

# *The National Children's Agenda*

## *Nova Scotians Respond*

*A Report on the 1999 Consultation Process*



  
**NOVA SCOTIA**

acknowledged as a significant barrier to children and youth. Several groups wanted emphasis on preventing racism in the text. Change 'reflecting the diversity' to 'celebrating the diversity'. Include the concept of abilities and disabilities (Value 5).

- This value should refer to on-reserve communities and off-reserve communities and the need for equitable levels of service. Acknowledge the move in the direction of self-government for Aboriginals. All Canadians should 'recognize and respect the special importance of parents, elders, and extended families in nurturing children' (Value 6).

#### 4 Goals

*Do you feel that these are appropriate goals for children in Canada?*

- In general, participants said the goals were appropriate
- Many participants felt that the goals could be improved by making them firm, positive, action-oriented, and measurable
- Again, the content of the booklet was preferred to the content of the workbook
- Participants wanted the wording to be active rather than passive
- The goal statements should begin with the word "All" to emphasize that the goals include every child and youth
- There should be more emphasis on education, recreation, and play
- Adding more goals was suggested, including developing one that would refer to healthy families:
  - Children will have safe and inclusive communities in which to grow and develop;
  - Children will have a happy childhood with the opportunity and encouragement to express themselves through play and recreation.

*What changes would you make to this group of goals or any to these individual goals to make them more relevant for children in Canada?*

- Health should include a reference to healthy environments. The following revision is suggested: Good Health and Well-Being – As a nation, we aspire to have children who are raised in families and communities which support children to achieve their optimal potential for physical, mental, emotional, social, behavioural, and spiritual health and well being (Goal 1).
- Objection was raised to having the basic needs issue in

the same goal as the child protection issue. These are two separate goals. The list of basic needs was seen as inadequate and implies a defined standard, probably survival mode. Reference to the specific needs of children with mental and physical disabilities, chronic health problems, and emotional disorders should be included, as special care must be directed at these populations to ensure that their safety and security needs are met. The word "torture" was suggested in relation to victimization. The words 'love', 'emotional support', 'consistency', 'have fun', 'play', and 'safe environment' should be added to the list of basic needs. The safety aspect should include a reference to safe housing. The goal should end with 'caring adults and communities' (Goal 2).

- The concepts of readiness or 'ready to learn' and 'success' were considered problematic – children and youth are always learning something whether we define it as successful learning or not. Equitable access to all learning was noted as important and the word 'inclusion' should be added to address the issues faced by children and youth with special needs. 'Communication' should be added to the list of skills. Non-academic education should also be emphasized. Suggested revisions included: 'Children should be supported in developing life skills to be a healthy person.' 'Children must be provided with meaningful opportunities to reach their full potential... These opportunities should lead to the development of skills... Acknowledge the need for adequate planning for transitions throughout life (Goal 3).
- The title and content of the goal should be broadened; for example, to include children and youth with special needs and to acknowledge that while children and youth have rights, they also have responsibilities. The title of the goal should be revised to read: 'Socially engaged, included, and responsible.' Other revisions to these sentences include: "They should be taught to respect themselves and others, and to value the cultural heritage, language, and diversity of themselves and others. They should be encouraged to develop an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of belonging to a wider society, and to understand and be responsible for the personal and social consequences of their choices." The addition of the phrase, 'achieve a society which is socially and economically inclusive' was also requested. The first sentence put the onus on the child, instead of reflecting