does the Alliance need to do to make it happen? Is simply tracking dollars the place to start? This in itself may be challenging enough.
- Is it the ECD Agreement or children in general that are being monitored?

### **E.2. Summary Comments**

- The group accepted generally the paper and the process upon which it reported. Specifically, participants agreed with sticking to the commitments outlined in the National Children’s Agenda and the Early Childhood Development Agreement.
- The suggestion was made to identify different time frames for different outcomes, as some will clearly be longer term than others. The size or effect of outcomes is another consideration, as what can reasonably be expected will vary.
- Community-based audience is key. The information gathered through monitoring should be immediately relevant in the community.
- An important caution is that a generic basket works best if everyone is at the same starting point. Is this likely to be the case?
- It is also important to remember that we are not linking the ‘basket’ to specific outcomes. This is described as the “attribution problem”. The group questioned whose problem the

attribution problem really was. The government announces programs. The logic should be determined here.

- We need to avoid owning the program theory.
- The National Children’s Agenda can push for research on quality programs. This kind of research supports decision making around an effective ‘basket’, and from here government expenditures can be tracked.
- The concept of the basket was challenged on the grounds that it might be too selective, representing government choosing priorities rather than meeting the needs. Others in the group felt there was a need to be selective. Not everything can be monitored. Some specific goals are needed. The concept of the basket was also challenged on the grounds that it does not denote a continuum. This led to the suggestion of defining core services in every community. The core service proposal was also challenged on the grounds of being too selective. This issue was not resolved at the meeting.
- There are some reasons for discomfort with the ECDI around the amount of money and the sample rather than menu approach. It was not clear to participants that a third party monitor can demonstrate child population outcomes based on a flawed program. There is the risk that the ECDI would not been seen as leading to improved child outcomes and the funding would be cut. No one wants to undermine this initiative.
- What does the Alliance want to do? Monitor child outcomes or monitor the ECDI? The group felt it was the latter. Consequently, the group suggested dropping the ecological model and focusing on services and expenditures. Focus on the government’s performance. Focus on policy and funding and the impact on services.
- It must be remembered that this involves not just monitoring government, but also monitoring the delivering organizations. Are organizations comfortable with that?
- The outcomes of this kind of third party monitoring of the ECDI would be to focus public attention on the right questions and bring evidence to bear.
- Any third party report will be contested – but this is a good thing.

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### **E.3. Alliance Next Steps Re: Third Party Monitoring**

The participants felt it was important to step back and think about the role of the Alliance rather than getting into the details around the monitoring document, as at this point nothing is on the table and no strategy has been determined. The deliverable for the Symposium was the discussion paper with a framework, and now the Alliance needs to step back and look at the broader picture of child outcomes and indicators.

The Alliance is not set up to take on monitoring the ECD Agreement. It would use up all its time and resources. Also, it might jeopardize the Alliance if government funding for ECD advocacy is received on one hand, and on the other, the Alliance ‘calls them to task’.

The Alliance should not be the sole monitoring source but should advocate for another independent body to take on this role. The Alliance would recommend the framework, which is a better use of member’s knowledge and expertise. Another independent body leaves the Alliance free to do what it does best: visioning and advocacy. Using the Auditor General as a third party monitor was a suggestion as it is a strong independent voice. There was a comment that the Auditor General takes an efficiency focus and this could be an issue. This approach may depend upon the particular auditor.

The Alliance could play a supportive role around accountability, through for example: commenting on how funding was allocated and spent; on expenditures and outputs; on policy and policy analysis; and on providing a general ‘picture’ for each province and territory. A concern here is placing the Alliance in the middle of provincial/territorial tensions.

Finally, there was a concern that by getting involved in the monitoring the Alliance may be perceived as endorsing the ECD Agreement.

#### **E.4. Alliance Role Re: Monitoring Child Outcomes and Indicators**

The question is: “What would the Alliance monitor? The state of our children and/or the service systems across the country, and/or the Agreement itself?”

The Alliance cannot monitor child outcomes because of its resources (e.g. technical problems) and unrealistic expectations (e.g. the attribution issue). Monitoring child outcomes is a government responsibility and the Alliance role would be to push government to be accountable. The Alliance should take on a role as an alternative mechanism for accountability of the provinces and territories. How can the Alliance translate this accountability role at the provincial and territorial level into action? How can it integrate the diversity of current monitoring work?

The Alliance and its members however, are a critical voice in the monitoring piece. The Alliance needs to provide a framework for the provinces and territories and build a common vision and language. The provinces and territories then need to make the pitch, although organizations will make their own decisions. The Alliance members can buy into the ECD Agreement, promote the same messages and parallel the Alliance work. The suggestion was to take what’s similar, the common language, take it home and sell it to have a common front.

The Alliance needs time to build understanding and support by the provinces and territories and then it can mobilize existing resources (i.e. data collection). Members all have different resources and somehow they all have to find out how the needed work can be shared.

Alternatives to monitoring ideas included: videos, best practices and letter writing campaigns (although there are different appetites for these kinds of activities).

### **E.5. What is the Next Step for the Alliance on the Monitoring Project?**

The participants suggested that the Alliance explore the strategies listed below.

- Promote the good models across Canada (in particular Manitoba's).
- Develop a framework for monitoring the ECD Agreement in a popular report card format, and explore ways and means to support the provincial and territorial coalitions to use it and influence decision makers.
- Explore the Auditor General idea.
- Help provinces and territories by sharing information, research and best practices; and by providing a research base for legitimacy and how they might move the agenda forward.
- Move towards the development of a common tool.
- Develop a consensus around what the scope of the monitoring is going to be (and even further agreements that may be put on the table).
- Share dialogue of the 'critical analysis'.
- Develop a marketing strategy to promote and educate what the Alliance is doing in this area.
- Produce a national poster like "Where's Waldo?" but rather: "Money? Show me the money!"

It was agreed that the Monitoring Report would be completed with the input from the Symposium discussions and circulated to appropriate government departments. The key discussion points have been added to the discussion paper. This new version will be posted on the Alliance website. The Alliance will continue to share the feedback, as this will be used to determine its direction and decisions. By June, the Alliance will have thought this through.

## **F. BUILDING A COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY STRATEGY FOR 6 to 12**

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### **F.1. Setting the Stage**

The previous two days discussion resulted in good, solid content and the task was now to develop communication and advocacy strategies. The group focused their discussions and ideas on the 6 to 12 area only, as it was felt the Alliance needed to step back and reflect on what the role of the Alliance should be in monitoring before considering communication or advocacy strategies for this area.

Participants were asked, at their tables, to select one or more of the summary list of issues that were developed during Saturday discussions and develop communication and/or advocacy strategies.

**The summary list of issues is repeated here for reference purposes.**

1. Promoting social responsibility
2. Pursuing an asset based approach
3. Major trend towards kids with problems
4. Changing attitudes to valuing kids as a sacred trust
5. Children living in families and universal access
6. Fear, loneliness and safety
7. Lack of family security
8. Avoiding the shopping cart approach on how we make policy change and moving towards a community planning mechanism
9. Using the school as entry point (seamless)
10. Children with special needs

The table discussions included:

- what kind of communications the Alliance needed to have;
- the audiences that needed to be reached (i.e.: public, federal and provincial/territorial governments);
- the key messages for each of the audiences;
- an advocacy strategy for the federal and provincial/territorial governments;
- areas where and how the Alliance and the provincial and territorial organizations and networks can support each other in communication activities; and
- determining the next steps the Alliance should take to push forward an agenda for children ages 6 to 12.

## **F.2. Communication & Advocacy Strategies**

The table discussions generated a number of issue-specific strategies (some of which may be more line with advocacy strategies) as well as general advocacy strategies.

### **Issue-Specific Strategies**

**Issue # 1: Promoting (global) social responsibility through education for/to/about “our children”**

### **Target Audience: All levels of government, related organizations and the public**

*Key messages:*

- Promote core messages to all groups/audiences, such as the ones suggested below.
  - Our children - Our Families
  - Children Count.
  - Get help, Give help.
  - There is a child development continuum.
  - Children are here and now. They are not in the future and can't wait.
  - The job for 0 to 6 is not finished.

- Children are a collective responsibility whether you have them or not.
- Step up to plate now and give a damn!
- Kids are for life.

*Strategies:*

- Promote social responsibility by getting people to understand the reality of children and families living in deprived conditions.
- Develop a brief policy analysis that is easily digestible by the public and provide some data and research for government.
- Promote knowledge and use of social programs, and work to ‘normalize’ such use.
- Encourage volunteerism, from example, retired populations.
- Engage Canadians in the urgency of the issues, the needs of children, and the work that still needs to be done. This is to be accomplished through developing a country that practices social responsibility.
- Build public opinion support through a user-friendly campaign, such as Where’s Waldo.
- Promote a sense of social responsibility throughout all the Alliance’s work using the ‘Lifecycle’ approach to address issues.
- Strengthen the collective voice to take the sector beyond the silos. There is a better chance of making things happen by working together rather than individual efforts. Maximize the opportunities, work with groups and influence them to believe in the worthiness of children.
- Engage people with alternate views to find common ground, and dialogue with non-traditional groups about the issues.
- Educate people, influence future leaders, and teach young children so that they can develop awareness around social responsibility at an early age. This is the link with the education system and teaching social responsibility.
- Fraser Mustard was good at finding a piece of research and making it sexy and selling it. The problem is that children don’t stop living at age 6. Kids grow up to be adults. Look for a sexy study in the same manner, as did Fraser to get attention beyond ages 6, to the 7 to 18-age range (e.g. ‘Preparing for Hormones’ Study).
- Implement a campaign that speaks to ‘Ms. & Mrs. Smith’ and that focuses government attention on things like work/family balance issues and ‘persuades’ them to join the parade.
- Communicate a sense of passion about our children to the general public. If society backs away from our children we will in the end only fear them, and then social services is the only game in town. Engage and befriend youth to cease fear, borrowing the Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada approach and making it a cultural norm. Motivate the public to “care for” not “fear for”.

**Target Audience: Business & Professionals**

*Key messages:*

- These are your present and future customers, employees and shareholders.
- Understand that your workers have families and they can't necessarily afford in-home care.

*Strategies:*

- Engage corporate Canada, again borrowing from Fraser's approach, which was to find a champion that will speak to business about their future customers and workers. Corporate Canada is changing, and many businesses (i.e.: high tech) do not have supports for workers and families. Family-friendly workplaces are a place to start or advocating for on-site day care.
- Build on corporate consciousness about being a good citizen.
- Find cooperative corporate advertisers.
- Engage corporate Canada to carry messages to government about the economic advantages of a family-friendly workplace, quality of life and the recruitment and retention of workers.

**Target Audience: Federal Government**

*Key message:*

"Leave no child behind, in fact, leave no Canadian behind".

*Strategies:*

- Provide a tax incentive to employers that will allow parents to put time into their children's lives.
- Advance the economic circumstances (income security) for children and families. The NCB needs to be increased overall and not reduced for ages 0 to 6.
- Continue to push government and business on this issue, for example the concern about what is going to happen after 5 years of the ECD Agreement, for their next steps, and for funding a massive public education campaign on social responsibility.
- Target governments through some funding or tax cut mechanism for things such as freeing up adult talent in business to mentor kids ages 7 to 18.

**Target Audience: Municipal government**

*Key message:*

- Understand the issues of children in your municipality, be responsible for those issues and understand how your programs affect children.

**Target Audience: Provincial/Territorial Governments**

*Key message:*

The best interests of the child should be of primary consideration and concern, and this has implications not only on children's programs, but welfare and work-type programs.

## **Issue # 7: Income Security**

### *Key messages:*

- Impress upon the public that if we try we can do it! We are denying our responsibility as human beings if we don't support those with the least power. At the same time acknowledge the work of government(s) to date, emphasize that the job is not done, the resources are not nearly enough and provide data that supports this case.
- Economic security is the foundation.

### *Strategies:*

- Continue to network with other groups with like issues and whose agenda is income security to build the case for the impact of income security (and lack of) on children.
- Recruit a public personality to champion the cause and put her/him on the road.
- Address barriers to the labour market and the labour market structure.

### ***General Advocacy Strategies & Ideas***

- Implement a national campaign that emphasizes “our communities, our children”, and the contributions that people are making to make communities safe, fun, open and vibrant.
- Find ways and means to support and engage the voice of children, including Aboriginal children.
- Address the attitude shift required to educate people about the importance of, and need to participate in their community.
- Find credible peer champions to deliver key messages.
- Find our common identity as this will help produce a momentum.
- Find ways that don't require a lot of effort and could be molded to suit locally (e.g. Blue Box concept) to attract those not involved in children's issues to become involved.
- Share information and education through a modern marketing strategy. More fundraising is needed for marketing.
- Network with other income security groups and alliances focused on family income (housing groups, food security and poverty groups).
- Create a dual strategy to congratulate government on what it has done on one hand, but that it hasn't been enough on the other hand. There is a need to advance ways to enhance the payoffs for government.
- Use new technologies such as teleconferencing and chat lines.

### **F.3. Areas of Collaboration Between the Alliance & the Provincial/Territorial Organizations & Networks**

- Ways and means must be found for the meaningful participation by First Nations people in the aims and objectives of the Alliance. The needs of Aboriginal children must be explicitly referenced in its work and materials.
- Use connections among coalitions with existing tools and mechanisms to link the provinces and territories with the national level. Identify the existing groups in provinces and territories and let them make the connections. In Manitoba for example, the Childhood Development Committee, Healthy Child Manitoba and the Social Planning Council of Manitoba are working together.
- Replicate the regional consultations for 6 to 12 to inspire and focus local efforts to implement programming and policy that makes sense at the grass roots level.
- Share research and network using new technologies and find linkages and a common voice.
- Taking advantage of local media.

### **G. SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS**

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Dawn Walker summarized the common themes and messages of the Symposium.

- Keep the federal and provincial /territorial governments ‘feet to the fire’ of the National Children’s Agenda.
- Fulfill the vision that was articulated.
- As an Alliance look at monitoring on ECDI within the NCA.
- Communication and advocacy are vital activities for the Alliance.
- The Alliance needs to expand its vision from a program perspective to ages six plus and build its capacity in this area.

#### **Alliance Next Steps**

The Steering Committee will continue to consult with members through dialogue and building options and consensus. They will be in touch with members by June.

#### **In Conclusion: The Participants Speak**

- Give in trust. We have it in a number of policies; we just need to do it.
- Keep caring about kids.
- Kids are worth it.
- We can make a difference.
- If not us then who?
- Spread the word.
- Communities crazy about kids.
- The contagion of peace.
- The Rights approach.
- Fired up with passion & zeal.
- Make a fuss and create some heat.
- Inspired connections.
- Continued commitment.

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*Where there is life in the child there will be peace in the world. (Sandra Griffin)*

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Dawn thanked everyone on behalf of the Steering Committee. The great input and ideas given so freely by the participants throughout the three days will facilitate the Alliance moving forward in a common direction.