

National Children's Alliance (NCA)

E-mail Digest, week of 15-19 December, 2003

NCA ACTIVITIES:

1. **Invitation:** Communique from the Steering Committee
2. **Information:** Report on History of Funding, Mandate and Operating Principles of NCA
3. **Update:** Change of NCA Secretariat

NEWS FOR OUR MEMBERS:

1. **Announcement:** Anticipatory Call for Proposals
2. **Information:** New research on Canada's Child Protection System
3. **Conference:** of possible interest to our members
4. **Correction:** improved link to National Plan of Action

ISSUE ALERT:

1. **New Federal Cabinet sworn in**
 2. **Chair and Councillors of National Health Council named**
 3. **New funding for creation of Child Care Human Resources Sector Council**
 4. **Monumental changes to Child Labour Laws in British Columbia**
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NCA ACTIVITIES:

1. **New members are welcome to join the Steering Committee of the Alliance.** The Steering Committee is open to any member organization who wishes to volunteer their time. The Terms of Reference include: monitoring financial reporting; engage in strategic thinking with regard to project planning; are tasked with preparing recommendations for consideration by the full Alliance; ensure that communications processes are in place for this policy development; are responsible for government relations with respect to project deliverables; and ensure appropriate liaison and support to provincial/territorial networks. Steering Committee members are expected to participate in monthly meetings. If you are interested in being on the Committee, please contact Tara Ashtakala, (613) 238-1591 ext. 228, tashtakala@nvo-onb.ca.
2. **Please find attached** to this E-mail Digest a report summarizing the funding history, mandate and operating principles of the NCA. This

document would be particularly helpful to new members or those interested in joining the Steering Committee.

- 3. A new home for the NCA Secretariat:** In response to the winding down of the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations, the NCA has been holding discussions, with member organizations that have a broad mandate, to find a new host organization. A proposal will be circulated to members in early January, with a move most likely to occur by February. If NCA members have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Dianne Bascombe at (613) 238-1591 ext, 248, Dbascomb@nvo-onb.ca.

NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS:

1. Health Canada is soliciting applications for financial assistance grants from National Voluntary Health Organizations (NVHOs). The initiative is designed to help NVHOs build their capacity to respond to ongoing challenges and new opportunities, as well as to collaborate with Health Canada in enhancing the health of the public. The purpose of the program is to: invest in and strengthen the national leadership and human capital of organizations and to enhance the sharing of information and expertise across a wide network of national, regional and community organizations. For more information, please call the Office of the Voluntary Sector, Population and Public Health Branch, at (613) 952-0902.

2. The rising number of children being removed from their homes is raising fundamental questions about Canada's Child Protection System, according to a study released on 10 December by the **Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare (CECW)**. Entitled "Community Collaboration and Differential Response: Canadian and International Research and Emerging Models of Practice", the report attributes the increase in admissions to care as being due to a change in the types of situations being referred to child welfare authorities. Most of the cases involve neglect or exposure to domestic violence; however child welfare services in this country were primarily intended to investigate physical and sexual abuse. The increased demand for services requires that the whole community be mobilized to support the well-being of children and families. The report summarizes the research presented at a two-day forum, organized by the CECW earlier this year, which looked at the need for child protection services to be shared among medical, mental health, education and community services sectors. For more information, check out the website of the CECW at: www.cecw-cepb.ca

3. Just Act! Youth Leadership Conference will be held in Ottawa from 4 to 7 March 2004. The annual conference brings together youth and educators from across Canada to learn about human security issues and how to advocate for them in the community or teach them in the classroom. There will be presentations by experts in the field of human security, workshops in leadership skills and seminars exploring how drama, music and video can be used to enhance a campaign for global change. For more information, contact: War Child Canada, at 416-971-7474 or www.warchild.ca

4. Some of our members have indicated that the National Plan of Action on the website of Senator Pearson is difficult to find. The following link should take you directly to the PDF document:

<http://sen.parl.gc.ca/lpearson/specialsession/reports/Canada-NPA.pdf>.

ISSUE ALERT:

- 1. New Federal Cabinet sworn in:** Paul Martin took over the leadership of the country today and named his new team of Ministers. There is a fair mix of old and new faces in the Cabinet, as well as in the portfolios themselves. Of greatest interest to advocates for children's well being is the split of the Human Resources Development Department into separate Ministries for Social Development and for Human Resources and Skills Development. **Liza Frulla**, who will be the new Minister of Social Development, is a rookie MP from Quebec with a good reputation on social issues. A new Secretary of State for Public Health has been created, which will be occupied by **Carolyn Bennett**; this is good news for the Alliance, as she has been a long-time supporter of the NCA. Another old friend of the Alliance, the Hon. **Ethel Blondin Andrew**, will remain the Minister of State for Children and Youth. Media pundits have widely predicted that the current composition of the Cabinet will last only until the anticipated spring election.

As for the commitment of the new Prime Minister to children's issues, the NCA will be watching closely to gauge this in the next few months. Mr. Martin has characterized his new government as having the freshness and energy to renew the social vision of this country. He has publicly committed to reduce the national debt and lower taxes, while maintaining current levels of social program spending. He claims his priorities are early childhood development, disabilities, better health care and a better quality of life for aboriginals. He responded to calls for more spending on the military. He plans on delivering the federal Liberal promise of another \$2 billion in health care spending. However, analysts say that Mr. Martin

has had to amend his thinking on lower taxes after estimates of the federal surplus shrank, and is revisiting the possibility of cutting social programs.

2. **Michael Decter will serve as the Chair of the new National Health Council**, which will be situated in Edmonton. He will work with 25 Councillors, who will represent provincial and territorial governments, have expertise in certain areas and have experience addressing health care issues at the community level. The establishment of the Council fulfils a key commitment made by the First Ministers in their February 2003 Accord on Health Care Renewal. The Council will have a mandate to monitor public reports on the implementation of the Accord, particularly its accountability and transparency provisions. Alberta has declined to participate in the Council, claiming that its broad mandate will unduly interfere in its jurisdiction. The Council will collaborate with the Conseil de la Sante et du Bien Etre du Quebec.

3. **In one of her last acts as Human Resources Minister**, the Hon. Jane Stewart announced on 9 December over \$800 000 dollars of federal investment in a new Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (CCHRSC). She said this significant funding reflects the priority her government accords to children's early learning and development and recognizes how important child care providers are to the Canadian economy. The Council will have the mandate to address human resources issue that concern the child care community. Joanne Morris, the Chair of the CCHRSC, said that the Council brings together representatives from business, education and government to identify and understand sector-wide resource challenges and to implement long-term human resource strategies for the sector. It is expected that this commitment will not be affected by the changes to HRDC or the new Minister.

4. **The Government of British Columbia has posted the new child labour regulations** implementing Bill 37, The Skills Development and Labour Statutes Amendment Act 2003, which dismantled the previous child labour permit system and put in place voluntary, self-regulating measures whereby:
 - employers need obtain the consent of only one parent to hire a child aged 12-14 and not the consent of teachers
 - a child employee can be asked to work up to 35 hours a week during non-school time
 - there are no prohibited occupations under the new system
 - no restrictions on the time of day the child is required to work

In effect, due to reduced cutbacks in staffing provincial workplace inspection teams, parents in BC will have to manage on their own to learn about workplace hazards and enforce restrictions with employers.

The Society for Children and Youth of BC, UNICEF Canada, churches, school boards and a number of other concerned citizens have expressed their opposition to these changes. Fundamental rights of children and Canada's obligations under international labour conventions are being challenged.

You can read the changes to BC's Child Labour Laws on the website of the Provincial Ministry of Skills, Development and Labour:
www.gov.bc.ca/bvprd/bc/.

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