# CPRN DISCUSSION PAPER

## Moving Forward on Child and Family Policy:
## Governance and Accountability Issues

by

**Sherry Thompson, with Judith Maxwell and Sharon M. Stroick**

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# Foreword

Attention to outcomes for children has many different dimensions. One of them is the use of outcome measurement by government as part of an overall performance accountability system. This discussion paper explores this issue by examining governance and accountability systems for child and family policy in six Canadian provinces and the federal government.

The last few years have been a time of turbulence and change in policies for children and families. Key governance challenges include building a common vision and purpose, fostering collaboration across government departments, within the service delivery network, and between governments, and building a shared culture between the government and its communities. One particular challenge will be to improve relationships among governments including those of Aboriginal peoples, as well as their organizations, and communities. Another will be to ensure that voluntary agencies are able to maintain their advocacy role in the new environment.

This discussion paper is part of a three-year research project designed to address the multifaceted question, *What is the Best Policy Mix for Canada's Children?* The ultimate goal of the project is to help set the foundation for an overarching societal strategy for children and their families. CPRN seeks to stimulate new thinking about the kinds of interdependent and integrated programs and policies that could improve child outcomes in Canada.

I want to thank Sherry Thompson, who undertook this project during her tenure as a Research Fellow with CPRN during the first half of 1999, and Sharon Stroick, Manager of CPRN's Family Network, who assisted with the preparation of this report. I also want to thank our funders, especially the Canadian foundations that provided most of the financing for the project, along with a number of federal and provincial agencies. They are listed at the end of this report, as are the *Best Policy Mix for Children* reports. In addition, I want to acknowledge the contributions of the Advisory Committee members and the external reviewers whose advice and constructive criticism helped shape the entire *Best Mix* research program.


Judith Maxwell
December 1999

# Executive Summary

This paper provides an overview of the governance and accountability challenges that have been emerging within some Canadian jurisdictions and especially in federal-provincial relations. It explores some of the issues that have arisen as governments develop more partnerships and collaborative relationships with other governments, with non-governmental organizations, with regional and community structures, and with Aboriginal governments and communities. It begins to formulate and share best practices, and synthesizes the recommendations of participants at a CPRN roundtable on how best to move forward on policies for children and families in this changing environment.

Governments in Canada are instituting a 'focus on results' and becoming more interested in measuring policy performance. Several jurisdictions are using indicators of child and family well-being or 'outcomes' as part of this performance measurement process. Provinces are also increasing the transparency of the policy design and delivery process and some have changed their governance structures to integrate or coordinate services for children and families across government departments and ministries. Taken together, this enables all stakeholders to coordinate their actions around shared goals and objectives for children. This is especially important for voluntary sector agencies that deliver many programs and services at the community level. Efforts by government to manage interdependence -- across governments and across sectors of society -- suggest that Canada is inching closer to the creation of a broad-based societal strategy to support children and their families.

# Moving Forward on Child and Family Policy: Governance and Accountability Issues

Sherry Thompson, with Judith Maxwell and Sharon M. Stroick

## 1.0   Exploring Governance and Accountability

As part of CPRN's major project, *The Best Policy Mix for Canada's Children,* information was gathered about governance and accountability practices related to policies for families with preschool children in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick.  This information was supplemented with a review and analysis of the 1999/2000 budget documents and associated performance reports from these six jurisdictions and the federal government.  A brief overview of historical and theoretical approaches to governance and accountability issues was undertaken to provide a contextual backdrop for the analysis.

Building on this information, CPRN hosted a national roundtable in May 1999 that brought together government officials, academics and representatives of non-governmental organizations from across the country to discuss governance and accountability issues related to policies for children and families.  Participants had expertise in policy development, the voluntary sector, intergovernmental affairs, finance, and economics.  The goals of the roundtable were to further map changes in practice, brainstorm about the best ways to deal with emerging governance and accountability challenges, and discuss the next steps needed to move the children's agenda forward in the context of the *Social Union Framework Agreement*.  The findings have been synthesized for inclusion in this report.

The paper begins with an overview of governance and a definition of accountability.  It reviews the roles of the major actors.  Next, a summary of the ways governance issues are being addressed by different jurisdictions is presented, followed by a more detailed analysis of accountability issues.  Finally, governance and accountability issues are discussed in the context of emerging federal-provincial relations, along with the implications for moving forward.

This paper builds upon the findings from CPRN's roundtables and research reports on defining and securing the social union, and blends them with its research on how to improve outcomes for Canadian children and families.  It shows that governments are taking steps to manage interdependence, across governments and across sectors of society.  They are also beginning to focus on the outcomes achieved by children and families.  This holds the potential to enable all stakeholders to coordinate their actions around shared goals and objectives for children, and to create a broad-based societal strategy to support children and their families.

## 1.1  Government or Governance?

Historically, one of the most influential models of government suggested that policy makers just "muddle through," making incremental changes in a rather disjointed fashion, without full cognizance of the consequences of their actions.  It was suggested that policy-makers behaved this way because they assumed that the complex interrelations between policies and their outcomes could not be adequately explored or predicted (Lindblom, 1968, 13-14). The book, *Reinventing Government* by Osborne and Gabler shifts the focus, however, by defining governance as "the process by which we collectively solve our problems and meet our society's needs" (1992, 24).

Participants at CPRN's governance and accountability roundtable emphasized that governance must be defined broadly, including the whole policy process and especially the interface between the government and the community.  Building on the work of Osborne and Plastrik (1997), we can identify the tasks of governance as being to:

- Create and maintain the conditions under which governance can take place, including an atmosphere where civility, civil order and democracy thrive, so that collective actions which are designed to solve problems actually meet society's needs

- Creatively and innovatively initiate public policies, programs, and projects which contribute to solving problems and to meeting society's changing needs

- Actively participate in the planning, financing, production, delivery, and evaluation of public services, and

- Act efficiently, effectively, equitably, and transparently so that citizens have the necessary access and involvement to hold governments accountable for outcomes.

In practical terms, an effective governance system in any jurisdiction must set priorities (vision, mission, goals), ensure the necessary structures are in place (such as regional boards or authorities, or public advisory committees), allocate resources, ensure service delivery, monitor and evaluate progress, and learn from these results.

### Governance for Policies for Children and Families

The past few years have seen a rapid evolution of governance regimes for child and family policies, both within provinces and in the federal-provincial arena.  There is new attention to governance and accountability issues by governments, federal and provincial auditors, and voluntary organizations.

As described by Downes (1998), the key governance challenges emerging for governments are to provide leadership in:  (1) developing a vision of how we, as a society, conceptualize our desired future and measuring progress toward desired future outcomes, (2) developing a new, more inclusive, multi-stakeholder decision-making process that will enable us to deal with conflict-provoking issues, and (3) facilitating, nurturing and sustaining progress toward the desired future outcomes.

## 1.2   What is Accountability and Why is It Important?

We use accountability here in a broad sense to mean the requirement to explain and accept responsibility for carrying out an assigned mandate in light of agreed upon expectations.  It is particularly important that such accountability exists in situations that involve public trust (Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector, 1999).  A firm commitment to accountability demonstrates the fulfillment of obligations to those that have delegated authority and/or have provided funding.  Attention to accountability is also a constructive tool for strategic planning, organizational development, and for enhancing management practices, self-evaluation and client services.

### What is Performance Accountability?

Some accountability systems look at human service systems and ask, for example, about the number of people served, the costs of service, whether quality standards are met, and whether the program is delivered within its budget.  However, accountability systems have become more comprehensive over time, adding other types of output measures.  As a recent product of this evolution, *performance accountability systems* examine results or outcomes by asking:  Are children and families better off now than they were last year?  Performance accountability thus holds governments and partnering organizations accountable for changes in the lives of those it serves.

Performance accountability systems examine both *program outcomes* and *policy outcomes*. *Program outcomes* measure whether those served by a program improve.  Outcome data are interpreted primarily with respect to specific programs or program components.  In contrast, *policy outcomes* focus on whether the entire set of government policies, programs and actions are achieving broad goals and objectives.  Therefore, policy accountability examines, for example, the effects of regulatory policy, tax policy, and so on.  Outcome data are interpreted in the context of the entire government system, in light of political and economic conditions, and compare performance on agreed-upon goals and objectives over time (adapted from Chynoweth and Dyer, 1991, 82-83).

## 1.3   Who are the Key Actors in Policies for Children and Families?

Interest and involvement in child and family policy is shared by many actors.  These include federal, provincial and municipal governments, Aboriginal governments and communities, regional and community boards, members of the voluntary sector, the academic community, think tanks, and citizens at large, including parents and children.  The roles of these stakeholders are briefly described below.  The challenges faced by each of these actors in the current time of turbulence will be addressed in later sections of this paper.

**Federal and Provincial Governments**

The Canadian Constitution assigns the provinces responsibility for many of the key areas affecting children and families, such as education, health, social services, the administration of justice, and local government. For its part, the federal government has taken responsibility for income support and pension programs, as well as Employment Insurance, which includes maternity and parental leave provisions. It also supports and promotes the development of health and social programs in the provinces through fiscal transfers, including the Canada Health and Social Transfer and the *Canada Health Act*. It also has some responsibility for marriage and divorce, research development and funding, and many other activities.

In practice, then, both orders of government are often simultaneously active in any area, and overlaps can occur. However, recent federal-provincial-territorial initiatives such as the National Child Benefit system, the *Social Union Framework Agreement*, the National Children's Agenda, and the Labour-Market Development Agreements have helped to clarify roles and relationships and to increase opportunities for cooperative action across jurisdictions.

**Aboriginal Peoples and Governments**

The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples found that the federal government had, in the past, pursued contradictory policies of assimilation, protection, separation, and neglect which have had negative impacts on Aboriginal societies, governments, and economies. At present, many critical social priorities need to be addressed for Aboriginal families and children. These include raising family income above poverty levels, addressing the educational, occupational, and mental health needs of youth in remote and poor urban neighbourhoods, improving the life expectancy of infants, improving population health, reducing rates of abuse, and preventing youth suicide (Wolfe-Keddie, 1999, 136-37; INAC, 1999). In the western provinces, the proportion of Aboriginal children in child welfare and in secure custody as young offenders far exceeds their proportion in the population as a whole.

First Nations governments and Métis Associations are negotiating framework agreements with the federal and provincial governments under which Aboriginal organizations or governments can take over responsibility for delivering social programs, such as child welfare, in their communities. Provinces, particularly in the west, and the federal government are taking initiatives to involve Aboriginal communities and leaders in planning for their own needs, and Aboriginal peoples are beginning to demand more accountability from their own governments.

**Municipal Governments and Regional Boards**

Provinces have long delegated authority to municipal governments or other bodies. Most provinces have created regional boards for health services, many have regional boards of education, and several have created regional boards for child and family services within the last 10 years. The roles and responsibilities of municipalities and the emerging regional boards have therefore been in a period of rapid evolution in most provinces. In addition, as both orders of government have pursued cost-cutting measures, these cuts have cascaded down to the municipal and community levels.

**Communities and Voluntary Agencies**

In most parts of the country, there has been an increased role for the voluntary sector in delivering services to Canadians, ranging from treatment, social support and child care services to food banks.  In 1997, about 9 percent of Canadians were employed by the volunteer sector, almost one third of the population did some kind of volunteer work through an organization, and almost 88 percent of adult Canadians made donations to charitable or non-profit organizations (Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector, 1999).  Numerous advocacy, self-help, and consumer groups have become major stakeholders in child and family policy by providing services, making representations to governments, and contributing practical knowledge to the processes of policy and service system development (Gourlay, 1998).

**The Academic Community and Think Tanks**

Academics and think tanks may play a role in policy development via their participation in policy networks.  Policy networks are defined as "groupings of government agencies, pressure groups, media people, and individuals, including academics, who, for various reasons, have an interest in a particular policy field and attempt to influence it" (Pross, 1995, 265).

**Citizens**

Mintzberg (1996) argues that, as individuals, we wear four hats in relation to government:  client, customer, subject and citizen.  We receive 'professional services' from government, such as health and education, for which we are clients.  However, governments do relatively few things for us as customers or recipients of general goods and services. We also relate to governments as subjects, in that there are duties and obligations, such as obeying laws and paying taxes, which we must fulfill or risk the discipline of government authority.  As citizens, we have both rights and responsibilities.

As Peters reported in the CPRN study, *Exploring Canadian Values* (1995), Canadians want a more accountable government that recognizes the participation and interests of citizens.  In addition, Canadians favour a strong and activist government that helps citizens, provides services and demonstrates leadership.

**Many Actors, But Shared Values?**

Moving forward on policies for families and children will be challenging because of the large number of actors involved.  Nonetheless, in some areas, there are widely held values, such as the importance of ensuring Canadian children have a good start in life and that children's basic needs are met, including for health care, food, shelter, education, security, guidance and love.  However, in other areas, there are contrasting views.  These include controversy around the role of the state in supporting children and families, ambivalence about how best to balance work and family life, and concerns about fostering 'dependency' through social programs (Michalski, 1999).

Where there is agreement on desired outcomes but not on the means to achieve them, flexibility is needed to allow governments, or even communities, to try different approaches, and then compare the results in terms of child well-being. Developing agreement on desired outcomes and then measuring progress may be an easier and more successful strategy for improving child well-being than trying to get governments to agree on the best means of achieving desired results (Chynoweth and Dyer, 1991; O'Hara, 1998).

## 2.0   Emerging Trends in Governance Regimes

Social policy reform and restructuring is underway. As Biggs observes, "most of the major building blocks of the post war welfare state are under review; all sectors, all jurisdictions are in the process of rethinking and reformulating their programs and policies. This intense period of change has been brought on by a series of converging factors -- fiscal, social-economic and federal-provincial" (Biggs, 1996, 20). Governments are simultaneously changing both policy content and delivery mechanisms. Here we discuss the changing policy context, the changing public management context, emerging commonalities in child and family policy changes, and differences in emerging governance regimes.

### 2.1   The Changing Policy Context

Problem definition has shifted in recent years. First, attention to debts and deficits has encouraged people to focus on government budgets as a 'policy problem', thereby making it difficult to articulate other policy problems in terms of solutions that require more spending. This focus has also led to the increasing dominance of treasury and finance departments in the policy-making process. Governments around the world are designing policies that make increasing use of self-regulation, or that set framework policies, relying on partnerships and third-party delivery of programs and services. However, at the same time, the impact of such restructuring on jobs and communities is forcing governments to begin to consider how to insulate their citizens to some degree (Pal, 1997, 271-72). This means difficult choices are ahead (Maxwell, 1999). It is also in this context that policies for children and families must be addressed.

### 2.2   The Changing Management Context

The management context in Canada has changed dramatically in recent years, as it has in most member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Governments have been facing the same pressures for change -- a global economy, dissatisfied citizens, and a fiscal crisis -- and countries are responding in very similar ways (Osborne and Plastrik, 1997, 7-8) by:

- Decentralizing authority within government units and devolving responsibilities to lower levels of government

- Re-examining what government should both do and pay for, what it should pay for but not do, and what it should neither do nor pay for

- Downsizing the public service and privatizing activities

- Considering more cost-effective ways of delivering services, such as contracting out and using market mechanisms such as user charges

- Adopting a customer orientation, including explicit quality standards for public services

- Benchmarking and measuring performance, and

- Undertaking reforms designed to simplify regulation and reduce its cost.

The success of these public management reforms is not clear. Changes have been made, and some do appear to have made a lasting impact. Few, if any, of the reforms, however, have lived up to the claims of their supporters, and few have been formally evaluated (Peters and Savoie, 1998, 6). In addition, these changes have added to the recent turbulence of public services and have added to concerns about accountability issues.

In this context in Canada, we observe satisfaction with the level of services received from governments is very low overall. The level of satisfaction is highest for municipal governments, although less than 40 percent rate service as excellent or good. Provincial governments are next, at less than 30 percent. The federal government receives the lowest rating, at less than 25 percent (Insight Canada Research, 1992).

In the past, there have often been changes in the structures used to develop and deliver child and family services, with waves of centralization, decentralization, and various combinations and recombinations of departments. Roundtable participants suggested that, in the past, governments sometimes reorganized as a response to the need to 'do something.' However, they observed that the end result was often not worth the high costs of reorganization and the resulting structures were likely to revert to old ways of functioning. Despite this, there are signs that some changes are taking hold.

## 2.3   What Commonalities are Emerging?

Commonalities are apparent in both the types of child and family policy initiatives and in the governance structures administering programs (For a capsule summary of how child and family services are changing in six Canadian provinces, see Jenson and Stroick, 1999, Table 4). Common shifts in child and family policy include the following (Jenson, 1999):

- Social assistance programs are being redesigned to become temporary programs of last resort for disabled or the long-term unemployed.

- In the meantime, children are being removed from social assistance via mechanisms such as the Canada Child Tax Benefit and provincial programs such as British Columbia's Family Benefits, Saskatchewan's Child Benefit, and Quebec's Family Allowance. Indeed, the vast majority of provinces have instituted child benefits which are 'neutral' as to the source of family income (whether from employment, unemployment insurance, social assistance or maintenance payments).

- The transition from welfare to work is being promoted, and this often includes childcare and other supports to low income families with children.

- Early intervention and prevention programs are proliferating and access to childcare is being improved in several provinces.

- There has been an increasing focus on improving the public reporting of results through the requirements of the National Child Benefit, and the reinvestment portion, and via provincial reports on child and family services.

- Several Auditors General have each begun to comment on governance and accountability issues in areas related to child and family policy.

Looking at some of these initiatives in more detail, we see some experimentation. For example, Alberta has developed a detailed framework for addressing governance and accountability issues between the province and its regional Child and Family Services Authority boards, as well as a population-needs protocol for allocating resources to the regions. Saskatchewan has developed guidebooks on evaluating interagency projects, on sharing information to improve services for children, youth and families, and on integrated case management.

Quebec has focussed several policies on supporting all families with children, rather than targeting interventions to certain groups. For example, its Early Childhood Centres are meant to be universally available, at a flat rate of $5 per day for developmental and educational child care (with some subsidies also available) and may be open 24 hours per day to support parents who work non-standard hours. Quebec also provides a universal Child Tax Credit, the only one in Canada.

New Brunswick's Early Childhood Initiatives program combines universal pre- and post-natal screening, intervention with selected follow-up through several health and social services programs, and targeted services delivered through Family Resource Centres in low income areas. Evaluations have demonstrated clear improvements in infant mortality rates, breast feeding rates, the proportion of low birth weight infants, and improvements in detecting disabilities before school entry. New Brunswick also has made full-day kindergarten compulsory for five-year-olds.

## 2.4   What Governance Regimes are Emerging?

The governance systems set up to design policy and deliver programs for families and children often differ across program areas within a jurisdiction, and differ widely across jurisdictions. An overview of the governance regimes that are emerging in the jurisdictions studied is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Emerging Governance Regimes for Child and Family Policy**

| | British Columbia | Alberta | Saskatchewan | Ontario | Quebec | New Brunswick | Canada |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Responsibility for Policy** | Ministry for Children and Families (integrated from six ministries). | New Minister of Children's Services in 1999. | Action Plan for Children coordinates action by eight ministries. | Ministry of Community and Social Services. | Ministère de la Famille et de l'Enfance. | Health and Social Services. | Finance, Human Resources Development, Health, and Justice are taking the lead. |
| **Notable Activity** | Provincial Co-Chair of National Children's Agenda. | Six ministries jointly responsible for improving outcomes for children through cabinet-approved plan. | Provincial Co-Chair of the Council on Social Policy Renewal during the Social Union Framework negotiations. | Includes several former ministries' children's services divisions. | Has a broad mission to enhance the value of the child and family, and ensure their development. | Provides services to protect, strengthen, or restore family life, and improve the social functioning of communities. | Involved in the National Children's Agenda. |
| **Budget Allocation** | Allocated by province to Regional Executive Directors. | Allocated by province to regional Child and Family Services Authority boards based on population and needs criteria. | Within program streams. | Within program streams. | Health and Social Services allocates budget to the Régies régionales, and through them to CLSCs (Centre locale de services communitaires). | Within program streams. | Allocated by program stream within ministry. Some programs, such as the Community Action Program for Children (CAP-C), use a federal-provincial steering committee. |

(continued)

**Table 1.  Emerging Governance Regimes for Child and Family Policy, continued**

| Description | British Columbia | Alberta | Saskatchewan | Ontario | Quebec | New Brunswick | Canada |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Service Delivery** | Child Welfare and Youth Justice are delivered directly.  Other services delivered by community agencies under contract.  Contracting procedures being revised to focus on integration and outcomes. | Child Welfare delivered directly by regions.  Early intervention services delivered by community agencies through competitive proposals. | Child Welfare delivered directly by government.  Health and education delivered by third party institutions. | Services, including Child Welfare, are largely delivered by community agencies. | CLSCs are a central actor or partner in virtually all child and family programs.  Developing $5 per day educational child care spaces for all children under five. | A suite of seven health and social services, and 13 CAP-C funded family resource centres.  Largely delivered by public health nurses, hospital based nurses, and community agencies. | Working with Aboriginal communities, leaders, and provinces to establish agreements for delivery of services to Aboriginal children and families. |
| **Public Input** | Child, Youth and Family Advocate, Children's Guardian, and Deputy Ombudsman.  Children's Commission.  Community agency boards.  Advisory Committees, Regional Planning Tables, Aboriginal Policy Tables. | Appointed Child and Family Services Authority boards in each region.  Volunteer community boards to work with regional authorities.  Public Forum held in the fall of 1999. | Council on Children, Children's Advocate, Task Force on Work and Family Issues, nine coordinating committees. | Children's Secretariat promotes the well-being of Children.  Community involvement being promoted. | Conseil de la Famille et de l'Enfance advises the minister on childhood and family issues.  Forum of Partners consult on policy matters to ensure cohesive action.  Large scale surveys on policy issues. | Launching Social Policy Renewal Roundtables.  Just completed Health Services Review. | Task Forces, surveys. |

In addition, the governance structures of all provinces studied, with the possible exception of Saskatchewan, are either in transition (British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and, in some program areas, Quebec) or under review (New Brunswick). Therefore, attempts to capture the 'flavour' of emerging governance structures is necessarily tentative. Areas that seem to result in different choices are having a focus within Cabinet on child and family issues, the articulation of a clear vision for child and family policy, approaches to dealing with the cross-departmental responsibility for child and family policy, mechanisms for public input, and resource allocation methods. Each one is discussed below.

**Establishing a Focus for Children and Families Within Cabinet**

Four of the provinces studied have named a Minister to Cabinet, thereby giving a high profile to child and family issues: British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec. British Columbia has a Ministry for Children and Families, consolidating all services for children, youth, and families from six ministries into one. Quebec's Ministère de la Famille et de l'Enfance (Ministry of the Family and Childhood), created in 1997, has a broad mandate to enhance the family, improve the lives of children, and promote child development. Alberta created a new Minister of Children's Services in May 1999, with responsibility for child welfare, early intervention programs for children, and child care.

Ontario created the Ministry of Community and Social Services some time ago, including child welfare, children's mental health and young offender services. More recently, a Minister Responsible for Children was appointed to review all new government legislation, regulations, and policies and consider whether these measures promote the well-being of children. A Children's Secretariat supports the government's vision for children, and works with government ministries to develop a unified and coordinated approach to policy planning and service delivery. An Office of Integrated Services for Children has also been created to coordinate children's services among the Ministries of Community and Social Services, Health, Education and Training, and Culture and Recreation.

**Delivery of Services for Children and Families**

Although British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec all have someone speaking to children's issues at the Cabinet table, the governance structures are quite different. For example, British Columbia has eleven Regional Executive Directors who coordinate services, which are largely delivered through over 12,000 contracts with service providers. The province is planning to restructure program delivery in cooperation with its community partners to provide more integrated services at the community level.

Quebec delivers many health services, including pre- and post-natal services and early intervention through its network of *Centre locale de services communitaires* (CLSCs). The Ministry of the Family and Childhood is directly responsible for developing and maintaining a province-wide network of child care services. The role of the Ministry is to advise government and other ministries, to coordinate multisectoral interventions, and to ensure there is an overall consistency in government action concerning child and family matters.

Both Alberta and Saskatchewan have coordinated (not integrated) ministries serving children and families and have a government wide mission for enhancing children's services. Six Alberta departments are jointly responsible for overall progress on the children's action plan: Children's Services, Health and Wellness, Learning, Human Resources and Employment, Justice, and Community Development. Alberta is looking for innovation and integration starting at the community level and is providing funding for children's services to 18 regions based on both population and needs.

Conversely, Saskatchewan is focussed on provincially designed program streams. However, nine regional intersectoral committees have been established to find innovative ways to integrate human services at the local level. For its part, New Brunswick has a coordinated system of early intervention services but retains separate ministries and separate delivery systems for child and family policies.

The provincial systems studied differ in whether ministries are integrated, coordinated or separate at the provincial level and in the degree of integration found in service delivery. Table 2 presents a matrix which attempts to situate these differences. Other differences are whether funding is by program stream or based on geographic regions, and whether program innovation is largely top-down (British Columbia and Saskatchewan) or emerging through community level planning for non-mandatory programs (Alberta).

**Table 2.  Matrix of Emerging Models of Integration in Six Provinces**

| Delivery | Provincial Ministries | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Integrated** | **Coordinated** | **Separate** |
| **Integrated** | Quebec | Alberta | |
| **Coordinated** | | Saskatchewan | |
| **Separate** | British Columbia | Ontario | New Brunswick |

## Mechanisms for Encouraging Public Input

Provinces have used or are using a wide range of mechanisms for soliciting public input into the priorities for and design of policies. Table 3 situates the provinces under review along a spectrum of approaches that are being used to gather public input. Each category in the spectrum is subsequently described.

**Table 3.  Spectrum of Public Input Into Priorities and Design**

| Provincial Level | | Regional Level | | Community Level | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Advocates or Secretariats** | **Provincial Advisory Councils** | **Regional Advisory Committees** | **Regional Governance Boards** | **Community Advisory or Coordinating Boards or Committees** | **Task Forces or Forums**[*] |
| BC<br>AB<br>SK<br>ON | SK<br>QC | BC<br>QC | AB | AB<br>SK<br>QC | AB<br>SK<br>ON<br>NB<br>Canada |

∗ Within the past 12 months or announced for the next 12 months.

## Advocates or Secretariats

Four provinces have child or family advocates or secretariats:  British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario.  Two report to the Legislatures (British Columbia and Saskatchewan) and two report to ministers (Alberta and Ontario).  In British Columbia, there are really three advocates for children.  The Child, Youth and Family Advocate hears from the community and provides advice to the legislature on child and family issues in general.  The Children's Guardian reviews child fatalities and identifies needed improvements for children in care.  Finally, the Deputy Ombudsman monitors implementation of the recommendations of the *Gove Inquiry Into Child Protection* and advises on other child-related matters.

Saskatchewan's Children's Advocate provides an annual public report to the legislature on areas of success and areas needing attention in the province's policy and program planning.  The Advocate also educates the public on child and family issues and prepares special reports.  Alberta's Children's Guardian advises on individual needs and systemic issues regarding children in the care of child welfare.  The Ontario's Children's Secretariat is responsible for obtaining input and reporting on needed changes to policy and programs.

## Provincial Councils

Saskatchewan and Quebec each have provincial councils and British Columbia has a Children's Commission.  Saskatchewan's brings together representatives of most community service providers and has been reported to be very influential in policy planning for the province.  The council meets annually with all the ministers responsible for areas of child and family policy.  Quebec's Ministry of the Family and Childhood has established a Forum of Partners, representing education, health, the workplace, and volunteer community services.  The purpose of the forum is to consult on a regular basis with the main representatives of child and family interests regarding policy matters, and to ensure cohesive action.

Quebec's Conseil de la Famille et de l'Enfance (Council of the Family and Childhood) is responsible for soliciting opinions and hearing suggestions on child and family issues, and for submitting an annual report to the minister on the situation and needs of families and children in Quebec. The Council reports to the Minister of the Family and Childhood. British Columbia has a Children's Commission, which assesses government services for children and youth and advises government on improving these services. The Commission works with children, youth, their advocates, communities, services providers and government to create and maintain safe and nurturing environments for all young people. It is independent of the Ministry for Children and Families and reports to the Attorney General.

## Regional Structures

Virtually all provincial health systems moved to a regional board structure during the 1990's (Gourlay, 1998), so it will be interesting to see if this is the beginning of a similar trend in child and family services. Both British Columbia and Alberta have implemented different types of regional structures deal with child and family issues. In British Columbia, advisory committees provide input to Regional Executive Directors. In Alberta, regional Child and Family Services Authority boards are responsible for governance. Board members and co-chairs are community representatives who are appointed by the government. Each Alberta board is required to have an Aboriginal co-chair and several representatives from the region's Aboriginal community.

In Quebec, the Ministry of the Family and Childhood works closely with the regional development councils in developing child care services. Regional task forces are created to determine the specific needs for child care and to plan the appropriate response. The objective is to ensure that child care services are adapted to regional and local conditions.

## Community Structures

Volunteer community planning boards are active in many Alberta communities, and there are plans for them to feed into the regional planning processes through Child and Family Services Authority boards. Saskatchewan's nine regional intersectoral committees are responsible for finding innovative ways to integrate human services at the local level. Participants include representatives from many segments of the community including the RCMP, health districts, school boards, and First Nations governments, as well as government personnel. Quebec's numerous CLSCs are engaged in community development activities and are active in most areas of child and family policy.

## Task Forces or Forums

Virtually all provinces and the federal government have used task forces and forums in the last few years to examine issues related to child and family policy. There are many recent and upcoming initiatives. Quebec held hearings on its White Paper on family policy in 1997. Alberta held a children's forum in the fall of 1999. Saskatchewan has recently completed a major task force on work and family issues. New Brunswick held a social policy renewal roundtable in 1998-99. Ontario has recently completed the *Early Years Study*. In addition, the federal Senate has recently completed a study on child custody and access issues.

## 2.5　Emerging Challenges in Governance

Roundtable participants identified a number of key governance challenges in the current context. A brief overview of each is presented below.

### Finding a Common Vision and Purpose

There was consensus among roundtable participants that the greatest strides are made when a common vision and common sense of purpose is held, valued and reflected by the government and the community (including the voluntary sector and citizens). Community representatives supported the importance of a common vision but expressed concern about how to ensure that the government's vision is congruent with community priorities.

The key challenge is to achieve broad participation and ownership, to ensure that all members of the community can see themselves as part of the process and understand how their efforts can contribute to achieving the overall vision and goals. There are risks that some essential players may not be sufficiently involved in developing the vision and further efforts will be required later, either to bring them on board or to adjust the vision. There were also concerns about the community being too exhausted by previous demands to participate in new initiatives, pointing to a community capacity issue. Finally, there was some concern that elected representatives in parliament and provincial legislatures had been somewhat left out of the process used to develop the National Children's Agenda.

### The Importance of Culture to the Ability to Deliver Policy

One of the new challenges being addressed by governments is how to build a shared culture within the ministry or ministries serving children's policy, and within the community. A shared culture is an outcome of a common vision, and strengthened by public and stakeholder involvement. In the new environment, there may be more community-based service providers than government employees delivering services to the public. This means that it is crucial to build strong lines of communication, ensure that input from partners is heard and acted on, build trust, and create a shared commitment to a common vision and shared goals for children and families. Culture and trust do not develop automatically, but must be nurtured and developed. Participants from both the community and government described the need to change the culture of organizations, which is currently a barrier to be overcome in implementing new policies.

### The Cross-Sectoral Nature of Child and Family Policy

Roundtable participants agreed that ongoing work is required to coordinate the activities of the many departments that have an impact on the child, particularly through health, education, income support and child care programs. Child and family policy by its nature is cross-sectoral; no one department manages it all. Nevertheless, in many jurisdictions, the question of 'who owns the child' or, in other words, which department takes primacy in child and family policy, is a contentious issue. Even in jurisdictions where many children's programs have been integrated, there are still challenges in fostering cross-program cooperation within the integrated department as well as coordinating with the remaining programs in other ministries.

**How Citizens Can Influence Policy**

At the CPRN roundtable, there was consensus that governments need to accommodate the desire of people to be involved in the policy development process. Governments have responded to criticisms that decision-making is too centralized with efforts to involve communities in the development of a shared vision for children. In addition, ongoing mechanisms for involving the community in the policy process have been developed by various jurisdictions (see Table 3). These processes are still evolving and most jurisdictions are actively working to improve their relationships with the community.

**The Role of Community and Voluntary Agencies**

*With consultations, the challenge is balancing public demands with the realities of hard decisions. With partnerships, the challenge is balancing accountability with autonomy.*

Pal (1997, 217)

The role of the government, the community, and the voluntary sector in the lives of children and families has altered in recent years.[1] In some cases, governments have withdrawn from service delivery, with increased contracting out or decentralization. In other cases, there has been the expectation that individuals, the community and voluntary agencies will be able to pick up additional responsibilities, albeit often without funding support.

At the CPRN roundtable on governance and accountability, community representatives expressed concern that the impact of recent changes has been negative in some parts of the country. They mentioned in particular reduced access to housing and child care. Indicators such as the number of children in poverty have not recovered to pre-recession levels. Some community representatives, particularly those operating at the federal level, also reported that they have less access to information, and to the policy development process than in the past.

Jenson and Phillips (1996) have documented how, in recent years, the federal government has reduced support for advocacy groups. Similar issues were raised during the CPRN roundtable, where concerns were expressed about the impact on voluntary agencies of increased responsibility for service delivery as governments have restructured, decentralized, privatized and built new partnerships. Concerns centre on whether an agency's advocacy role, and even its charitable status, could be compromised if it becomes a transfer agent for government programs.

Fears were also expressed that agencies may risk being penalized if they speak out. In addition, accountability requirements for receiving government funding may dilute an agency's ability to maintain its accountability to donors, its board, and the community. Further, as more actors are involved in developing a common vision and delivering services, it may become more difficult for community members or advocacy groups to determine 'who is responsible for what.'

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[1] All data in this section, unless otherwise indicated, is from Thompson (1999).

**Addressing the Aspirations and Needs of Aboriginal Governments and Communities**

Roundtable participants stated that one of the key governance challenges of the next decade will be how to improve relationships with Aboriginal communities and governments. The challenges are both to ensure that their voices are heard and to work effectively with Aboriginal governments and communities to meet the needs of Aboriginal children and families.

There are signs that governments are making efforts to improve relationships with Aboriginal governments and communities. In 1998, the federal government released *Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*, which calls for a renewed partnership based on recognizing past mistakes and injustices, the advancement of reconciliation, healing and renewal, and the building of a joint plan for the future. The federal government offered a Statement of Reconciliation, acknowledging its role in the development and administration of the residential schools, and expressing its deep regrets to those who were abused in the school system. The government also launched the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, an arms-length, Aboriginal-run nonprofit foundation that will fund community-based healing initiatives (INAC, 1999).

Key federal initiatives include signing jointly developed framework agreements for moving forward on the commitments in *Gathering Strength* with the Assembly of First Nations, the Métis National Council, and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. Others initiatives involve strengthening Aboriginal governance (with more than 80 self-governance agreements in various stages of negotiation), developing new fiscal relationships, and supporting strong communities, people and economies with a myriad of social and economic initiatives (INAC, 1999).[2]

All Canadian governments, with the exception of Quebec, signed the *Social Union Framework Agreement*, in which they agreed to work with Aboriginal peoples to meet their pressing needs. During the development of the National Children's Agenda (NCA), leaders of five national Aboriginal groups were involved in key discussions, approved the NCA, and participated in the signing ceremonies.

First Nations and Métis Associations are negotiating framework agreements with the federal and provincial governments, under which Aboriginal organizations or governments can take over responsibility for delivering social programs in their communities, such as child welfare. By 1991, a delegated model of child welfare delivery had been adopted by over 200 First Nations bands across the country (McKenzie, Schall and Bone, 1995). In 1999, Alberta appointed Aboriginal co-chairs to all of its regional Child and Family Services Authority boards and required each board to have significant representation from Aboriginal communities. British Columbia has approved an historic agreement that will allow Nisga'a governments a role in providing services for Nisga'a people wherever they live.

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[2] For further reading on Aboriginal self-governance, see Durst, McDonald and Rich (1995).

There was recognition among roundtable participants of the need to involve the community and elders in seeking solutions, and to find a way to address problems effectively while keeping children at risk in touch with their homes and communities. There were also concerns expressed about how to meet the special needs of Aboriginal children and how to reverse cuts to off-reserve Head Start programs. There was some discussion of the need for attention to the similarities and differences in the governance challenges in addressing the needs of First Nations and Métis families and communities. Considering all these issues, while there are many promising new initiatives, these are only a beginning, and many years of negotiation and investment may be needed to make lasting progress.

**The Shift in Governance Regimes for Child and Family Policy**

The challenges discussed by the participants at the CPRN Roundtable were those of the 'new paradigm' for governance (see, for example, Rosell, 1999; Popovich, 1998). These include providing leadership through a common vision and purpose, recognizing that organizational and community cultures and relationships are essential to delivering policy, and appreciating the importance of communications among all those embarking on a common purpose.

There has been a recent increase in the number of jurisdictions with an explicit policy focused on the child and family, and an increase in the mechanisms being established to facilitate two-way communications with the community. However, even in those jurisdictions that have an explicit children's policy, and have worked hard to include the community in the development of a vision, the goal of having a broadly shared vision may not yet be fully realized. There are also indications that community representatives and Aboriginal communities are not yet confident that they are adequately included in the policy dialogue process. In many jurisdictions, work is ongoing to broaden and deepen the dialogue.

Other challenges also remain, as large bureaucratic structures try to communicate across departmental boundaries or even across silos within departments. Therefore, it would appear that governance in child and family policy is in transition, with some characteristics of both the hierarchical government-centered regimes of the past and 'distributed' or 'high performance' governance regimes. The trend appears to be moving towards the latter.

## 3.0 Emerging Trends in Accountability Regimes

As responsibility is shifted to integrated ministries or offices for child and family services -- and often simultaneously to regional, community and voluntary agencies -- two key questions emerge: How is performance being measured and who is accountable to whom? The question of how performance is being measured is a main focus of this paper and will be discussed at length in the following sections of this report.

The second question, that of who is accountable to whom within these new structures, is very complex and will not be addressed in detail. However, what is clear about accountability within these emerging regimes is that new partnerships are taking many forms in addition to the straightforward service contracts.

Partnerships can be designed for service delivery, infrastructure, administrative support, or even policy development. All partnerships involve some amount of shared decision making and decentralization of control. Therefore, as governments develop 'open borders' or interdependent agencies, the question of who reports to whom can become difficult to clarify. Partnerships that include private sector or voluntary agencies make it more difficult for a minister to be directly responsible to the Legislature because some of the responsibility for results is now shared (Langford, 1999). Further, unless care is taken in designing new partnerships, the feedback loop to policy and program design can be broken.

Thus, there are many layers of accountability that need to be considered: from an agency to its board, possibly to a regional entity and its board, or to a civil servant, and eventually to the responsible minister (or ministers) and the Legislature. These relationships merit further exploration and denote an area in need of further research. Setting this complex issue aside, we now turn to a discussion of how performance is being measured.

## 3.1    How are Accountability Regimes Evolving?

Theoretically, accountability regimes should 'account for' the systems set up for governance: (1) priorities such as missions and goals, (2) regional structures, (3) the allocation of resources, (4) the provision of services, and (5) the monitoring and evaluation of outcomes. Table 4 provides an overview of how accountability for child and family policy is being measured in the jurisdictions that were reviewed.

## 3.2    Evaluating Emerging Approaches to Accountability

Performance measurement systems are intended to enhance performance and accountability. The evaluation criteria which could be applied to these emerging performance management systems include the following (Junek and Thompson, 1999, 1):

- Are performance measures linked to the *mission* of the organization?

- Are performance measures being used as part of a system to promote both *policy learning* and the *continuous improvement of services*?

- Are performance measures being *updated and refined* through an iterative process?

- Are performance measures being used to *share information* with stakeholders?

- Are comparable performance measures, or ones that are 'rolled up' into broader measures, being used by different levels of the organization, and by its community service providers, to *promote communication and monitor progress*?

- Are *target levels and benchmarks* included to help users of the measurement data understand the policy goals and compare results with what has been achieved elsewhere?

**Table 1. Emerging Accountability Regimes for Child and Family Policy**

| Description | British Columbia | Alberta | Saskatchewan | Ontario | Quebec | New Brunswick | Canada |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Child Centred Mission Statement** | *Measuring Our Success: A Framework for Evaluating Population Outcomes.* | *The Alberta Children's Initiative: An Agenda for Joint Action.* | *Action Plan for Children.* | The Children's Secretariat promotes the government's vision for children. | Ministère de la Famille et de l'Enfance. White paper *Les enfants au coeur de nos choix.* | Health and Social Services department goals. | No government wide mission. *Managing for Results 1998.* |
| **Departments Involved** | Ministry for Children and Families. | Six Ministries and government wide. | Government wide. | Ministries of Community and Social Services, Health, and the Children's Secretariat. | Ministère de la Famille et de l'Enfance. | Health and Social Services. | *Managing for Results 1998* includes a Treasury Board consolidation of 80 department performance reports on the Investing in Children Throne Speech. |
| **Goals** | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **Program Indicators** (e.g., number of spaces, number served, recidivism rate, client satisfaction) | Part of service effectiveness, client satisfaction, and practice standards processes. | Yes, includes intermediate steps on multi-year initiatives. | Yes, includes resources allocated and goals for program implementation. | Yes, Health department business plan includes service commitments. | Yes, provides data on context and strategic orientation and is in the process of setting up an accountability program. | Yes | Provides data on projects implemented and clients served. |

(continued)

**Table 4. Emerging Accountability Regimes for Child and Family Policy, continued**

| Description | British Columbia | Alberta | Saskatchewan | Ontario | Quebec | New Brunswick | Canada |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Reduction of Negative Indicators** (e.g., percent of children in care) | Yes | Yes | Population level indicators being developed. | Population level indicators found in Health. | Population level indicators not found. | Yes, by year and includes three-year averages. | In specific evaluation reports, not Canada-wide. |
| **Achievement of Positive Indicators** (e.g., learning readiness) | Where possible, positive indicators are used. | Where possible, positive indicators are used. | Population level indicators not found.<br><br>Educational performance indicators are developed in cooperation with community partners. | Population level indicators not found. | Population level indicators not found. | Where possible, positive indicators are used. | Population level indicators are proposed. |
| **Target Levels** | No | Target and historical levels included. | Yes, for services. | Yes, for service levels and some indicators. | Yes, for service levels. | Yes | Yes, for services. |
| **Benchmarks** | Yes | Some | Not found | Some | Not found | Not found | Not found |
| **Integration into Business Planning Process** | Planned for the future. | In 3-year plan for ministry and cross-ministry initiatives. | A budget section on the Action Plan for Children is prepared each year. | Integrated into business planning process, particularly in Health. | Integrated into business planning process. | Integrated into business planning process. | Link to business plan is unclear. |

Using the criteria previously indicated for evaluating performance management systems, the progress being made by the jurisdictions reviewed in this study could be assessed as follows.

**Child and Family Centred Mission Statements**

Alberta and Saskatchewan have *government-wide* mission statements relating to children. British Columbia, Quebec and New Brunswick have a clear mission for children and families, expressed by the *ministry* most directly responsible. In Ontario, the Children's Secretariat promotes the government vision for children. In the federal government, no clear child and family centred mission statement was found. The federal government does, however, have the 'Investing in Children' Throne Speech theme and associated initiatives. With the exception of British Columbia, all jurisdictions with mission statements show, to some extent, how the mission and goals link to the department's initiatives. British Columbia is currently developing these linkages.

**Policy Learning and Continuous Improvement of Services**

Only Alberta and New Brunswick, and to some extent the Ministry of Health in Ontario, have clearly linked their business planning and accountability processes to the measurement of child and family outcomes. Since most performance measurement systems are less than five years old, it would be hard to demonstrate that these systems are already being used as part of a system to promote both policy learning and the continuous improvement of services. In addition, there are limitations in the kinds of information that performance measurement can provide.

Accordingly, some of the best material for policy learning will come from in-depth evaluations of program and policy changes. Examples include the follow-up studies of Alberta's welfare reform initiatives (Elton *et al.*, 1997) and the evaluations of New Brunswick's early intervention programs (New Brunswick Health and Community Services, 1998). In addition to tracking basic outcomes such as fewer people on welfare or fewer low-birth weight babies, these in-depth assessments have begun to identify effective program and policy components that lead to changed behaviour.

**Updating Performance Measures on an Iterative Basis**

This criterion is particularly difficult to evaluate when there is no clear mission against which to measure progress. British Columbia, Alberta and New Brunswick, which have mission statements for children and families, are updating their performance measures on an iterative basis. In contrast, Saskatchewan and Quebec simply 'report progress annually' on child and family issues. How these reports feed into the improvement of performance measures is uncertain, although Saskatchewan has a project underway to develop this capacity. The federal government also has a multi-year plan to improve performance measures but lacks a clear mission for children and families. As yet, there is no evidence that each year's federal performance measures build on and improve those used in the past. Ontario, similarly without a clear mission, does not appear to be improving its outcome measures in an iterative manner.

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**Sharing Information with Stakeholders**

All governments are making their current performance measures available to the public. However, without a clear mission against which to assess progress, it will be hard for stakeholders to determine whether the government is achieving its goals for children and families, and whether children and families are better off for having received services, except possibly on a program by program basis.

**Communicating and Monitoring with Performance Measures**

British Columbia plans to integrate the performance measures from *Measuring Our Success* into its contracting process with agencies, using a cooperative process. The six Alberta ministries involved in child and family services will now be jointly responsible for reporting on the same measures for children and families. Alberta also requires its regional Child and Family Services Authorities to use outcome indicators in their business plans to show progress in achieving the goals of the Alberta Children's Initiative. However, these boards are just being established and the performance measures in their initial business plans are still under development. Saskatchewan involves all of its service providers in the Action Plan for Children but does not use outcome measures on a cross-agency basis at present.

**Target Levels and Benchmarks**

Target levels help the users of performance measures to understand governmental goals, whereas benchmarks aid in the comparison of results with what has been achieved elsewhere. The potential to use benchmarks to assess progress within regions of a province will increase as more regional entities become involved in child and family services. All provinces set target levels of some kind but only British Columbia, Alberta, and to some extent Ontario's Ministry of Health, use benchmarks.

**3.3 Performance Measurement and Child Outcomes**

The United Way of America has developed an overview of the history of performance measurement that describes how the scope of performance measures has expanded over time (Plantz, Greenway and Hendricks, 1999). Beginning with financial accountability, performance measures later began to include program outputs or products, such as the 'number of counselling sessions' or 'days of care.' Adherence to standards were then incorporated, using measures such as 'staff qualifications' and 'staff-to-client ratios.' Performance measures were again expanded to include data on participant characteristics, such as 'age, sex, or presenting problem.'

More recently, performance measures have begun to include *effectiveness measures* such as 'ratios between inputs, services, outputs and total costs.' The most recent step in this evolution has seen accrediting bodies within the human services sector require the measurement of 'client satisfaction with services.'

There is wide range of performance measures that are being used to demonstrate accountability for child and family policy in the jurisdictions reviewed for this report. The United Way's description of a spectrum of indicators that have evolved over time turns out to be an accurate reflection of the spectrum of measurement currently being used across Canadian jurisdictions, as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5. Spectrum of Accountability Measurement for Child and Family Services**

Key:  XX = Measurement is clearly indicated in the province's budget documents and/or performance reports.
X = Measurement is somewhat indicated in the province's budget documents and/or performance reports.
Blank Cells = Measurement is not indicated.

| Measurement Spectrum | BC | AB | SK | ON | QC | NB | Canada |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Financial Data** | XX | XX | XX | XX | XX | XX | XX |
| **Program Outputs** (days in care, sessions) | XX | XX | XX | XX | XX | XX | XX |
| **Program Standards** (staff-client ratios, spaces per 1000 population) | X | X | X | X | XX | X | X |
| **Client Characteristics and Needs Assessments** (age, sex, depth of poverty) | XX | XX | XX | XX | XX | XX | XX |
| **Cost per Client Served** | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| **Client Satisfaction** | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| **Program Outcomes** (improvement of client well-being) | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| **Population Outcomes - Negative** (reduction of children in poverty, fewer low birth weight babies) | XX | XX | | X | | XX | |
| **Population Outcomes - Positive** (percent immunized, percent of healthy birth weight babies, percent of non-custodial parents paying child support) | XX | XX | | | | XX | |

In terms of the range and detail of the performance measures used, British Columbia has the strongest focus on measuring outcomes among all the jurisdictions reviewed. The province has not integrated the measurement of outcomes into its business planning process as yet, although it intends to do so in the near future.

The performance measurement system used in Alberta is possibly the most sophisticated of any government in Canada. Since 1995, the Alberta government has monitored outcome goals and has integrated this into its government-wide and ministry business planning processes. One innovation has emerged partly in response to the Auditor General's request for better 'progress information' on cross-government initiatives. In response, all six ministries responsible for child and family services will now be held *jointly responsible* for achieving the same outcomes for children and families, in addition to achieving their specific ministry objectives.

A second innovation is that Regional Child and Family Services Authority boards will be responsible for identifying outcome goals and showing how these contribute to achieving regional and government wide goals for children and families.

New Brunswick has a very sophisticated outcome measurement system that allows clear evidence to emerge on the effectiveness of its multi-component Early Childhood Initiatives Program. However, since that province does not have a government wide mission for children, program outcomes are measured against departmental goals for health and social services rather than against an overarching mission for children and families.

Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec provide data primarily on the achievement of goals for services delivered, resources allocated and, sometimes, for distribution of and access to services. Outcomes for clients are sometimes included in specific program evaluations. Ontario includes data on life expectancy at birth in its health data, and is investigating outcome measures as part of the Early Years initiative of the Children's Secretariat. Saskatchewan and Quebec have 'progress reporting' well integrated into their government wide mission and as part of their planning for children and families. Accountability is one of the main preoccupations of Quebec, and it is in the process of developing an overall outcome measurement system. The Ministry of the Family and Childhood generates integrated and progressive data on families and children in its *Statistical Portrait of Families and Children*, and other ministries also monitor relevant variables. As previously noted, Saskatchewan is also currently developing a performance accountability system.

The federal government tracks progress relevant to its Throne Speech theme 'Investing in Children' but there does not seem to be a clear path from a government wide mission for children, which is tied to desired outcomes for children and families through specific initiatives. The data seem more focussed on 'clients served' and 'services delivered,' which are grouped under a theme but reported by program line. However, the federal government acknowledges that implementing a comprehensive performance management system is a multi-year enterprise.

## 3.4 Commonalities and Differences

Of the six provinces studied in this report, British Columbia, Alberta and New Brunswick have implemented outcome measurement systems while Saskatchewan has a project under way to develop one. It is therefore useful to look for commonalities across the three systems that are in place to identify areas of convergence in the types of outcomes used for children and families. Performance measures used or under development by at least two of the three governments are included in Table 6.

**Table 6. Convergence in Measuring Outcomes**

Key:  XX = Measurement is reported for the indicator shown.
       NLSCY = Data derived from the *National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth.*

| Measures of Physical Well-Being | BC | AB | NB |
|---|---|---|---|
| Infant mortality rate | XX | XX | XX |
| Percentage of low birth weight babies | XX | XX | XX |
| Mortality rate of children aged 1 to 4 years | XX | XX | |
| Mortality rate of children aged 5 to 14 years | XX | XX | |
| Percentage of two year old children properly immunized | XX | XX | |
| Rate of vaccination for preventable diseases | XX | | XX |
| Reported cases of child abuse or neglect (BC and AB) or percent of child abuse or neglect cases for which goals are met within two years (NB) | XX | XX | XX |
| Teen birth rate | XX | XX | XX |

| Measures of Learning Readiness | BC | AB | NB |
|---|---|---|---|
| Children aged 4 to 5 whose verbal ability falls within or above the normal range of development (NLSCY) | XX | XX[1] | |
| Children aged 4 to 5 whose motor and social skills fall within or above normal range of development (NLSCY) | XX | XX[1] | |
| Children aged 13 who are achieving an acceptable level on national math and science exams (BC and NB) or acceptable math and science achievement in grades 3, 6, 9 and 12 (AB) | XX | XX | XX |
| Children aged 13 who are achieving an acceptable level on national reading and writing exams (BC and NB) or acceptable reading and writing achievement in grades 3, 6, 9 and 12 (AB) | XX | XX | XX |

| Measures of Economic Security | BC | AB | NB |
|---|---|---|---|
| Children living in families above Statistics Canada's low income cut offs (BC) or the National Market Basket Measure of Low Income (AB) | XX | XX[1] | |
| Support paid on behalf of spouses and children as a proportion of the amount owed in support (NB), or measure under development (AB) | | XX | XX |

1   Measures reported as under development in 1999.

All three provinces use a mixed system of positive achievement indicators and negative or deficit indicators to measure physical well-being. However, all three use positive achievement to measure learning readiness for preschool and school aged children.

Economic security is of concern to both British Columbia and Alberta. British Columbia uses the Statistics Canada low income cut offs to define low income, whereas Alberta is planning to use the new National Market Basket Measure of Low Income, that takes actual living costs into account but which is still under development by Statistics Canada (Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Social Development Research and Information, 1998). New Brunswick measures 'the amount of maintenance support paid to spouses and children as a proportion of the amount owed.' Alberta is developing a similar measure of spousal and child maintenance.

Areas of divergence in performance measurement are also evident across all three provinces. This is demonstrated in Table 7, in terms of unique performance measures used in each province.

**Table 7. Divergence in Measuring Outcomes**

Key:   NLSCY = Data derived from the *National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth*.

| BC | AB | NB |
|---|---|---|
| NLSCY data on breast feeding, alcohol and tobacco use during pregnancy, early development, getting along with parents and peers, sadness, attitude to learning, family well-being.<br><br>BC data on child HIV, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, injuries, disabilities, neural tube defects, dental caries.<br><br>Health and Activity Limitation Survey data on disabilities.<br><br>Additional data on demographics, family structure, economic security, housing, child care, and service use.<br><br>Adolescent and youth measures. | Median income of families.<br><br>Percentage of Aboriginal people satisfied with their involvement in governance, delivery, and evaluation of services for Aboriginal children. Proportion of programs with an identifiable Aboriginal component. Proportion of Aboriginal children in the care of the province. Proportion of Aboriginal children cared for through First Nations Child Welfare Agreements.<br><br>Percentage of students, parents and public satisfied that schools provide a safe and caring environment.<br><br>Adolescent and youth measures. | Integration of computer technology into public education as measured by the ratios of pupils per computer and pupils per World Wide Web ready computers.<br><br>Communicable disease rates, including HIV infections, life expectancy at birth, reduction in out-of-province mental health residential placements for children and youth.<br><br>Adolescent and youth measures. |

In terms of unique measures, in addition to using provincial data on the rates of injuries, disabilities and childhood illnesses, British Columbia includes far more indicators based on data derived from the *National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth*. Alberta includes more measures on how satisfactory the service system is in responding to the needs of Aboriginal people and on general satisfaction with the safety and caring quality of the school environment. New Brunswick measures access to technology at school, access to residential child mental health services within the province, data on diseases across the life span, and life expectancy at birth. All three provinces, particularly British Columbia and Alberta, use additional data on service provision and client satisfaction which is presented in departmental reports.

## 3.5    New Approaches to Measuring Outcomes

A new resource for measuring positive outcomes for children -- and ultimately for assessing the impact of government policies over time -- is the *National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth* (NLSCY).   The study is premised on evidence that the quality of early childhood experiences will have long-term effects on individual performance in the education system, on behavior in adult life, and on the risks of developing chronic diseases in adulthood.

In addition, it is believed that creating and maintaining high levels of coping, competence and well-being will be essential to sustaining a healthy civil society in the face of rapid technological and demographic changes.  Through tools like the NLSCY, the effective monitoring of outcomes on a long-term basis will demonstrate to what extent children and their families are responding well or poorly to change.  Quebec, through the Ministry of Health and Social Services, has set up its own longitudinal survey to measure development in children, called *Enquête Santé Québec : En 2001…j'aurai 5 ans*.

Every two years, the NLSCY will gather data on the health, well-being and life circumstances of Canadian children, which can be analyzed at national and provincial levels.  This provides the opportunity to link community, regional, provincial and national indicators of child well-being and healthy development (Keating and Mustard, 1996).  The analysis of national findings will permit the comparison of child outcomes in Canada with those achieved by other countries on an ongoing basis.  In addition, the analysis of data at the provincial level will allow all jurisdictions in Canada to learn from others shown to be handling policy challenges especially well.

The results of the NLSCY and its attendant research will build knowledge about the developmental changes experienced by children as they are studied over long periods of time.  It will illuminate how children are affected by the opportunities and challenges presented by changing social and family environments, within families and across Canada.  In the fullness of time, the NLSCY will enable researchers to learn more about what promotes healthy development, protects health and modifies risk.  In turn, this will provide policy makers with evidence-based information that can be used in the creation of effective policies and strategies to help young people and their families.  At present, only British Columbia makes extensive use of the NLSCY data, yet this demonstrates the potential for this database to be used by other Canadian governments to monitor policy outcomes for children and youth.

Concurrent with the emergence of new data collection methods is a shift of emphasis in how outcomes are reported.  As society seeks to identify ways to improve the development and well-being of children, moving beyond discussions of negative behaviors and deficits toward consideration of a broad set of characteristics desired for children will significantly alter our discussions of children and families (Moore *et al.*, 1997).  In the context of children's policies, 'desired characteristics' are best understood as specific markers of *successful* development and are thus described as positive child outcomes.  In CPRN's report *Building Better Outcomes for Canada's Children*, the use of positive outcomes for children and youth along the entire developmental continuum is recommended (Tipper and Avard, 1999).  Positive outcomes for each developmental stage are measured for physical well-being, learning readiness, secure attachments, social engagement and competence, and 'smart' risk-taking.

Overall, there is considerable similarity between the 'ideal' measures proposed by Tipper and Avard and the measures actually used by the three provinces that currently measure performance outcomes. This is particularly evident in the more extensive measures used by British Columbia, which also separates performance measures for child outcomes by developmental stage. However, there is a clear preference for the use of traditional negative outcome measures in the area of physical well-being. In this cluster, all measures currently used by the jurisdictions studied are presented in a negative or deficit format, with the exception of one discrete measure used in each province.

Accordingly, most of the measures currently used in Canada would have to be recast to qualify as positive outcome indicators. For example, instead of reporting 'child mortality' for children in a particular age range, provinces could present 'child survival rates' for that age group. British Columbia and Alberta have each used this approach for reporting the 'percentage of two year old children properly immunized.' Similarly, New Brunswick has adopted this approach for reporting the 'percent of child abuse or neglect cases for which goals are met within two years' instead of the more traditional deficit measure for 'reported cases of child abuse or neglect.'

In terms of *learning readiness*, British Columbia alone uses positive outcome data from the NLSCY. Alberta is planning to develop a measure of children's 'readiness to learn' in the near future. For older children, all three provinces use positive outcomes measures to report on successful learning achievement at school. British Columbia and New Brunswick rely on data prepared by the Council of Ministers of Education to report these results for 13 year old children. In contrast, Alberta uses its own achievement test data for children in grades 3, 6, 9 and 12.

Across all three provinces studied, much less attention is given to reporting outcome measures for what Tipper and Avard identify as *secure attachments*, *social engagement and competence*, and for an area of emerging interest, *'smart' risk-taking* (e.g., curiosity in toddlers, safe sex for teens). However, as one of its unique approaches to outcome measurement, British Columbia includes several measures of secure attachment, again relying on data from the NLSCY.

Another advantage of focussing on the desired positive outcomes of policy is the avoidance of rewarding people or systems for reducing a negative indicator in ways that may not be in the long-term best interests of the population. For instance, if the policy outcome goal is the 'reduction of the number of persons receiving social allowance,' there are many ways this could be achieved that would not increase the family's long term earning potential and economic security. If, however, the goal is not merely the reduction of welfare cases but is framed positively as 'moving parents along the self-sufficiency continuum' (from social allowance and unemployment, through sporadic low-wage work, toward stable employment with good wages and benefits), policy options such as providing job readiness skills, child care services, or training would look more promising (Chynoweth and Dyer, 1991).

This shift towards thinking about outcomes in positive terms, and the capacity to measure desired outcomes through instruments such as the NLSCY, will alter the policy discourse on children and families dramatically. As greater attention is directed to accountability for child and family policy, these new approaches to measuring outcomes are poised to play an important role in the solidification of emerging governance and accountability regimes.

### 3.6    Benefits and Limitations of Outcome Measurement

Keating and Mustard (1996) argue that in order to build a learning society, we must first determine how well we are doing and then assess whether or not our efforts at improvement are succeeding.  The use of outcome measurement can serve this end.  As identified in CPRN's *Securing the Social Union*, outcome measurement can achieve two key objectives:  enhancing government performance and accountability, and strengthening the social union (O'Hara, 1998). Issues related to outcome measurement and the social union will be addressed in the next section of this report.  As O'Hara (1998) suggests, the following could be considered key benefits of outcome measurement, which would:

- Force governments to explicitly identify objectives and desired outcomes as part of their decision making processes

- Provide objective and relevant information to clients, stakeholders and citizens so they can assess whether government objectives are being met and hold governments accountable for results

- Motivate public sector employees and other public service delivery agents to deliver programs that achieve the government's intended results, by clearly articulating what those results are and how their achievement will be measured

- Provide information to governments that will enable them to improve program design and delivery

- Aid in resource allocation decisions, and

- Help clarify and define the roles and responsibilities of different parts of the policy development and service delivery system.

Despite the many benefits of outcome measurement, it is important to note that outcome measures have a number of limitations.  While they can indicate whether people are better or worse off by taking a snapshot at successive moments in time, they cannot explain why a change has occurred.  As previously noted with respect to Alberta's welfare reforms and New Brunswick's early intervention initiatives, a detailed program evaluation may be required to identify the causes of change, to examine which program components are effective, and to consider the interactions between programs and client characteristics.

Another limitation to the use of outcome measurement is a caveat about the interpretation of short-term variations in results. Demographic changes or a set-back in the economy can provoke major movements on measured results in the undesired direction, regardless of the quality of the programs or services which are in place.  If there is a major recession, for example, family incomes may fall and the negative impact of unemployment, lay-offs, or business divestment could easily overwhelm the impact of even very positive programs, temporarily at least.  Further, even when both the economic and policy climates are positive, it may take years to demonstrate the positive impacts of some programs, particularly those aimed at early intervention or the remediation of severely disturbed children.

In the interim, other factors such as changes in family structure or school variables could severely affect the life circumstances of service recipients and be at the root of stalled positive progress. For this reason alone, outcome measurement will not replace the need for thorough program evaluations in the search to identify best practices that can be shared among jurisdictions. By understanding the limitations of performance measurement, and the need to use other forms of evaluation concurrently, governments should still be encouraged to consider its use, providing results are interpreted in light of changing socioeconomic conditions while striving for long-term positive change.

## 3.7 Emerging Challenges in Accountability

A shift in accountability regimes is emerging, where outcomes help focus the vision and all members of society, not just government, take responsibility for improving outcomes for children. At the CPRN roundtable, there was broad agreement that information is power and that better information is important to promoting sustained progress on children's issues. There was particular interest in well-analyzed and digested data, such as the reports emerging from the *National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth.*

Despite the strong interest in outcome measurement, there was also a focus on the difficulties of achieving robust outcome measures and on the continuing need to invest in the full spectrum of measurement, including input and output measures and client satisfaction. Issues related to flexibility and standards, as well as the "do's and don'ts" for developing outcome measures were also discussed. Each of these areas is addressed in more detail below.

### Information is Power

There was broad support for the development of outcome measures for children's well-being, and for setting outcome targets. Good information 'cycles through the system' and is used for many different purposes. Participants agreed with the adage that 'what gets measured, gets done.' The battle against the deficit was given as an example: once there was public understanding of the size of the deficit, and once public targets had been set for deficit reduction, attention to reducing the deficit became much more focussed.

Outcome data similarly provide an important vehicle for discussions between the government and the community about what needs to be done. One important suggestion was to ensure that goals for outcomes, as well as having long-term targets, are also broken down into smaller segments that are achievable in a two year time period. In this way, communities and politicians can readily see whether or not progress is being made.

### Digested Information is More Powerful

There was a consensus that the reports from the *National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth* (NLSCY) have been invaluable. This well-digested information, analyzed by academics and others, has been much more useful than 'raw numbers.' The nature of the data promotes research examining what has an impact on children's well-being and allows researchers to analyze what factors play a role in changes.

**Measuring Outcomes is Not Easy**

Although there was a great deal of interest in measuring outcomes, there was considerable discussion of the challenges of developing good outcome measures. These included:

- *Technical* challenges in measuring outcomes, since it may take 5 to 10 years to develop to robust measures of child and family outcomes through an iterative process

- *Political* challenges, such as how to develop comparable measures across jurisdictions

- *Resource* challenges, since effective measurement can be expensive and, when jurisdictions are pressed to find resources for interventions, it is hard to invest in data collection and research, and

- *Process* challenges, such as how to ensure that communities are involved in the development of the measures. Participants emphasized that grassroots consultation and input on the design of outcome measures is essential, and that an infusion of democratic accountability would be important in any structure that is established to oversee the production of outcome measures. The development of the measures should neither be too top down nor too far from the people.

**The Need for a Full Array of Measures**

While there was strong interest in developing *outcome* measures, participants stressed the importance of using other forms of measurement. There is still a need for a full array of measures, including inputs, outputs, access to services, service standards, and client satisfaction. The consensus was that other measures are also important, but may have different uses.

**Flexibility and Standards**

There were different perspectives on the need for national programs and standards, as opposed to a focus on setting national objectives for outcomes for children. Some roundtable participants suggested that there should be a full spectrum of programs for children and families in every province, and that choice and flexibility should be at the individual level, not at the community or provincial level. Others pointed out that there will always be trade-offs required and priorities to be set, and asserted that it is not possible to have everything everywhere. There are also jurisdictional issues involved, and some provinces are not enthused about the federal government inserting programs into their areas of jurisdiction.

Other participants suggested that we need national objectives or benchmarks for child outcomes, not structures or programs, and that provinces would achieve outcomes differently. Yet another perspective focussed on flexibility at the community level, whereby a community would be allowed to reallocate resources from various funding sources, provincial or federal, to respond to local needs and priorities. Finally, there were suggestions that innovation is important at both the community and the provincial levels, and that we should set benchmarks, celebrate best practices, measure outcomes, and encourage and support a 'race to the top.' In addition, the "do's and don'ts" for developing outcome measures were discussed (see Box 1).

**Box 1. "Do's and Don'ts" for Developing Outcome Measures**

**Don't ...**

• Don't build too tight a link between government accountability and outcomes. There are too many factors that influence success which are outside government control.

• Don't focus too narrowly. The focus of outcome measurement should be broad, including measures where all can be expected to contribute to progress.

**Do ...**

• Use outcomes to help frame common issues.

• Use outcomes as a basis for two-way discussions between governments and communities.

• Use outcomes to provide a common vision so that all can focus on achieving better outcomes for children and families.

• Use outcomes and benchmarks that are useful to politicians for assessing the impact of their policies, and as a basis for communicating with their constituents.

• Promote public reporting of results, and allow a role for those outside government to provide data analysis and reporting as is done for the NLSCY.

• Build on the commitment to share information in the *Social Union Framework Agreement.*

• Promote the need for regular reporting of measures that are:
  • easy to understand,
  • achievable, building on the existing base
  • widely available, and
  • lend themselves easily to comparisons.

• Choose outcome measures strategically. Use some that demonstrate the link to productivity.

• Use balanced reporting and include some performance measures.

• Involve communities in selecting and developing outcome measures. Broad input is essential because the measures need to be important to the community. The measures should make it easy to see your own responsibility to contribute to outcomes.

• Ensure that the perspectives of the client and the community are heard by listening to children in care and to others being served. This will help build a capacity to respond.

• Keep expectations of improvements on key measures realistic. There are concerns that factors like the impact of a recession could overwhelm the impact of positive policy changes. It may not be realistic to expect that things will always get better. In some cases, 'holding the line' would be a realistic goal.

• Create a clearing house or secretariat outside of government to develop outcome measures. Government funding would be needed, but it would also be useful to have external or arms-length funding to allow a modicum of independence.

• Set aside one percent of funding for any new program to fund research and outcome measurement, in order to develop a secure economic base for future research.

**A New Thrust in Accountability Regimes**

Where the outcomes provide feedback into the policy process and help focus the vision of what the government is trying to achieve, this amounts to a new thrust in accountability regimes. The government develops and refines the vision in cooperation with the community, and encourages all members of the community to take responsibility for making progress toward agreed goals. In this paradigm, the progress in achieving important outcomes provides opportunities for both the government and the community to learn about what can be done differently or better. Although performance measurement is not a panacea, its critical connection to governance and accountability could play a significant role in emerging federal-provincial regimes.

## 4.0 Emerging Trends in Federal-Provincial Relations

The social union enterprise represents a fundamental change in the evolution of social policy in Canada. In this new paradigm, it is explicitly recognized that citizens should be engaged in the construction of the social union, that policies are interrelated, and that new ways to manage the interdependence of governments are needed to ensure 'commonality where desired and diversity where required' (O'Hara, 1998). However, the *Social Union Framework* (SUF) is only the first step in managing social policy in a truly collaborative way. As Marchildon (1999) observes:

> As a framework, it does not address specifics in terms of health care, post-secondary education, training, income assistance and social services. An enormous amount of work remains to be done in order to breathe life into the SUF. Much of this work will be done on a sectoral basis. The Ministers of Social Service and their officials have had a head start in this respect. Already responsible for designing the National Child Benefit, they are currently working out a National Children's Agenda -- a diverse menu of active programs targetting at risk children, consulting on disability issues, and sharing information on welfare reform initiatives.

This section of the report examines governance and accountability issues in relation to the social union and reviews existing mechanisms for managing the social union. In addition, three new collaborative initiatives are analyzed for their importance to child and family policy for the future: the National Child Benefit system, the National Children's Agenda, and *A Framework to Improve the Social Union for Canadians*. The role and relevance of children's initiatives in strengthening Canada's social union, as well as the steps that could be taken to advance this important work, are also discussed.

### 4.1 The Relevance of Governance and Accountability to Federal-Provincial Relations

Governance and accountability issues are challenging within a single jurisdiction, but they are further complicated by the cross-jurisdictional relationships needed to implement federal-provincial (and federal-provincial-territorial) initiatives. There is even more complexity related to the 'glocalization' of society, meaning that power is simultaneously flowing from national governments in opposite directions: *globally* towards supranational institutions and *locally* towards provinces, regions and cities (Cameron and Simeon, 1999).

The federal and provincial governments each have important and sometimes overlapping roles in designing and delivering policies that affect children and families. Effective governance in this situation is essential to ensure that the many parties involved clearly understand their respective roles and responsibilities, their spheres of autonomy, and the areas in which coordination is essential. For effective federal-provincial initiatives, a governance system is needed which is consistent with the purpose, values and principles of the social union. Thus, it must be collaborative, respectful of the role and jurisdiction of each order of government, inclusive, accountable, and able to balance consistency and diversity. This approach can be characterized as a *collaborative* governance system.

In order to move policy forward however, an *effective* governance system is also a necessity. Accordingly, in the collaborative environment of federal-provincial initiatives, the goals of effective governance could be achieved by:

- Setting priorities to steer the partnership, which are understood, agreed upon and clearly reflected in a mission statement and goals

- Establishing structures, such as ministerial councils and secretariats, needed to facilitate the process of goal achievement

- Allocating resources and ensuring flexibility in order to respond to different community and provincial needs

- Coordinating roles and responsibilities, across ministries as well as across jurisdictions, and eliminating unnecessary overlap and duplication

- Involving Canadians in the design of programs which will affect them, and

- Monitoring and evaluating progress in order to identify and share best practices, learn from results, and refine policies and systems.

## 4.2   Mechanisms to Coordinate Action on Child and Family Policy

In recent years, several mechanisms have been created by First Ministers to coordinate action on social policies, including those that affect children and families. These include meetings of First Ministers, annual conferences for Premiers, sectoral councils, the Provincial-Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal, and the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal. Each of these mechanisms will be discussed briefly below.

### First Ministers' Meetings

Traditionally, First Ministers' meetings have been called by the Prime Minister, and control of the agenda and chairmanship of the meetings have traditionally resided in the Prime Minister's hands. However, for several years, Premiers have been calling for regularly scheduled First Ministers' meetings to address national issues of mutual concern and also have been pressing for greater input into the timing and agenda for First Ministers' meetings.

In 1996, First Ministers began to discuss a collaborative approach to renewing Canada's social programs and agreed that their first priorities would be to develop an integrated child benefit and to improve services to persons with disabilities. All three of the collaborative initiatives which are discussed in the next section of this report were officially launched at First Ministers' Meetings: the National Child Benefit system, the National Children's Agenda, and the *Social Union Framework*. The key roles of First Ministers are to set priorities, give mandates to ministerial and sectoral councils, review results, and make final decisions on new initiatives.

## Annual Premiers' Conferences

Each summer, Premiers and Territorial Leaders hold an Annual Premiers' Conference to discuss matters of mutual concern. Chairmanship rotates annually among the Premiers. In recent years, the Chair has had a continuing leadership role in communicating with the Prime Minister and the public on behalf of all the Premiers and Territorial Leaders. At the Conference itself, Premiers receive position papers and also direct and review the work of sectoral councils and the Provincial-Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal.

## Sectoral Councils

Several sectoral councils are involved in child and family policy issues, including councils of ministers responsible for social services, health, justice, education, and finance. Many of the sectoral councils hold both provincial-territorial and federal-provincial-territorial meetings. Most of the federal-provincial-territorial councils have joint federal and provincial co-chairs and establish working groups of officials to draft documents and design projects for consideration by the ministers. The Council of Ministers of Education is somewhat of an anomaly since it has only provincial and territorial members, with the federal government participating as an observer. It also has a full-time secretariat, which is jointly funded by the federal and provincial governments.

## Provincial-Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal

In 1995, Premiers formed the Ministerial Council on Social Policy Reform and Renewal to advise on social policy issues of mutual concern. The Council prepared the *Report to Premiers* and, thereafter, formed the Provincial-Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal. This Council is mandated to coordinate social policy renewal initiatives and address issues that involve more than one sector. Through it, Premiers invited the federal government to work towards a cooperative approach to reduce duplication of effort and contribute to the renewal of Canada's social safety net.

## Federal-Provincial-Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal

The Federal-Provincial-Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal was launched in November 1996. It was agreed that the Council's first priorities would be to coordinate the development of an integrated child benefit and to improve services to persons with disabilities. At the First Ministers' Meeting held in December 1997, the Prime Minister, Premiers and Territorial Leaders, with the exception of Quebec's, gave the Council a mandate to commence negotiations on a framework agreement on Canada's social union.

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The agreement would apply to federal, provincial and territorial governments while respecting the constitutional jurisdictions and powers of each. This launched the negotiations, which culminated in *A Framework to Improve the Social Union for Canadians* in February 1999.

## 4.3  Federal-Provincial Initiatives Relevant to Child and Family Policy

In the realm of intergovernmental relations, three important initiatives are underway which are relevant to child and family policy. These are the National Child Benefit system, the National Children's Agenda, and *A Framework to Improve the Social Union for Canadians*. Each of these will be discussed below.

### The National Child Benefit

The National Child Benefit (NCB) represents a new model for collaborative arrangements between provinces, territories and the federal government. It was designed by the Council of Ministers Responsible for Social Services and its working groups. The goal of the NCB is to reduce the depth of poverty among families with children, with a particular emphasis on providing incentives for low income parents to enter and remain in the work force. The federal, provincial and territorial governments have also been working with Aboriginal groups to ensure that on-reserve Aboriginal children receive the benefits of the NCB. Quebec has chosen not to participate in the program but has introduced new programs for children and families, which are comparable to those introduced in other jurisdictions.

*NCB Governance Process*

As part of the NCB, the federal government increased the benefits paid to children in low income families (those on welfare and the working poor) by augmenting the Canada Child Tax Benefit. The provinces, territories and Ontario municipalities, for their part, have committed to invest new funds, and to reinvest any savings from their income security programs resulting from the NCB, into programs to benefit low income families with children. The federal government also committed to working with Aboriginal people and other governments to ensure that savings from on-reserve income security programs are reinvested consistent with the objectives of the NCB.

Each government provides programs appropriate to its own jurisdiction, but the NCB initiatives are coordinated, complementary, and designed to achieve common goals. Reinvestment strategies differ by province but can be generally characterized as measures that are intended to:

- Provide income support, earnings supplements and tax relief to low income families with children

- Improve child benefits

- Extend benefits, such as health benefits, which are available to families on social assistance to low income working families

- Provide services, such as child care, to support parental attachment to the labour force, and

- Create initiatives to prevent and reduce child poverty, such as child nutrition programs.

*NCB Accountability Process*

Under the *National Child Benefit* system, governments are jointly accountable to the public, not to each other. However, the federal Auditor General has stated that he would like to see three types of accountability emphasized in assessing collaborative arrangements such as the National Child Benefit (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 1999). These are: (1) accountability to respective legislatures, (2) accountability between government partners in the enterprise, and (3) accountability to the public. The Auditor General recognizes that the essence of collaboration is mutual trust and confidence among the partners. To serve the public interest, there must be a balance between efficiency, accountability, and the achievement of results.

There are no agreed paradigms for government partners to be accountable to each other. If equal partners are expected to be accountable in the same way that a direct delivery agent or fee for service contractor would be, the benefits in terms of innovation, synergy, and future cooperation may well be lost. At the very least, any accountability framework for a partnership should be jointly developed and agreed to by the partners. Since the National Child Benefit system is perceived as a potential model for future cooperation, any accountability provisions for the program should be carefully considered, and the jurisdictions of the partners respected.

**The National Children's Agenda**

The federal, provincial and territorial governments have been working cooperatively to draft a vision which would help build a better future for Canada's children. The National Children's Agenda (NCA) was drafted under the auspices of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal, with involvement and review by departments responsible for health, social services, justice and education.

This illustrates both the complexity involved in building intergovernmental alliances and the commitment of all Canadian governments to improving outcomes for Canada's children through the renewal of social policy. The National Children's Agenda vision document was formally released in 1999, by representatives of provincial and federal governments and national Aboriginal leaders.

**The Social Union Framework**

*A Framework to Improve the Social Union for Canadians* was signed on February 4, 1999 by the First Ministers of Canada for all provinces and territories except Quebec. The *Social Union Framework*, as this agreement is commonly called, contains general principles intended to reflect and express the fundamental values of all Canadians. It includes a mobility provision and commitments to enhance each government's transparency and accountability to constituents. Signatories agreed to identify priorities for collaborative action, to collaborate on implementation as appropriate, and to give advance notice of changes that would have an impact on the other order of government.

The *Social Union Framework* also contains rules by which to establish a collaborative approach to the use of federal spending power, and procedures for avoiding and resolving intergovernmental disputes. In addition, it includes the commitment that governments will jointly undertake a full review of the *Social Union Framework* and its implementation and make appropriate adjustments to the agreement as required, ensuring opportunities for input and feedback from Canadians. The commitments in the agreement that are most relevant to this paper aim to:

- Build mutual respect and cooperation between orders of government and promote governments' willingness to work together to meet the needs of Canadian children and families

- Measure outcomes for social programs and report results to their own citizens

- Develop common outcome indicators for shared priorities

- Involve Canadians in developing social priorities and reviewing outcomes, and

- Work with the Aboriginal peoples of Canada to address their needs.

The opportunity exists to create child-centred policies, since all of the governments with an interest in these policies are working together and can bring to bear a wide range of policy instruments. The significance of this type of effort is illustrated in the following examples.

- The release of the National Children's Agenda vision document, when coupled with its opportunities for public discussion, could contribute to the creation of a shared vision among diverse stakeholders and mobilize them to each take steps to more effectively support children and families. Within government, this could spark the remaining provinces, and the federal government, to develop a child-centred mission and take supporting actions in their own jurisdictions. It could also serve as an impetus to create a joint mission for children and families, complete with commitments to action.

- There is a commitment in the *Social Union Framework* to 'monitor and measure outcomes' of social programs and share information on best practices. All governments are already committed to joint reporting on the outcomes of the National Child Benefit, especially those related to reducing the depth of poverty for families with children and increasing the labour market participation of parents on social allowance. Three provinces are now well advanced in establishing outcome measures to report to their citizens. Their path-breaking work could make it easier for other jurisdictions to put similar accountability systems in place, building on the data available in the *National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth*. In short, since governments are well-positioned to make progress in this area, measuring outcomes for children and families would be a logical place for First Ministers to begin to fulfill their commitment to monitor and measure outcomes.

- There is also the potential to make progress on the commitment to ensure effective mechanisms for the 'involvement of Canadians' in developing social priorities and reviewing outcomes. While governments are already developing a wide range of mechanisms to hear from Canadians about their priorities for child and family policies (see Table 3), other opportunities for citizen involvement in child and family policy emerge through community committees, task forces, forums, and client or community satisfaction measures. Combined, this strengthens the argument that governments are well-positioned to select child and family policy as the first area in which to demonstrate their *Social Union Framework* commitments.

## 4.4   A Coordinated Outcome Measurement System for Child and Family Policy

In order to implement a coordinated outcome measurement system for child and family policy, an effective and collaborative governance regime is first needed. The question remains as to what needs to be done to accomplish all of this. Options for setting priorities, creating structures, allocating resources, coordinating roles and responsibilities, monitoring progress, and involving Canadians are discussed below.

**Setting Priorities for Cooperative Action**

In *Securing the Social Union*, O'Hara (1998) suggests there is an essential role for First Ministers in providing momentum, supporting what is working, monitoring progress, and adjusting what is not working well. The use of First Ministers Meetings was recommended as a means to that end. Although the National Children's Agenda will set a broad vision and general objectives for children, the progress made with the National Child Benefit demonstrates the advantage of setting limited and clear goals for a successful initiative. Therefore, a critical factor would likely be a clear mandate from First Ministers to develop a mission and goals for improving specific child outcomes and to design an outcome monitoring system to track improvements.

**Creating Structures to Support Collaboration**

The Federal-Provincial-Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal is likely the best structure for carrying out any role assigned by First Ministers for implementing goals and designing an outcome measurement system for child and family policies and programs. The *Social Union Framework* has assigned the Council a role in supporting sectors by collecting information on effective ways of implementing the *Social Union Framework* agreement.

Along with the previously assigned role of the Council on matters which cross sectors, this makes it the most suitable structure for setting an overall policy direction and designing a monitoring system for intergovernmental cooperation on child and family policy. Finally, the Council usually has broad membership from different sectors such as ministers of health and social services and, often, ministers of finance and justice as well. This broad representation is crucial for advancing the agenda since child and family policy issues cut across so many sectors.

There may also be a need to develop a jointly funded secretariat to support the Council, which is done for the Council of Ministers of Education, or to hire a third party organization to provide support in developing proposals, collecting and analyzing data, and preparing reports. Alternatively, existing organizations such as Statistics Canada or the Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat may be able to provide some of the support required. Another option would be for the Council to use *ad hoc* working groups of officials from participating jurisdictions to complete its work, an approach which has also been used successfully in the past. Box 2 provides a list of possible models for data collection on outcomes measures.

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**Box 2. Models for the Collection and Distribution of Outcome Measures**

A number of formal structures could be used to collect and distribute outcome measures on child and family policy (O'Hara, 1998). These include models based on the following:

- The *Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics*, which is located within Statistics Canada but is governed by a council of federal and provincial justice deputies

- The *Canadian Institute for Health Information*, which is a nonprofit organization whose board of directors includes government and non-governmental representatives

- *Oregon Benchmarks*, in which an independent data collection and oversight organization links performance to resource allocation and uses performance measurement to assess adherence to conditions placed on funding

- Germany's *Council of Experts*, which provides annual reports, independent analysis, and options for achieving objectives (albeit on economic issues), or

- Australia's *Performance Measurement System*, steered by representatives of all governments but with an independent chair, which provides annual indicators of performance in agreed upon areas of service although it does not establish broad goals or targets.

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**Allocating Resources to Support Collaboration**

Governments need to invest resources to support collaboration (Marchildon, 1999). This would include the allocation of resources needed to measure program outcomes and, possibly, for program evaluations to study effective programs in more depth in order to identify best practices and learn from innovation. Resource allocation should take into account the ability of each government to pay and allows governments to opt out of paying for projects they choose not to support.

The federal government has a traditional role in funding research, evaluation and data collection initiatives such as the *National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth* and may be able to provide a larger share of funding for measuring the outcomes of child and family policies. For example, there are precedents established for funding the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers of Education and its educational outcome measurement projects. The federal government sits as an observer on the Council of Ministers of Education but has been contributing the cost of its operations. A similar model could be used to invest in resources for any outcome measurement project undertaken by the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal.

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**Coordinating Roles and Responsibilities**

Any outcome measurement system that is implemented should complement, rather than duplicate, other initiatives already under way such as the NLSCY or the *Report Card on the Health of Canadians*. This will enable new initiatives to build on the outcome measurement processes that are already being used by governments. For some measures, national data could be provided through the NLSCY or Statistics Canada. For other measures, each government could collect and submit data on its own initiatives, if parallel definitions are used for the data collection process. Therefore, coordination in this area is critical.

**Monitoring Progress**

Developing an explicit child-centred goal or mission statement and outcome measures for children and families which are shared by all governments (and, ideally, taken up by community partners) is likely to be an iterative process taking several years, particularly if efforts to involve stakeholders are instituted and maintained. The best outcome measures would provide feedback at every level, for communities, regions, sectors, provinces and the nation, thus allowing data to be used for multiple purposes and corrective actions to be taken at the appropriate level.

As noted, the key monitoring roles for the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal, either alone or with supporting structures such as a council secretariat or third-party organization, are related to identifying and sharing best practices, learning from results, and refining policies and systems. This management body will learn from the results of outcome measurement and notify First Ministers when there is a need for correction. Similarly, First Ministers have an essential role in monitoring by providing ongoing momentum, direction, review and correction as required.

**Involving Canadians**

As previously noted, each province already has mechanisms in place to consult with citizens about child and family policy. However, the National Children's Agenda could provide a stimulus for engaging citizens across Canada. Public reports on the progress made in achieving goals for children and families will be essential, once a coordinated performance measurement system is in place.

Given the variety of consultation mechanisms in place in different jurisdictions, a process like the one used for the *Calgary Declaration* could serve as a useful model. In that framework, each province conducted its own public input process, reported publicly on the results, and eventually tabled the results in the legislature. Consultation processes varied from province to province but were based on the same 'core text.' The modalities used for garnering public input included the Internet, toll-free telephone lines, questionnaires, focus groups, town hall meetings, legislators' meetings, and face to face discussions.

Any initiatives that emerge from the *Social Union Framework*, particularly those related to child and family policy, will be cross-sectoral in nature. Therefore, in addition to engaging 'the public' in its broadest sense, it will be vitally important to engage key stakeholders, within and external to government, to participate in both the debate and in the work that lies ahead. Again, the Council of Ministers of Education provide an example through their recent report on *Public Expectations of Post-Secondary Education in Canada*, which received endorsement from the Association of Canadian Community Colleges and the Canadian Association of University Teachers. This provides an example of "a solid first step towards greater citizen engagement in broad policy formulation" (Marchildon 1999).

## 5.0  Summary

Placed in historical perspective, the last few years have been a time of turbulence and change in child and family policy. Key governance challenges include how to build a common vision and purpose, foster cooperation, and create a shared culture between governments and communities, across government departments, within the service delivery network, and between governments. One challenge is to improve relationships between governments, including those of Aboriginal peoples, as well as their organizations, and communities. Another will be to ensure that voluntary agencies are able to maintain their advocacy role in the new environment. Accountability for child and family policy, and for improved outcomes for children, requires solid information, concerted efforts at communication across and within sectors, and effective outcome measurement tools.

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## 'Best Policy Mix for Children' Research Projects

The following 10 research reports embody the findings of the CPRN Family Network research project, *What is the Best Policy Mix for Canada's Children?* Several of these reports are available on-line at: http://www.cprn.org.

- O'Hara, Kathy. 1998. *Comparative Family Policy: Eight Countries' Stories.* CPRN Study No. F-04. Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.

- Phipps, Shelley. 1999. *An International Comparison of Policies and Outcomes for Young Children.* CPRN Study No. F-05. Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.

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