Commission to Promote
Sustainable Child Welfare

Commission de promotion de la viabilité
des services de bien-être de l'enfance

A NEW APPROACH TO

ACCOUNTABILITY & SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

September 2012

ACCOUNTABILITY AND SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHY ACCOUNTABILITY MATTERS TO SUSTAINABILITY

Better information about service performance and child outcomes is crucial to strengthening accountability and securing sustainability. The child welfare system must demonstrate its value to funders, communities and the families it serves. Moreover, it is critical that the resources spent on services are effectively invested to delivering positive benefits for children and youth. Though the Commission has observed excellent work on the part of Children's Aid Societies (CASs), it is difficult to demonstrate measurable results. Without clear expectations and accurate information, judgments about the effectiveness of CAS are made on the basis of unreliable sources, local anecdote or high profile child tragedy.

The current accountability requirements were introduced over many years and now lack an overarching framework and coherence. This has resulted in many separate, overlapping and, at times, conflicting mechanisms that taken together are overly-focused on compliance to process and procedures instead of on measurable results. An over-emphasis on compliance to prescribed standards and processes is not an effective approach to securing better child outcomes and service improvements. In fact, there is evidence that disproportionate reporting and audit diverts resources from serving children, de-motivates professionals and obscures from view the results that services achieve. It is also clear that for a range of reasons, the current system of accountability negatively impacts Aboriginal children, families, communities and agencies.

There have been several efforts to strengthen accountability over the last decade. Some CASs have developed, and are currently using, excellent planning and performance systems that generate public reports and support service improvement. Over the years, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) and the sector have worked with researchers to develop performance measures, outcomes and more effective accountability mechanisms. The current work builds on these earlier efforts.

THE DIRECTION OF CHANGE

The Commission's work focused on developing a new and more coherent framework of accountability to strengthen governance and secure continuous improvement. An effective framework of accountability requires:

- Purpose and guiding principles:

- Clear roles and responsibilities;

- Mechanisms for identifying priorities and communicating policy;

- Reliable outcome and performance information; and

- Results that are tied to future improvements in performance

Purpose and Guiding Principles

The overriding purpose of the framework is to strengthen governance and support improvement by bringing greater coherence to accountability mechanisms and focusing on strategic priorities.

The principles guiding the direction of change to arrive at the new approach are set out below:

From Less	To More
Fragmented accountability and experience of bureaucratic burden	Unified and coherent system that reduces experience of administrative burden
Reliance on the funding formula to incent change	Reliance on a performance management system with clear expectations and consequences
Conversation about control of financial and other inputs	Conversation about children and the value-for-money of services
Ad hoc introduction of new demands and rules	Clarity of expectations on a planned basis
Compliance to standardized processes	CAS responsibility for continual improvement of results
Ministry focus on case management	Ministry focus on system management
Need to reach judgments without explicit expectations and data	Comparative benchmarking and timely public reporting of results Evaluating whether what we're doing is working

Respective Roles

An effective accountability framework needs to be grounded in a definitive understanding of who is accountable for what. Clarity of roles is essential where the stakes are high and resources are stretched. Ongoing responsibility for developing and maintaining an effective system of accountability rests with the government. Hence, it is important for the Ministry to set the overall strategy, goals and priorities of the child welfare system and ensure that there is an effective accountability framework in place.

CASs boards have the responsibility for governing independent not-for-profit corporations. As such, CASs boards are accountable to their members and local communities as well as to the government for their performance and outcomes. The accountability of CASs should be discharged through multi-year plans prepared within the planning guidance issued by the Ministry and within the context of local community needs and circumstances. Both the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) and The Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario (ANCFSAO) have critical roles to play in unifying and supporting their respective members to meet the accountability expectations placed upon them by government and by their other stakeholders.

Dimensions of Child Welfare

In order for CASs are to manage their performance, gauge results and put plans in place to address short-comings, they need to know what they are expected to deliver. The Commission's work on the "scope" of CASs provides part of the answer to this question. Generally, the Commission's touchstone in defining scope is that every Ontario child and family should have access to a comparable continuum of services wherever they live regardless of which agency delivers the services. The dimensions of child welfare that are the focus of the work done on accountability are: child safety, permanence and well-being as expressed in the policy characterized by transformation.

Accountability Mechanisms

The Commission reviewed the current landscape of accountability mechanisms and concluded that the three mechanisms requiring the most urgent change are strategic planning and target setting, child outcome and service performance measures and cyclical agency reviews. As these new mechanisms are introduced, existing reporting and administrative requirements need to be streamlined or removed.

Strategic Planning and Target Setting

Clear direction and objectives need to be established and communicated before agencies can be held accountable for meeting them. MCYS, in collaboration with the sector, should design and implement a multi-year strategic planning and target setting process that sets clear directions for more child-focused programs and services across government and its local delivery network.

A new conceptual framework is needed for improving planning and goal setting in order to better align government directions and priorities with on-the-ground execution. The framework, set out in **Chapter 5,** sets out a series of interlocking strategies and plans:

- A multi-year provincial Strategy for Children's Services developed by a cross-governmental "children's services forum" led by the Deputy Minister of Children and Youth Services, with full support of the Minister, the Premier and the Cabinet. The priorities it sets should transcend

Ministries and existing program boundaries. The strategy should also more closely align the scope, policy and priorities for which MCYS is directly accountable;

- Each CAS should have a multi-year strategic plan that reflects provincial as well as local priorities; and

- Annual Accountability Agreements between local CASs and MCYS should make clear what is expected of the Ministry and local agencies.

Child Outcome and Service Performance Measures

What gets measured gets managed. Therefore, child outcome and service performance measures are required to enhance accountability and drive improvement.

Over the past year the sector worked with the Commission to develop an initial set of 24 performance indicators (PI) that represent the key dimensions of child welfare: safety, permanence and well-being as well as agency management. The PIs cover two categories: service performance and outcome indicators which offer a snapshot of how well CASs are serving children and families. In addition, agency capacity indicators provide insights into how likely an agency will continue to improve.

In Phase 1, the 24 PIs were collected in 24 CASs to gather preliminary data and results. The results from this first phase were reviewed at a full-day "summit" in May 2012 which brought together leaders from every CAS as well as from MCYS. The first phase was instrumental in producing preliminary results and identifying areas for further investigation – areas where information is not being collected in a common way and areas where standardized instruments and definitions will be required to improve data capture in the future.

The stage is now set to move to Phase 2 and include all CASs in capturing and evaluating results across the common set of performance indicators. In future years, , the Commission urges that CASs begin to consistently capture information on the ethno-cultural backgrounds of clients served using the standard set of categories adopted for the 2006 Canadian long form census. This information will be important in assessing how effectively the sector is adapting to increased population diversity and whether some populations are disproportionately over-served or under-served. The Commission also urges attention to developing indicators for community- and family-based services to supplement the existing indicators on out of home care. This will enable a more accurate assessment of outcomes from all child welfare interventions, not just children placed in out of home care.

All work moving forward should be closely coordinated with the implementation of the Child Protection Information Network (CPIN). **Chapter 6** explains the steps taken in Phase 1 and how the lessons from it should inform Phase 2.

Cyclical Agency Reviews

Strategic planning and target setting provide direction and clarity of goal, while performance indicators provide a retrospective snapshot of results. However, an assessment of the agency's capacity provides the best predictor of future improvement and results. . This prospective view requires a mechanism for regularly reviewing CAS; hence, the Ministry should introduce a program of cyclical agency reviews focused on an agency's capacity for improvement. In contrast with compliance-oriented operational reviews that are informed by paper-based audits of client files assessed against Ministry standards, the reviews the Commission is recommending will be more strategic, systemic and results-focused.   Our rationale is to support more responsive/responsible leadership by purposeful organizational processes and good feedback loops, and in this way remove the need to scrutinize the transactional level of an agency's day-to-day operations.

The design of these reviews would be focused on the improvement for children's outcomes drawing on performance data and evidence. The calibre and credibility of the Review Teams is critical and should be composed of people with a skill mix in management, finance, information and child welfare. Specialist expertise, either in-house or external, similar to the improvement services established in other sectors, will be required to design the Agency Reviews, develop methodologies and tools, ensure consistency of execution and reporting.

All CASs would be reviewed within a three-year cycle. Individual reviews would be conducted through an iterative process of self-study, feedback, publicly published reports and action plans. Much of the value of the Agency Reviews would be realized through the quality of the exchanges between CASs, the review team and MCYS in the course of the process. Results of the reviews would be reported publicly without delay. The format of reports should be short, with clear conclusions about how well the agency is rated for serving children and families in its community and what capacity the agency has for improvement. The results of Reviews would enable comparisons to be made from one agency to another and track improvement over time. **Chapter 7** sets out the process of conducting Cyclical Reviews in more detail.

Making Results Matter

Accountability is strengthened and outcomes improved only if instruments – strategic planning, analyzing performance data and conducting Cyclical Reviews – make a difference, a meaningful difference. Information about expectations and results need to be used to support decision-making – for children and youth, families, CASs and the Ministry. There are six important enablers that support making results matter:

Importance of Transparency

CASs exercise powerful protective powers and are authorized to intervene in the lives of children and families – in many instances with lifelong consequences. Clear expectations set out in published plans

will bring greater transparency to the priorities of CASs and their role in the community. Performance measures also provide transparency around results in key areas reflecting children's safety, permanency of care and well-being. Many CAS produce excellent annual reports and scorecards but province-wide measures will allow local results to be put in a broader context.

Power of Comparison

Clear expectations, performance measures and Agency Reviews will make it possible to employ the power of comparison. Analyzing differences between agencies can generate better knowledge and best practices. If one CAS places most children in family-based care or unifies families more quickly or finds permanent homes more successfully, it is important to understand why this is the case and what changes could be introduced to improve results more widely. Information needs to be accurate, reliable and reported on a timely basis so that the data can be used for different purposes by different parts of the system.

Statistical Neighbours

There are a number of mechanisms that can be used to support more effective benchmarking. This is particularly important given the diversity of CASs, their different scale, service models, resourcing and local communities. The Commission developed a prototype "statistical neighbours" tool which uses a set of local socioeconomic data and agency performance data to identify CASs 'nearest statistical neighbours'. Such a tool will enable CASs to compare their performance on a number of service benchmarks against "like" CASs. This tool can be a very powerful support to CASs' Boards of Directors and leadership teams in examining variation and putting plans in place to address differences that are not justified by local circumstances.

Value of Proportionality

This effective accountability framework recognizes and rewards excellence and addresses failure. Its overall design is intended to align incentives with achieving good results and where poor performance is identified to require improvement. The aim is to create a self-improving system where excellent agencies are rewarded for getting better, given more freedoms and encouraged to share best practice. Poorly performing agencies would be monitored more closely and given external help until they demonstrate improvement.

A Culture of Curiosity and Learning

Learning how a system learns is key to being able to adapt and ultimately improve. A system requires feedback and data directly from the frontline. The concept of ' learning loops' is the next step, permitting corrective action on the basis of the feedback. Feedback must focus not only on whether agencies are doing things right but also on whether they are doing the right things. It would be a big mistake to make assumptions about what is good or poor performance at this stage of the process; first must come curiosity, further investigation and support for a culture of learning. Child welfare services are part of a complex system with many interlocking parts. The challenge to assess their impact, is to

identify and interpret the right measures in the right combination. As understanding improves so, too, will the ability to form more confident judgments and directive actions.

The Question of Financial Incentives and Sanctions

The idea of incentives is sometimes misunderstood to mean funding agencies or staff according to results. Payment by results is in its infancy as a funding model in child welfare. It has been introduced in a few places in the United States where states or counties have used it as part of a wider strategy to create a market, drive down costs and drive up performance through competition. Ontario does not have a market-based strategy for the provision of child welfare services, nor does it have a results-based approach to funding.

Certainly at this point, child welfare policy goals are not sufficiently clear nor are CAS services sufficiently standardized for funding to be based on performance. Additionally, there is not enough reliable data to assess performance and pay on results. The overall sustainability strategy outlined by the Commission provides some of the necessary foundations – a fair and transparent funding allocation system, clear policy direction, an effective accountability framework, performance data and agency assessments would all be important precursors. No attempt to introduce payment by results should be introduced without the requisite foundations in place. **Chapter 8** explains in more detail how the new accountability system would make results matter.

Building the Capacity for a Self-improving System

Complex adaptive systems are designed to work best when they have the drivers necessary for self-improvement. Three of these drivers are highlighted here. Beyond these drivers, the Commission recognises that there are many other elements that require development in the overall accountability framework. It will need to be regularly reviewed and revised to build on the mechanisms recommended by the Commission in this report, and adapt to changes in the child welfare system and in the broader accountability environment. In spring 2012, the OACAS established an Accountability and Outcomes Advisory group to put in place a new framework for accountability across the sector and introduce the mechanisms required to make it work.

Strengthening CAS Governance

Strong governance by CASs' Boards of Directors is the critical link in enhancing local accountability to the community on one hand and accountability to the province on the other. Strong CAS board governance is also key to enabling MCYS and CASs to effectively play their respective roles. More efficient, results-oriented governance at both the MCYS and agency level will lead to better outcomes for children and youth and a more sustainable system.

In 2012, with the support and encouragement of the Commission, the OACAS established a Governance Advisory Committee to support CASs across Ontario to strengthen governance practices.

Streamlining Existing Accountability and Audit Processes

Continued attention to streamlining existing accountability processes is critical for overall system efficiency and for making room for the new demands arising from implementation of the accountability framework. Over the course of the Commission's work, MCYS has taken initial steps to reduce the administrative burden faced by CAS and frontline workers. Central to this work has been the establishment of a "Gateway Committee" as recommended by the Commission. The "Gateway Committee" is a table at which both MCYS and sector representatives examine both new and existing processes to contain and reduce their administrative impact. MCYS, supported by the Gateway, has made early efforts at streamlining processes such as the case file audits that are part of the Crown ward Reviews and foster home licensing reviews. Gateway has also made progress in reducing the duplication of Serious Occurrence Reports. The Ministry has developed a list of priorities for ongoing work in consultation with the sector.

Shared Resource to Serve as a Catalyst for Quality Improvement in Child Welfare

The approach to accountability and improvement recommended by the Commission will require greater capacity across the system for knowledge exchange, data analysis, benchmarking, applied research and improvement support. Currently this capacity is unevenly distributed across CASs. Therefore, quality and performance improvement would be included as part of the shared services initiatives proposed by the Commission. Pooling resources will enhance the concentration of expertise, expand the availability of professional quality function to all CASs, deliver greater value for money and enable better knowledge exchange.

Chapter 9 sets out the requirements for a system that is geared more towards self-improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE PRIORITIES

Over the past year, MCYS and the sector have been actively engaged in discussions around accountability and in rolling out the first phase of province-wide performance indicators to 24 CASs. CAS boards and the leadership of both OACAS and ANCFSAO have taken an active interest in this work and recognize its importance to realizing their goals for the children, youth, families and communities they serve. This commitment, and the readiness to work together, augur well for success in taking the next steps to implement all the necessary components of a new framework for accountability.

Future progress will also benefit from the province-wide implementation of CPIN. Extensive groundwork has been completed under the leadership of MCYS and with the active participation of many individuals from CASs across the province. CPIN has the potential to greatly enhance the quality and timeliness of information available at all levels of child welfare – MCYS, CAS boards, leadership teams and front-line staff – and to enable greater public transparency of results and outcomes.

The report and recommendations that follow offer a path to an accountability framework that will support improved outcomes, demonstrate results and contribute to sustainability.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Commission's first report introduced the four-tier strategy that it had adopted to realize sustainable child welfare in Ontario. Tier 3 of this strategy sets out to "Implement a new approach to accountability and system management".

Our work on accountability (Tier 3) builds on the commitment to monitor and improve child outcomes which Ontario has demonstrated over many years. There have been efforts to strengthen accountability for over a decade; for example, the many excellent examples of planning and performance systems, which local CASs have developed and are using now. Through The Quality Network (QNet), regular statistical reporting, Ontario Looking After Children (OnLAC) as well as is its recent Reviews of Standards & Licensing, OACAS also has much to contribute. We have appreciated the report done by MCYS from the Child Welfare Outcomes Expert Reference group, led by the Child Welfare Secretariat, the work on an MCYS-wide accountability framework, led by Client Services Branch, with support from Research and Outcomes Branch, and earlier work done in Quality Assurance in former MCYS divisions. Over many years, the sector has worked with researchers, at the University of Toronto (Trocmé, Fallon and Shlonsky), McGill (Trocmé), University of Ottawa (Flynn) and University of Chicago (Wulczyn) at Chapin Hall. Much of what the Commission is recommending in this report is not new, but is brought together in a framework for the current context facing child welfare's sustainability.

In undertaking this work, the Commission has recognized the practical realities that determine what is possible in the short and medium term. The availability and quality of management and clinical information falls far short of the ideal. MCYS's planned implementation of the Child Protection Information Network (CPIN) will help to address some of these deficiencies – but full implementation is in the future, and even then, invariably, there will be more analysis and interpretation required.

A second challenge relates to funding – and achieving a more needs-based distribution of resources across CASs in the province. The Commission's recommendations on funding propose ways to gradually rebalance these inequities.[1]

Finally, the goal of child welfare is to promote the well-being of children. Nonetheless, many factors beyond child welfare – poverty, education, housing, health, employment, etc. – play a significant part in determining children's vulnerability and outcomes. Attribution of CAS activity to children's well-being and outcomes is therefore a challenge.

These realities must be factored into efforts to create a robust system of accountability for child welfare, but they are not a reason to give up or wait until conditions are 'right'. Hence, in the Commission's effort to realize a system of accountability that maximizes positive outcomes for Ontario's vulnerable children and youth, we are respectful of these many realities.

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[1] CPSCW. (2011). *A New Approach to Funding Child Welfare in Ontario*, http://www.sustainingchildwelfare.ca/assets/Funding-Approach-CPSCW-Final-Report-final-version-Aug-17-2011.pdf

2. WHY ACCOUNTABILITY MATTERS TO SUSTAINABLE CHILD WELFARE

2.1 Clarifying Expectations and Providing Evidence

Having outcome and performance information about the impact of the work of CASs is important to the sustainability of the sector. In an ever-tightening fiscal context, the value of social investment must be demonstrated to justify sustained support. Without valid information, judgments about the value of the CASs are made on the basis of some pretty unreliable sources. Amongst others, they are influenced by sometimes-hostile public opinion shaped in response to the latest local anecdote, custody scandal or child tragedy. Or found in official reports documenting rates of compliance to a burdensome volume of process standards. Or drawn on research from States in the U.S. where data reporting has been required for many years. We have observed the claims and counterclaims made in such debates, founded on facts derived from other children in other places.

2.2 Appropriate to Independent CAS Governance

In Ontario, responsibility for protecting and serving the needs of vulnerable children is vested in local, independently-governed CASs. This is different than in many parts of North America where child protection is directly delivered as a government service. The Commission has endorsed the continuation of the child welfare system in Ontario as a devolved system delivered through CASs and overseen by voluntary boards. We believe that children will be safer and families better supported when services are well-connected to local communities and shaped to meet local circumstances. Nevertheless, this structure of decentralized responsibility makes it critical that CASs have clear expectations and accountabilities to their government funders, as well as to their clients and local communities. The accountability framework should deliver the benefits of locally responsive services, in a province-wide framework which ensures a consistent continuum of services for children and families across Ontario.

During our many conversations with CASs, with MCYS and with government, we often heard that the province is not realizing the full value inherent in devolved responsibility and multiple accountabilities to funders and stakeholders. During our regional and site visits with CASs in late 2009 and 2010, we heard a number of messages from board members and CAS leaders. Here are several examples.

- We need clarity on the big picture. In my five years (on the board), I don't feel like we have a sense of where MCYS is going and where the child welfare sector is going in particular.

- We are feeling increasingly circumscribed by audits, standards, regulations and other externally imposed requirements.

- We need clarity. What is it you want us to do, ministry? Make it clear, resource us appropriately and hold us accountable.

- One of the most powerful contributions of the Commission would be to reach clarity between government and CASs on who is accountable for what and what that means.

Views such as these have led us to take a close look at the current mechanisms for holding CASs to account, and put them in a dynamic system-wide perspective.

2.3 Appropriate to Aboriginal Children and Communities

The messages we have heard from Aboriginal child welfare agencies reflect the unique considerations for accountability that are necessary for Aboriginal agencies and children. Themes encountered during our discussions and reflected in the Commission's Reports on Aboriginal Child Welfare[2] highlight deeply felt concerns that the current system of accountability and mechanisms:

- Reinforce a Euro-Canadian model of child welfare that is designed to meet the objectives of non-Aboriginal governance;

- Fail to recognize the realities of Aboriginal governance and traditional authority;

- Disregard the inherent right claimed by Aboriginal people to care for their own children; and

- Impose inappropriate and unreasonable standards and policies on Aboriginal agencies that are having negative impact on Aboriginal children, families and communities.

In sum, the overarching theme from our conversations with Aboriginal agencies was that the current accountability regime fails to recognize unique Aboriginal needs, does not serve the intent of Part X of the *Child and Family Services Act* (CFSA), nor take full advantage of the "exemption provisions" of the Act.[3]

2.4 Differentiating 'Good' from 'Bad' Variability

Another problem to be tackled by a framework of accountability in Ontario child welfare, is gaining a better understanding of good and bad variability amongst the services and activities of CASs. To address this issue of variability there needs to be clear expectations and comparable measures of service performance and outcomes across the system, nested in a coherent framework of accountability.

The reality of child welfare service variation was recently corroborated in a multi-level analysis of over 16,000 investigations within 111 child welfare agencies across Canada examined by Jud et al (2012):

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[2] CPSCW. (2011). *Advancing Aboriginal Approaches to Child Welfare*, http://www.sustainingchildwelfare.ca/assets/CPSCW-Final-Recommends-Aboriginal-Child-Welfare-Dec-23-2011.pdf

[3] Under Subsection 214(5) (a) the Minister may make regulations to exempt societies from any standards, procedures and practices that are prescribed for a CAS in performing the functions of a society. Other provisions (subsections 214 (1) 6 and 223 (a)) allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations making exemptions from the provisions of the Act and its regulations in particular circumstances and/or for specified periods of time.

"The proportion of services provided following an investigation varies remarkably across Canada's provinces ranging from as low as 30% of children being open for ongoing child welfare services or getting some other service referral in one province to as high as 70% in another province. Variation between sampled sites is even more distinct and goes from as low as 13% to as high as 96% for medium-sized agencies and from as low as 15% to as high as 77% for large agencies.... Several case characteristics were significantly associated with the odds of receiving services. *Although there was remarkable variation in service referral rates between agencies, factors accounting for that difference remain largely unexplained* [italics added].[4]

Over the course of its work, the Commission has observed and heard anecdotal evidence of service variability that may stem from organizational and/or decision-maker factors. An analysis of service data also suggests areas where services vary more than one would expect. Exhibit 1 plots the service ratios for CASs across three dimensions of service (investigations, cases served and children in care). The ratios are plotted against the "Local Needs Based Score", a composite measure developed as part of the Commission's funding work to represent the relative need for service based on a number of socio-economic factors and community characteristics. As would be expected, the chart illustrates that as needs increase, there is a corresponding upward trend in service levels. However, there is wide variation and some significant outliers to the expected pattern. There is no agreed explanation for these variances, nor are we equipped with the kind of measures and data that would allow explanations to be pursued.

Children in Care, Investigations, and Cases Served per 1000 Children by Agency Local Needs Based Score
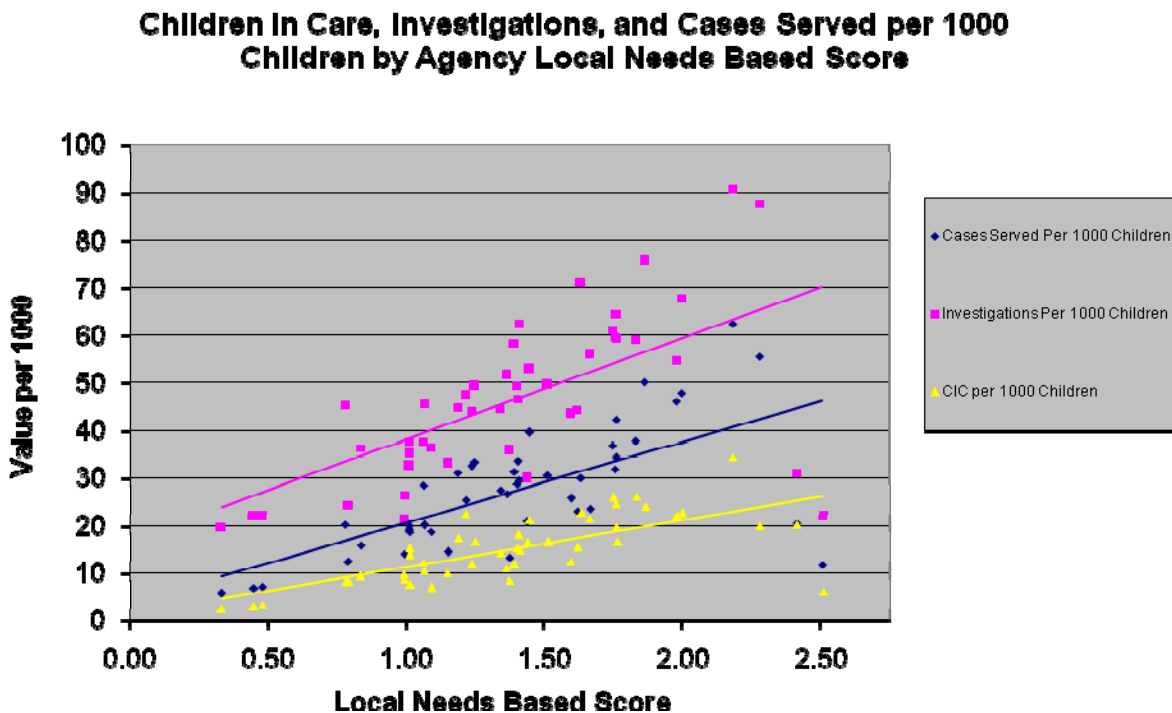
Exhibit 1

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[4] A. Jud, A., Fallon,B., Trocme, N. (2012). Who gets services and who does not? Multi-level approach to the decision for ongoing child welfare or referral to specialized services. *Child and Youth Services Review*, 34, 983-988.

The Local Needs Based score reflects (at least to a degree) variation in the availability of other local children's services from one CAS area to another, therefore that factor does not explain the observed variation in service. But it is not clear what does explain the difference.

The Commission's report on *Clarifying the Scope of Child Welfare Services* supports the provision of comparable levels of support for all children and families across Ontario.[5] This aim contrasts with the variability between the services currently provided by different CASs in different places. Our report calls on CAS boards and leadership teams to critically examine variations in service that stem not from individual family or community circumstances but from the factors relating to differing knowledge, cultural orientations, or service biases.[6] A robust framework for accountability will provide the context and mechanisms through which the sector can differentiate "good" from "bad" variability and put plans in place to make improvements.

2.5 A Tougher Fiscal Context and Emphasis on Accountability

Ontario's government faces some very tough fiscal challenges now and in the years to come. The 2012 budget estimated that revenues will grow at an average annual rate of 3.5% from 2011-12 to 2014-15.[7] Total expense is projected to increase at an average annual rate of 1.5 % over the same period, lower than the 2.2 % growth forecast in the 2011 Budget; the budget has fixed overall social expenditure at 2.7% average annual increase. The Commission on the Reform of Ontario Public Services considers that even these estimates may be overly optimistic and argues that social spending, including child welfare and related children's services, should not exceed .5% increase per year.[8]

Against this economic and fiscal backdrop is a heightened emphasis on accountability throughout the public and private sectors. CASs are always sensitive to calls for public accountability. In recent years, they have needed to address the implications of various events and respond to associated recommendations. For example, the 400 recommendations arising from the *1997 Ontario Child Mortality Task Force* created a major increase in protection activity and cost, which was brought to a pause by the 2003 Child Welfare Program Evaluation report. The sector then moved to a more sustainable position with the 2005 Transformation Agenda, but was brought again under adverse scrutiny by the Auditor General's Report of 2006. Events such as these in child welfare and other public services over the last few years have brought the themes of accountability and transparency to the forefront of all government funded activity.

2009, 2010 and 2011 brought a multitude of headlines relating to accountability for public spending with Ornge, eHealth, LCBO, Lottery and Gaming, and other news stories all feeding public cynicism and sensitivity about how taxpayer dollars are being spent. In part in response, new legislation is also being introduced that will affect CASs. The *Ontario Not for profit Corporations Act (ONCA)* received royal

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[5] CPSCW. (2012). *Clarifying the Scope for Child Welfare Services*: http://www.sustainingchildwelfare.ca/
[6] *Ibid*.
[7] *Ontario's Economic Outlook and Fiscal Plan 2012*: http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/budget/ontariobudgets/2012/bk1.html
[8] p. 40. The report from the Drummond Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services, February 2012.

assent in October 2010 and will fully come into force in late 2012. It will provide a new legal framework for Ontario's 46,000 not-for-profit corporations including CASs. The new legislation is structured around four guiding principles: transparency and accountability; flexibility and permissiveness; responsiveness and efficiency; and fairness. [9] It introduces rules for directors, officers, and members and will require boards to upgrade their bylaws, letters patent and any special resolutions by 2015. The *Broader Public Sector Accountability Act* (BPSAA) was also passed in 2010 to bring in new rules and more accountability for hospitals, Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs), school boards, colleges, universities and CASs. [10]

The Ontario 2011 budget devoted an entire chapter to *Accountability, Transparency and Financial Management* with particular emphasis on steps the government is taking to "protect the interests of taxpayers and strengthen the accountability of organizations that receive public funding". The Report from the Drummond Commission and the Ontario government's 2012 budget have continued to emphasize these themes. Initiatives are being developed to realize these broad government directions across government; the Commission has drawn particularly on the developments in health services and education. The Framework for Accountability being recommended in this report will align the child welfare sector more closely with the principles and approaches being realized across the Ontario government.

In short, many factors are pointing to the critical demand for a new approach to accountability in the child welfare sector. This approach must provide the clarity and latitude for CASs to deliver on overall provincial government expectations – while being responsive to the needs of local clients and communities.

2.6 Accountability Confounded by Ad Hoc Policies, Standards, Guidance & Reporting

Child welfare in Ontario will benefit from a more coherent framework for accountability. The current arrangements have developed on an ad hoc basis over the years without an overall common framework. Rather, there are many separate, sometimes overlapping and conflicting mechanisms that together produce unintended and problematic consequences:

- There is too little reliable and accurate data available on a timely basis and what is collected is not always made available to individual CASs or the sector.

- In the absence of good performance data and clarity on expectations, the conversation invariably focuses on money and spending and less on children and outcomes. Moreover, CASs often find themselves on the defensive with limited information to respond to criticisms about the quality and effectiveness of their work.

- Fragmented and overlapping processes, waste time and effort and sometimes undermine their intended purposes.

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[9] Ministry of Consumer Services (2011). *Modernizing the Not-for-Profit Sector*. Government of Ontario.

[10] MOHLTC (2011). *Broader Public Sector Accountability Act* 2010, Government of Ontario.

- Roles are not clear, leaving CASs often feeling micro-managed and MCYS frustrated, putting at risk the clarity of accountability which is critical to decision-making about child safety.

- Accountability is more about upward reporting and less about information that becomes a tool for self-examination and continuous improvement within CASs and the system as a whole.

- Overall, accountability is weakened leaving Boards, MCYS, government, and the public sometimes feeling frustrated by a lack of clarity of what we are achieving for the investment we are making in protecting and promoting the well-being of vulnerable children.

Over the course of the Commission's work on accountability, we have been encouraged by the initiatives we have observed within government, OACAS and CASs themselves to achieve a greater transparence and outcome focus. We have sensed a willingness to make the changes to realize a more coherent and effective framework for accountability for child welfare in Ontario.

3. THE COMMISSION'S APPROACH TO THIS WORK

3.1 Accountability is Key to Transformation

In the Commission's working paper comparing different jurisdictions Design of Child Welfare Systems[11], we argued that services for children and families should be thought about as a system with interlinking parts. We have also founded our understanding of 'sustainability' with a system that is 'adaptive' – able to respond to changing circumstances – in clients and communities as well as policy-makers and funders. In keeping with this view, accountability is but one element of an adaptive system; a system that has the capacity to improve itself.

The following elements are broadly seen as what is required to develop an adaptive system, capable of self-improvement and more sustainable. No one element is sufficient.

1. **Top down performance management.** To ensure the system has a performance orientation, with clear goals supported by smart metrics, an element of top-down performance management is part of the overall design. Often systems begin the journey of transformation with this piece, which may be effective in achieving some basic standards and developing a culture of improvement.
   - Outcome based target setting

   - Regulation and standard setting

   - Performance assessment, including inspection

   - Direct intervention

2. **Service users and community shaping service from below.** For timely and appropriate responses, the system must have the flexibility to recognize changing requirements and innovate in new ways. Top down change originates far from the personal and local experiences shaping people's needs for service, and our collective need for protecting children.
   - Choice and personalization

   - Funding following the client

   - Stronger 'voice' and 'co-production'

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[11] CPSCW. (2010). *Jurisdictional Comparisons of Child Welfare System Design*, Working paper No 2.
http://www.sustainingchildwelfare.ca/assets/jurisdictional-comparisons-child-welfare-system-design-20100721.pdf

3. **Capacity and capability building.** Talented people working in well-designed, purposeful organizations are critical to success. There needs to be investment in capacity-building to gain the best of the people engaged in the system.

   - Leadership

   - Workforce development

   - Organizational development and collaboration

4. **Market incentives to increase efficiency and quality.** This element may have less popular support in child welfare, similar to other sectors exercising a protective role often with involuntary clients. But there is evidence of some of these elements being introduced in some personal services across Canada and elsewhere.

   - Competition and contestability

   - Commissioning services – purchaser/providers split

Some of these mechanisms are in place in Ontario child welfare – standards setting and direct intervention to deal with failing services. There is local community 'voice' which is a signature feature of Ontario's CASs, and important given the nature of the 'protective' mandate in personal lives of families, there is also a commitment to service users, but not so many tangible initiatives to support its realization. From time to time there are province-wide or local initiatives to develop leadership or organizational capacity. In this report the Commission is recommending mechanisms to replace existing ones, because we believe they will serve the policy and service objectives better.

Not all will be appropriate for child welfare at the current time given the current state of the child welfare 'system'. But these could be considered in the future.

The most obvious issue inhibiting the scope for client choice is the protection powers vested in CASs which gives them far-reaching authority to intervene in the lives of children and families. Child welfare is not always a service of choice. But this should not be an excuse for totally disempowering CAS clients, for the cooperation of even involuntary clients is necessary for desired change to occur. Some CASs argue that this is what makes it important to invest in building trust in client relationships. And unlike Ontario in some other jurisdictions (e.g. Manitoba), all families can choose by which Child Welfare Authority they wish to be served.

However, there is further systemic work to be done before one could consider introducing further choice or competition; given the questions about the effectiveness of the current systems for purchasing, pricing and licensing Outside Paid Resources (OPRs). Similarly, one can only introduce 'funding following the client' after many years of needs-based population funding has allocated resources across the provinces on a fair and sustainable basis. And overall, the system does not have

the information or mechanisms to inform decisions about choice and quality. With the adoption of the recommendations made by the Commission, we hope that the asymmetry of information and influence will be put into better balance in the near term.

Systems with these elements (see Exhibit 2) are being designed for sustainability, and are being introduced in Ontario's health and education sectors, in part as a result of exchanges with the U.K. [12]
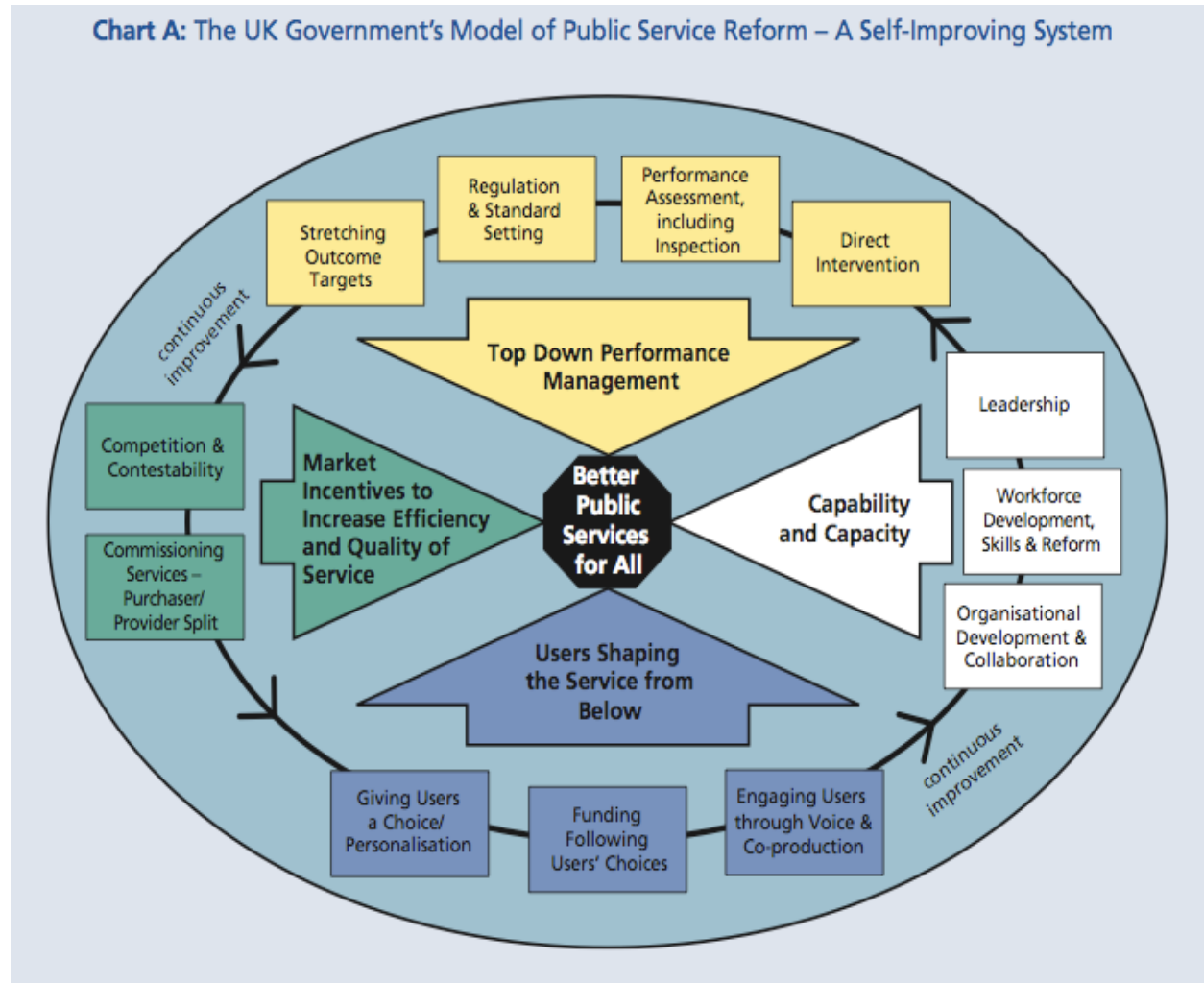
Exhibit 2: Representation of the U.K.'s Approach to Public Service Reform. [13]

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[12] See presentations from various NHS at OHA http://www.oha.com/KnowledgeCentre/Pages/KnowledgeCentre.aspx ; and the Change Foundation http://www.changefoundation.ca/library/integrated-healthcare-in-england-lessons-for-ontario/
And influence on Education, of Whole System Reform http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/bb4e/reportFullan_Barber.pdf

[13] Cabinet Office. (2006). *UK Government's Approach to Public Service Reform: a Discussion Paper*, The Prime Minister's Strategy Unit. p. 23:
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100428141142/http://cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/strategy/assets/sj_report.pdf

3.2 Evidence from Other Sectors in Ontario

Accountability for child welfare does not stand in isolation but is part of a broader system of public services in Ontario, which are undergoing a far-reaching program of transformation. The Commission has examined the legislation and directives being introduced to strengthen accountability across the public service – these are outlined in Section 5 of the current report.

It has also been interesting to examine the steps taken to secure better quality and cost in Ontario health care, which draw on practices emerging internationally. Ontario's pioneering work on a Case Costing model is now in its seventh version, and represents the most comprehensive data source of hospital activity in Canada.[14] The policy of separating commissioning from direct service provision was realized with the Local Health Integration Networks and Community Care Assessment Centres (CCACs). To tackle wait times, the province-wide Wait Times strategy laid the foundations for implementing real-time Information Technology systems and referral to treatment measurement. Cancer Care Ontario has a track record in commissioning evidence-based services from specialized regional treatment centres. The Health Based Allocation Model (HBAM) funding formula, Quality Payment Procedures, core performance measures and Accountability Agreements are new mechanisms brought about to better manage the health system, which were made law with the 2010 Excellence Care for All.

A similar focus on accountability and improvement is evident in Ontario's Education service. Ontario has drawn on Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) comparisons to: rank pupils' performance; clarify the roles and expectations of School Boards; drive the implementation of its Literacy and Numeracy Strategy with data and benchmarking; and support improvement with capacity-building expertise. It has designed a Statistical Neighbour Model to facilitate benchmarking and comparison of school performance.

The framework for Accountability proposed by the Commission has drawn on these approaches and shares their focus on improvement, clarity of roles and expectations, transparency and accountability for results.

3.3 Evidence from Child Welfare in Ontario and Other Jurisdictions

Canada

In a similar vein, the Commission has examined approaches to accountability employed in CASs across the province, in other jurisdictions and international evidence. In particular, our in-depth work on performance indicators inspired us to pursue a trail of people using data to drive improvement in children's outcomes and services. The development work done on the National Outcome Matrix (NOMs) by Trocmé[15] is still evident in the indicators reported in many provinces, which may in the

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[14] Ontario Case Costing Initiative, http://www.occp.com/mainPage.htm

[15] National Outcomes Matrix, Trocme et al. McGill Centre for Research on Children and Families, http://www.mcgill.ca/crcf/projects/national-outcomes-matrix-nom-phase-v

future enable comparison between child welfare services in different provinces. In Ontario, our work was founded on an extensive survey of CAS data and quality reporting mechanisms and benefited from the development of the OCANDS database by the University of Toronto. We also observed other Canadian provinces making increasing use of public reporting of performance measures. Our discussion with Alberta's Expert Panel on Child Welfare was timely, as it allowed us to discuss the early experience of implementing its recommendations for a Child Welfare Council and an independent body to collect and analyze data.

During this period, Quebec's 16 Centre de Jeunesse joined with McGill's Centre for Research on Children and Families to construct a longitudinal child-focused database, drawing on several cohorts from the provinces well-established single information system (Projet Information Jeunesse) to produce measures regarding safety, permanence and wellbeing.

United States

More than a decade of experience has been gained in the United States following the implementation of the *Adoption and Safe Families Act* of 1997 (ASFA). Section 203 (a) of the Act requires that States report their performance against a set of targets, covering children in foster care and adoption. The U.S. Child Welfare Outcomes Reports are an annual assessment, summarizing national performance as well as state level results across seven key outcomes, using 23 measures covering safety, continuity, stability, permanence and well-being. [16]

The first generation of performance measures captured primarily cross-sectional rather than longitudinal data, and consequently over-represented children with long-term placements. Some of these concerns have been addressed in the revised set of reporting arrangements in 2008 to improve the quality of child level data on which to make assessments of state's performance. New 'composites' were constructed that would provide a more holistic representation of outcomes than a single data measure. All states undergo a file review every three years based on qualitative and quantitative measures, an onsite review of cases and quality assurance. States prepare a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) based on their areas of improvement that includes negotiated targets. If targets aren't met, they face financial sanctions.[17]

Because delivery is devolved to county/district and then local providers, priority PIs and areas are selected within the overall PIPs. Strengths and improvement areas are identified; for the latter a series of 'practice strategies' are set out that are agreed between stakeholders and closely monitored. These are a mix of broad strategic goals (such as expand foster recruitment) and negotiated service targets. To enable more support to family preservation and reunification, rather than foster and group care, some states have been granted exemptions from the financial penalties and, in some cases, have used this flexibility to good effect. Though no state has met all of the federal targets, the framework has nevertheless provided a rich source of data and learning from which we have benefited in designing an approach in Ontario.

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[16] http://archive.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cwo06-09/cwo06-09.pdf
[17] http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/cfsr/CFSR%20PIP%202009%20Revised.pdf

The U.S. also provides insights into accountability exercised through market mechanisms, and we examined states where performance-based contracting is being introduced.

England

There is 30 years of experience of children's plans, performance measurement and inspection of local authority's children's services on which to draw from England. National institutions such as the Social Services Inspectorate and the Audit Commission have provided arms-length data collection and reporting on performance, building on longstanding traditions of Her Majesty's Inspectorates in Education (Ofsted), police (HMI Constabulary), prisons (HMI Prisons), probation and courts services.

The U.K. has served as a laboratory for combining private and public sector approaches such as: introducing performance indicators in the early 1980s; separating service commissioning from provision in the mid-80s; employing public service agreements across government in the late 1990s; and developing new forms of service and organizational inspections and reviews to secure the policy priorities of the day. A culture and capacity for performance management has been built in central and local government departments and independent agencies. Successive governments have conveyed a commitment to opening public services to public scrutiny, and a substantial body of grey literature and league table data reporting is available as a result. Children's services have also been subject to intense media scrutiny as a result of high profile child death enquiries, which have provided a wealth of insights about the systemic risks of reacting to tragic individual incidents.

The Commission's work on PIs, agency reviews and service integration has been particularly enriched by insights gained from the U.K. experience.

A fuller description of improvement case studies and accountability mechanisms used in other jurisdictions is described in Appendix C.

3.4 Working with the Sector

Ultimately, the success in moving to a new approach to accountability will be determined by the extent to which CASs and MCYS embrace and own this work. Therefore, from the outset, the Commission has approached this work as a partnership.

Work began with the establishment of a Reference Group with subject matter experts from both MCYS and OACAS. The full Reference Group met five times, with several sub-committees meeting to address specific components of the Accountability Framework and developing the rationale and criteria for determining performance indicators. In parallel, we have had regular discussions through a number of OACAS structures including: the Local Directors (LD) Executive/Zone Chairs, the OACAS Board, an evening forum of CAS board presidents, OACAS consultation meetings. The OACAS Accountability Advisory Group was established early on in this process and providing a forum for ongoing guidance to the Commission and leadership for the sector on this work.

The Commission also recognizes that there are distinct accountability considerations for Aboriginal child welfare. As a result, we have undertaken a number of informal discussions with Aboriginal child welfare leaders in recent months. In early June, we hosted an Accountability round-table with senior leaders from all Aboriginal CASs in Thunder Bay. The themes raised at that meeting were the subject of further consultation at meetings of the newly established OACAS Aboriginal Advisory Group.

From the ministry partnership, we began meeting with MCYS officials in December 2010 while our Accountability Steering Group regularly met with representatives from across the Ministry and regional offices until March 2011. In subsequent months, the Commission's work has benefited from the contribution of seconded staff and Ministry meetings.

In the final months of the Commission's mandate, we believe that these partnerships will advance the multi-faceted approach to strengthening accountability and system management. This approach will be crucial to its success.

4. A FRAMEWORK FOR ACCOUNTABILITY & SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

4.1 What Do We Mean by Accountability?

Though we have heard the term accountability used often in our work with the child welfare sector, not everyone shares a common understanding of what it means nor is using the term in the same way. This is more than a semantic problem as it may serve to explain some of the good intentions that have been frustrated from reaching a more effective overall approach to accountability for the sector.

The Health Council of Canada has recognized this problem in its 2012 publication on improving health system performance management. Drawing on an impressive body of research, it suggests two distinct ways in which the term is understood and used:

> *"Accountability implies the promise of responsible and responsive governance, which includes ethical behaviour and the ability to stimulate desired performance through control and oversight.... And in Canada, the term has seen used ....to characterize potential tools that can be used to achieve health care improvements".* [18]

We find that the Council's definitions provide a helpful clarification, that brings together the focus on stewardship and control, which have tended to concern the day-to-day operations of the Ministry, with the focus on improvement and outcomes, which have tended to concern the CASs and their QA advisers. Our understanding is that accountability includes both stewardship and improvement and that both senses of the term are entirely compatible, and should be expected to be a responsibility for all institutional instances within the Child Welfare system, albeit expressed in different ways for the front line agencies, middle and corporate tiers of the Ministry.

Accountability as both 'responsible and responsive governance and stewardship' and 'mechanisms to improve services and outcomes' underpins the Commission's work and recommendations for strengthening accountability and system management. We recommend that this way of understanding accountability be adopted and applied to existing and future work on Accountability across the child welfare system.

4.2 Purpose and Guiding Principles

The purpose of developing a new framework of accountability is to secure greater confidence in the sector by strengthening accountability in both senses – its stewardship and capacity for improvement – and to do so in a more sustainable way.

An effective framework of accountability should enable clients, community, staff, Boards and government to:
- Be clear about their respective roles and responsibilities
- Work towards clearly communicated expectations
- Obtain evidence to improve programs and front line practice

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[18] From Health Council of Canada. (May 2012). *Measuring and reporting on health system performance in Canada: opportunities for improvement.* , p.6. , includes the citations from primary research sources.

- Assess the value for money spent on child welfare
- Receive appropriate and transparent information to satisfy their role in the system

To achieve stronger and more sustainable accountability the Commission believes that it is necessary to make three major changes:
1. Bring greater coherence to the wide range of reporting and review activities operating within the child welfare sector and MCYS,
2. Clarify roles and responsibilities, and
3. Introduce mechanisms that are required to make the system work better, as well as ones that should be removed.

The Commission's first deliverable for Tier 3 on accountability – a high level framework for accountability and system management – recommends how to achieve these three changes.

Not entirely new...

The Commission's rationale for a new framework of accountability is not entirely new. During the Child Welfare Transformation initiative, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services released an Accountability Discussion Paper[19]. This document proposed a move to "a rationalized and streamlined accountability framework" and "an increased focus on outcomes for children". The proposed framework identified four levels of accountability; (i) case level, (ii) agency level, (iii) system level and (iv) public level. The four levels combined together formed a comprehensive framework designed to address the needs of multiple stakeholders. The proposed move – to an outcomes approach to accountability – was seen at the time as a shift from "a compliance driven accountability system…[to one] that helps to maintain the integrity of programs and service delivery by ensuring the focus is on the client".[20]

The MCYS discussion paper also highlighted the complexities of developing outcomes driven accountability system. The paper set out key themes of the proposed framework: knowing that services made a positive difference to children, youth and families; encourage a culture of continuous improvement; engage children, families and carers; have a strategic approach to quality; and engage broader communities that would need to be introduced as part of a whole system approach. The consultation also proposed changes to streamline other accountability mechanisms, including client complaints, child death reviews and Crown ward reviews.

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[19] MCYS. (2005). *Accountability Discussion Paper: Achieving a Better Balance*. Toronto, ON: Government of Ontario. http://www.oacas.org/pubs/oacas/presentations/accountabilitydiscpaper05nov1.pdf; Part of MCYS (2005). *Child Welfare Transformation*. And building on previous MCYS (2004). *Accountability Discussion Paper: Finding the Right Balance*.
[20] OACAS. (2006). *Children Protection Standards Review 2010: Review of the 2007 Child Protection Standards in Ontario as Related to Outcomes for Children and Families*, pp.4-6.

Guiding Principles

In developing a high level framework of accountability, the Commission has identified some principles that have been helpful in informing our approach and contrasting what exists now to what is proposed for the future. We believe that, guided by these principles, it is possible to strengthen accountability by introducing more coherence as well as free effort and resources by reducing the frustration and administrative burden associated with existing reporting and compliance-oriented requirements.

Guiding principles for the new approach:

Less	More
Fragmented accountability and experience of bureaucratic burden	Unified and coherent system that reduces experience of administrative burden
Reliance on the funding formula to incent change	Reliance on a performance management system with clear expectations and consequences.
Conversation about control of financial and other inputs	Conversation about children and the value-for-money of services
Ad hoc introduction of new demands & rules	Clarity of expectations on a planned basis
Compliance to standardized processes	CAS responsibility for continual improvement of results
Ministry focus on case management	Ministry focus on system management
Need to reach judgments without explicit expectations and data	Comparative benchmarking and timely public reporting of results. Evaluating whether what we're doing is working

Not Entirely New....

A rationalized and streamlined accountability framework was one of seven key priorities of the child welfare transformation agenda that has emerged from the Child Welfare Program Evaluation.[21] We believe that the case for rationalization and streamlining is as strong now as it was at the time of this discussion paper. The same Ministry discussion paper set as its goals "a more streamlined and rationalized accountability relationship that builds on the strengths of Ontario's community-based Children's Aid Societies, while maintaining province-wide standards".[22] Again, we agree with this goal to make the most of Ontario's community-based CASs and maintain or even raise province-wide standards.

So what happened to these plans? What we have heard is that in the face of the media attention arising from subsequent reports by the Ontario Auditor General[23], this dimension of the Transformation strategy became less prominent. We have concluded that the child welfare sector was set back with

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[21] MCYS (October 2005), *Accountability Discussion* paper, p.5

[22] Ibid. p. 4

[23] Office of the Auditor General of Ontario. (2006). 2006 *Annual Report*. Retrieved from: http://www.auditor.on.ca/en/reports_2006_en.htm

"more" rather than "better" government controls and some policy imperatives were compromised in the process. We believe that support for more modern and effective accountability between government and the sector makes this the right time to revisit this priority.

Striking the Right Balance in Managing Risk

Ironically, many of the current mechanisms that seem to have lost sight of children were put in place because of adverse events that resulted in harm or death of children; many made household names by the media. The sad truth is that, inevitably and tragically, bad things will sometimes happen to children regardless of how many checks and balances we put in place as a system. While we need a system that can rigorously examine and learn from tragic and adverse events, political will and leadership is needed to avoid the temptation to add ever more layers of audit and compliance checks. Such actions can appease immediate public concern but can have the consequence (as seen in recent years) of creating an incoherent mix of compliance mechanisms that divert ever more system resources away from children without necessarily improving outcomes or reducing risk. The accountability framework the Commission is recommending is intended to strike a better balance in managing risk so that, not only can the system reduce the likelihood of bad things happening to children, but also increase the likelihood that good things will happen.[24]

4.3 Respective Roles of MCYS, CAS and OACAS

As our introduction outlines, we have heard a great deal of concern by MCYS staff, CAS Boards, managers and staff about the lack of clarity in their respective roles and responsibilities. Who is accountable for what?

Clarity of roles is essential in a structure of independently governed organizations delivering mandated provincial services where the stakes are high and resources stretched. In its absence, there are risks of imbalances in attention to system versus operational issues. There are risks of inefficient and even counter-productive efforts when there are role overlaps or gaps.

The Drummond Commission on public sector reform recognized these challenges asserting in its final report: "We believe that there are simply too many watchers at the expense of people who actually get things done." [25] It is our view that this is the case in child welfare services.

This question of roles and responsibilities (between the watchers and the doers) has often been addressed with reference to a 'shared" accountability. We agree with the idea and necessity of partnership, in the sense that our goal is an integrated child welfare system, a goal pursued by making best use of its interdependent parts. However, shared responsibilities can obscure the distinct roles and

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[24] Mansell, J. (2006). The underlying instability in statutory child protection: understanding the system dynamics driving risk assurance levels. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 28, 97-132.

[25] Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services.(Feb 2012). *Public Services for Ontarians: A Path to Sustainability and excellence*, p. 74.

responsibilities of each player. When that happens 'sharing' may often undermine accountability and result at worst in confusion that may put children at risk, and at least, waste precious human effort and resource. Neither are risks that we can afford to take.

MCYS

Ongoing responsibility for developing and maintaining an effective system of accountability rests with the government, in this case, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. MCYS was created in 2003 to reflect "the government's commitment to achieve an Ontario where all children and youth have the best opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential.[26] As such, the Ministry's role and responsibilities occur at two levels: the overall "system" level (all services for children and youth) and the sub-system or sector level (e.g. child welfare, youth justice, etc.).

At the *system* level, the MCYS role is to:

- Provide an overall framework and strategic directions for the system as a whole.
- Monitor performance and outcomes for the system and for children and youth overall.
- Actively manage and influence cross-government/cross-sector issues of relevance to children and youth (and in the case of this document, of specific relevance to child welfare).

At the ***sub-system or sector*** level (child welfare in this case), the MCYS role is envisioned to include:

- The overall strategy for child welfare, provincial policy and priorities
- System design and development
- Funding and resource allocation
- The accountability framework and mechanisms to ensure responsive/responsible governance and tools to secure improvement
- Monitoring of system performance and results
- Legislative and regulatory framework including mandate, standards and licensing (entry and exit from the market)

In carrying out its role, MCYS has both corporate offices and regional offices. In general, the Commission envisions the main role of the regional offices as being the face of MCYS at the regional level. Given the size and diversity of Ontario communities, regional offices can play an important role as a conduit between CASs and the Ministry in managing the accountability relationship. Further possibilities for the regional office role will be revisited later in this document in discussion of planning processes.

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[26] MCYS. (2006). *Results Based Plan Briefing Book, 2006-07*.

OACAS

As with all membership associations, OACAS has a challenging task in leading timely and strategic change on behalf of the sector, while providing more traditional membership services (training, surveys, etc.) However, this role is critical and has the potential to unify and support the sector in pursuit of common goals.

Over recent months, OACAS has conducted an ambitious strategic review of its role and activities. The resulting strategic plan articulates an overall vision of "A highly effective children's services system which has the confidence of Ontario families and communities."[27] It is noteworthy that, while OACAS recognizes its role as leading an individual sector (child welfare), its members have embraced a vision of contributing to the broader children's services system. We are fully supportive of the strategic direction the OACAS is adopting and the leadership it demonstrates. We support the role that is outlined in the four strategic directions of this vision:

1. Lead members and engage with partners in the development of a seamless, integrated children's service system that responds effectively and respectfully to the diverse realities of children, youth and families across Ontario.
2. Build the public's confidence in and engagement with child welfare through an accountable and transparent system.
3. Along with its member agencies, OACAS will support and collaborate with the Aboriginal communities in bettering the health, well-being and life chance of Aboriginal children in Ontario.
4. Strengthen the capacity of the association and its member agencies to fulfil their mandates.

CASs

CASs are independent societies accountable to their local members and communities, and to government for their statutory mandate under the *Chid and Family Services Act* (CFSA) and funding. Delivery on these multiple accountabilities rests with CAS boards of directors. CAS boards have responsibility for:

- Strategic leadership and direction, within the provincial framework set by MCYS and within the context of local needs as informed by community stakeholders
- Stewardship and oversight of the agency's mission, integrity and resources
- Overseeing processes for agency planning and budgeting
- Monitoring agency performance and results, including service quality and client safety
- Appointment and appraisal of the Executive Director and succession planning
- Engaging and communicating with community and stakeholders
- Establishing agency policies in areas such as Quality, Finance, Human Resources and information
- Ensure effective governance

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[27] OACAS. (2012) *Strategic Plan 2012-2017*.

The CAS is expected to be responsible to the MCYS for its performance and outcomes. This means that it should not be overly dependent on seeking multiple levels of approval to individual financial or clinical decisions nor reporting upward on individual cases or incidents. Its accountability should be largely discharged though the proposed multi-year plans, which it will produce within the planning guidance issued by the Ministry, and its reporting on delivery of the targets and standards set. CASs should be expected to manage within their allocated resources and produce financial reports on their performance against planned budgets.

Not Entirely New...

The matter of respective roles and relationships has been addressed in various policy documents over the last decade. The Resource Manual for Boards of Directors of Children's Aid Societies issued by MCSS in 2000 laid out specific roles and responsibilities for Boards and for the Ministry. The 2003 Governance and Accountability Framework for Transfer Payments to Community Agencies addressed similar points. These themes were largely repeated in the 2005 Accountability Discussion Paper, *Achieving a Better Balance,* which arose from the 2003 Child Welfare Evaluation and contributed to the 2005/2006 Transformation Agenda. While the themes have been very consistent, the roles and responsibilities as envisioned in these documents and repeated here have yet to be fully realized. The establishment of the comprehensive accountability framework outlined in this report is an important enabler to creating the conditions to realize the roles and responsibilities as envisioned.

4.4 Key Dimensions for Child Welfare

An effective accountability framework must be grounded in an answer to the question of: "Accountability for what?" To be accountable, CASs need to have clarity on their mandate and functions. Clear expectations on their role, function and intended outcomes are essential for CASs to manage their performance, gauge their results and put plans in place to address short-comings and improve performance. Although the CFSA outlines seven functions that CASs can be approved to perform, some aspects of the language leave broad latitude for interpretation. Thus, we have observed considerable discussion and debate about what these key functions are for CASs.

The Commission has addressed some of these questions in its work on CAS Scope[28], as part of Tier 4 of our strategy. Our touchstone for this work is the right of every Ontario child and family to a comparable level of service and support, in the same spirit as stated purpose of the CFSA is "*to promote the best interests, protection and well-being of children*".

Our report on Scope sets out three categories of services that should be consistently available to all families and children in Ontario:
- Services to protect children from abuse and neglect
- Services to support children and families experiencing stressors
- Services to support the well-being of all children and families

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[28] CPSCW. (2012). *Clarifying the Scope of Child Welfare Services*.

The Scope report describes the continuum of child and family needs as a backdrop for determining the respective role of different organizations/sectors in meeting these needs (Exhibit 3).

The Continuum of Child and Family Needs

All Children & Families	Vulnerable Children & Families	Family situation results in a "child in need of protection" as defined by CFSA and requires …		Children & Families Exiting Child Welfare Services	Vulnerable Children & Families	All Children & Families
		Community-based child welfare services …	Out-of-home child welfare services …			
		… to ensure their safety and well-being				

Children's Aid Societies

Selective Community Services

Universal Services

Exhibit 3: The Continuum of Child and Family Needs

Within this continuum, we confirm in the report that CAS services should encompass *direct child protection when maltreatment has occurred* and *proactive intervention when there is likely risk of maltreatment.* The report expands on this overall direction by providing an initial listing of services that all CASs **must provide** either directly, as a shared service, or through direct procurement. The Commission has recommended that MCYS in collaboration with the sector build on this work to confirm and define standardised terminology to describe the "**must provide**" services.

The Scope report also recommends that all CASs map their programs and services against the Continuum of Child and Family Needs including not only the "**must provide**" but also the "**may provide**" and "**should not provide**" services that are currently delivered by the agency as a result of historical and local community circumstances. This mapping framework is illustrated in Exhibit 4[29]. Later in this document, we will return to how CASs can use this framework as part of their local planning process and in discussions with their communities and MCYS.

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[29] CPSCW. (2012). *Clarifying the Scope of Child Welfare Services*.

		Child & Family Population (Based On Need & Risk)				
		All Children & Families	**Vulnerable Children & Families**	**Family situation results in "child in need of protection" as defined by CFS and requires:**		**Children & Families Exiting Child Welfare**
				Community-based child welfare services …	**Out-of-home child welfare services …**	
				… to ensure their safety and well-being		
Aim of CAS Involvement		*Screen referrals to identify protection risks*	*Investigation and confirmation of whether need for protection exists. Referral for further CAS involvement and/or community services as appropriate.*	*Protection of children and family preservation*	*Protection of children and concurrent planning to realize permanency through family reunification, adoption, legal custody, or other form.*	*Transition children, young adults, and families to supports provided by selective and universal services.*
Services provided through Child Welfare Funding Envelope	***Must provide***					
	May provide					
	Should not provide					
Services Provided through _Other Funding Source_ (eg. OCBe, Foundation, etc.)						

Exhibit 4: Mapping Framework from the Commission's Scope project

4.5 New Accountability Mechanisms: Planning, Performance Indicators and Agency Reviews

As we considered what would be required to reach the Commission's vision of an adaptive, self-improving system, less dependent on compliance to process and standards, we appreciate that there are many accountability mechanisms that could be introduced and that could well make a positive difference. The Commission's strategy includes many recommendations beyond accountability which will make the sector more sustainable and adaptive as a system when implemented. These include agency reconfiguration, greater local service integration, local needs-based population funding, clearer expectations in terms of scope and policy, and a new approach to Aboriginal child welfare.

To strengthen accountability and enable better system management in this more sustainable sector, we have identified the following three new mechanisms as the most important:

1. Strategic **planning and target setting** process
   To manage the system there needs to be a means of setting direction, and aligning the activities of the CAS, and tiers of MCYS in pursuit of explicit goals for the province as a whole. Strategic planning will serve this purpose, if it is policy driven and results oriented.
   We will describe the shape of a strategic planning framework that would serve this purpose, an approach that also respects our guiding principles, in **Section 5.**

2. Greater collection and use of **outcomes and service performance information**
   There is broad support for shifting the focus of the system to children; and how well they are served by child welfare services and the contribution they make to improving outcomes. Performance indicators will serve this purpose, if they tell us how well children are doing, and support improvement. We will outline the work on performance indicators that the Commission has done, the next phase of, and how this data should be used to secure better governance and improvement in **Section 6**. A fuller report on Phase 1 of the performance indicator project is Companion Document 1.

3. **Cyclical agency reviews** to assess capacity
   While strategy provides direction and clarity of goal, and performance indicators monitor progress and outcomes, it is the capacity of the agency that is the best predictor of how likely an agency will achieve its strategy and hit its targets. Agency reviews will serve this purpose, if well-designed and professionally executed to focus on how well children are being served.
   We will describe an approach to agency reviews in **Section 7.**

A new Framework for Accountability: Recommendation 1

MCYS should introduce a new Framework of Accountability – that enables responsible and responsive governance and secures improvement by:

a) Aligning MCYS, CASs and OACAS roles and responsibilities with those outlined by the Commission;

b) Publishing a Framework for Accountability in Child Welfare, which brings greater coherence and transparency to the system, founded on the principles and roles provided by the Commission;

c) Making the changes necessary to align existing policy and practice with this framework through the mechanisms outlined by the Commission; and

d) Determining the features of a distinctive Accountability Framework for Aboriginal Child Welfare, as part of the agenda of the Strategic Forum that the Ministry should establish with Aboriginal leaders to develop a new strategy and approach for Aboriginal Child Welfare, consistent with those outlined by the Commission.

5. STRATEGIC PLANNING AND TARGET SETTING PROCESS

5.1 Delivering the Transformation Agenda

The Commission has expressed its support for the policy directions expressed in the Transformation Agenda in its first and many subsequent reports. The Transformation Agenda included priorities such as:

- A more flexible intake and assessment model for Children's Aid Societies

- A broader range of family-based placement options to support more effective permanency planning for children

- A court processes strategy to reduce delays and encourage alternatives to court

- A sustainable and strategic funding model for child welfare

- A single information system for all Children's Aid Societies (CPIN)

- A provincial child welfare research capacity

Further policy development work was intended in many of these priorities and progress has been made in several areas. However, there are still some areas where clarification is even more necessary today than a decade ago as other pressures have led to additional standards and rules which pull the sector into conflicting directions. The Commission's Report on Scope recognizes this dilemma and recommends that obstacles to progressing the goals of Transformation are identified and removed, and policy intent is clarified and made operational.

So, if the practical implications of this policy intent is to see more children supported at home in their families and fewer coming into care, then this expectation should be clearly expressed in a province-wide plan published by the Ministry. Similarly, we would want to see these outcomes reflected in the PIs published and the cyclical review process.

5.2 Current Strategic Planning and Budgeting

Currently, there are multiple planning mechanisms within MCYS and CASs. These have developed over the years, some led from the centre and others more bottom up. Some of these mechanisms are high level while others are aspirational. Others are more oriented to detailed operations and resource allocation.   The Ministry publishes high level strategies for all its programs [30] .

In general, while each of the existing mechanisms has merit in its own right, the Commission's observation is that collectively, they lack the level of alignment and specificity that is required to support accountability and to result in a province-wide system that is focused on priorities and common goals. Increasing alignment of these mechanisms will support realization of more consistent performance and realization of intended outcomes across the province.

Given the ongoing discussion in Ontario about the breadth and depth of CAS services, an effective planning, budgeting and target-setting system requires clarity on the question of "scope" programs and

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[30] MCYS. (2011). *Results Based Plan Briefing 2011-12.*

services. Currently, different interpretations and lack of stated clarity on the scope of child welfare services confounds the effectiveness of mechanisms for accountability. In the Commission's Report on the Scope of child welfare services[31], we made a number of recommendations for action by MCYS, with input from the sector that will result in greater clarity on the scope of child welfare services.

MCYS

At the level of MCYS, the Ministry produces a five–year "strategic framework". The most recent strategic framework, *Realizing Potential: Our Children, Our Youth, Our Future[32],* covers the period of 2008 through 2012 and sets aspirational goals cutting across the children and youth programs that fall within the Ministry's remit. Throughout the course of the Commission's work, it has not been clear how these goals are translating into focused activity within the Ministry or among CASs relating to child welfare. It has also not been clear how this overall strategic framework links to the 2006 Transformation Agenda which reflects the stated policy direction for child welfare.

Stronger mechanisms are required for linking broad, multi-sector goals with the sector-specific policy framework (Transformation) and, in turn, ensuring there is alignment between the multi-year strategies, annual results-based plans, and the priorities and actions pursued by MCYS and CASs.

The annual Results Based Plan (RBP) and *Annual Report* produced by MCYS appear to be intended to facilitate these linkages. The RBP process is an annual process undertaken by all Ministries to ensure alignment between their individual priorities and the Government as a whole. Exhibit 5 is an excerpt from the 2011/12 MCYS Results Based Plan showing the MCYS programs' contribution to provincial priorities. [33]

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[31] CPSCW.   (2012). *Clarifying the Scope of Child Welfare Services*.

[32] MCYS. (2008). *Realizing Potential: Our Children, Our Youth, Our Future*.

[33] MCYS. (2011). *Results-based plan and estimates 2011/12,* p. 14

Ministry of Children and Youth Services

The Estimates, 2011-12

Ministry Contribution to Key Priorities & Results

	Better Ontario For Families	Healthier Ontario	Smarter Ontario	Stronger Ontario
Priorities				
Key Results	• More children arriving in Grade 1 ready to learn • More children screened for risk factors, identified earlier • Increase in adoptions • More children and youth whose families need assistance benefit from the Ontario Child Benefit.	• More children getting a healthy breakfast or snack • More children are screened for risk factors and identified earlier • More children receiving supports for special needs • Improved function after mental health care	• More children arriving in Grade 1 ready to learn • More at-risk children and youth successful in school • More youth graduating from secondary school	• More opportunities for children and youth at risk • Fewer youth entering justice system and reduction in re-offending rates
Strategies	Support for low-income families; screening programs and support for at-risk families; healthy child development programs; access to appropriate services for children and youth with special needs including autism and mental health issues; nutrition programs; stability for children in need of protection.	Screening programs and support for at-risk families; healthy child development programs; increased access to appropriate services for children and youth with special needs and mental health issues; nutrition programs.	Support for low-income families; programs for at-risk youth and youth in conflict with the law; healthy child development programs; nutrition programs; focus on permanency for children in care; increased access to appropriate services for children and youth with special needs and mental health issues.	Programs for at-risk youth and youth in conflict with the law; support for low-income families; increased support for families with children with special needs and mental health issues.
Major Activities	Ontario Child Benefit Ontario Child Benefit Equivalent Healthy child development Services for children and youth with special needs including autism Mental health programs and services Child protection services	Ontario Child Benefit Healthy child development Services for children and youth with special needs including autism Student Nutrition Program Mental health programs and services Enhanced screening at 18 months	Ontario Child Benefit Ontario Child Benefit Equivalent Healthy child development Youth Opportunities Strategy Services for children and youth with special needs including autism Mental health programs & services Child protection services Youth Justice Services	Ontario Child Benefit Youth Opportunities Strategy Youth Policy Framework Youth Justice Services Services for children and youth with special needs including autism Mental health programs and services Ontario's policy framework for child and youth mental health

Ministry of Children and Youth Services   14

Exhibit 5: Contributions to outcomes: MCYS Results Based Plan 2011/12

As illustrated in Exhibit 5, child protection services are seen as contributing to provincial priorities in 2 ways:

- To *Better Ontario for Families* through increasing adoptions, providing stability to children in need of protection and the activities of child protection services.
- To *Smarter Ontario*, a key result is more at risk children and youth being successful at school. A strategy is the focus on permanency for children in care, with child protection services providing the supporting activity.

There is a single performance measure for child protection services in the 2011/12 Results-based Planning (RBP): the number of completed children's aid society adoptions.

What Needs to Change in the Future

While the RBP may help to align MCYS activity with overall government priorities, it does not provide a mechanism for establishing the clear goals and targets required to deliver the government's policy of Transformation and ongoing performance improvement in child welfare.

These various mechanisms (the strategic framework, the RBP, and the Transformation Agenda) provide an indication of policy intent, on which more explicit expectations could be developed and targets set to reflect ambitions for the direction and pace of change. For example, it would be possible to set more specific goals for the broad policy intents implied in the Transformation Agenda:

Reducing …
- the proportion of children who are placed in out-of-home care,
- rates of reoccurrence of child maltreatment,
- proportion of referrals that are subject to full investigations.

Increasing…
- the proportion of children supported in their homes, or with kin,
- the rate of reunification within a year.

To make a step change in the progress of the Transformation Agenda will require more explicit expectations of these kinds, tied to planning mechanisms and informed by data tracked over time. Put another way, we would want to see aspirational and policy directions linked to explicit targets which would be measured quantitatively with performance indicators (see **Section 6**) and assessed qualitatively in agency-level reviews conducted on a cyclical basis(see **Section 7**).

To be realistic and deliverable, plans should be linked to resources and logically a rolling, multi-year strategy should include rolling multi-year budgets. It takes several years to execute strategic decisions that may involve changes in structures and staffing, such as redesigning service models, recruiting new staff, developing different capacities. In its Report on Funding[34], the Commission recommended a shift

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[34] CPSCW. (2011). *A New Approach to Funding Child welfare in Ontario*,: http://www.sustainingchildwelfare.ca/assets/Funding-Approach-CPSCW-Final-Report-final-version-Aug-17-2011.pdf

to multi-year funding in order that CASs be able to strategically plan resources and 'adapt' to a fast-changing environment.

The Commission understands that moving to a multi-year resourcing cycle would be a major change in Ontario; yet, even an annual budgeting process should take more account of strategy, policy direction, system alignment and targets. Currently, the main link between strategic plans and resources appears to be ad hoc attempts to "buy" Ministry priorities by including financial "incentives" in agency's funding allocations. It is not evident to us that these attempts have achieved their intended objectives and in some instances, may have resulted in perverse incentives that are counter-productive to realizing Transformation policy goals. A more strategic and ultimately more powerful approach to aligning resources to priorities, and system-wide effort, is through plans and budgets which are grounded on clear policy, expressed through well-designed targets, with progress measured through performance indicators.

The Transfer Payment Accountability Directive

There are many other mechanisms for accountability within government; one which is worth mentioning here is *Transfer Payment Accountability Directive*[35] which was introduced in 2007 and applies to all provincially funded transfer payment agencies. Under the terms of this directive, agreements must be in place with all transfer payments to independent agencies like CASs, hospitals, schools boards and others . The Directive indicates that agreements must:

- "Set out expectations, terms of conditions of funding to support good governance, value for money and transparency in the administration of TP
- Document the rights, responsibilities and obligations of the ministry and transfer payment recipient
- Include specific measurable results for the money received, reporting requirements, and any corrective action the government is entitled to take is agreed results are not achieved." [36]

This kind of two-way accountability mechanism is in active use in other sectors like health and education in which accountability agreements signed at the level of the chair of the board of directors are in place. The Commission has not seen evidence in the MCYS-CAS relationship of this degree of formality of two-way accountability agreements covering the elements listed above.

CASs
Currently, there is no province-wide strategic planning framework for CASs apart from the annual "budget package". CASs are required to fill in an extensive spreadsheet forecasting volumes and costs of all activities for which they are asking MCYS to reimbursement. This data gathering tool is used principally in two ways. The first is to compare an individual CAS to its activities and budget allocation from the previous year, so that trends can be analyzed and variances noted. The second purpose is to

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[35] Government of Ontario. (2007). *Transfer Payment Accountability Directive*
[36] *Ibid* p. 5.

'roll-up' the data to undertake the same analysis at provincial level, for example seeing if the number of child protection investigations is rising, how quickly, in certain types of CASs. Agencies then submit a revised forecast and a few months later (this year in July), they are informed what their actual budget will be for the year (i.e. several months into the fiscal year).

These various submissions and negotiations, however, do not set out or include evidence about past goals, priorities or measurable targets. Budget packages in other public and private sectors would typically use a range of targets ('hard' and 'soft') to incentivize certain types of behaviour.

Locally CASs have adopted a variety of strategy, planning and budgeting mechanisms. Some CASs have very well developed strategies, service plans and budgets; many have introduced balanced score cards and other improvement and measurement schemes. In other CASs, strategic planning is more rudimentary or has withered away under the more urgent pressures of balancing budgets and ensuring agency viability. Many CASs conduct regular strategic review exercises and publish plans with goals for the coming year. Most CASs produce an Annual Report which reviews the results of the previous year and the implications for the next.

In all CASs, the alignment of local plans with provincial priorities and targets falls short of what would is desirable for a well-aligned, performance focused system. As described in the previous section, this short-coming arises in part as a result of lack of robust and explicit systems of accountability at the provincial level.

Community planning councils

In undertaking these various processes, the level of engagement by CASs with their community partners varies from one place to another. In areas where there is an active local Community Planning Forum, plans and priorities are discussed and adopted for children's services across the region. For example Simcoe CAS has an integral role in The Child, Youth and Family Services Coalition of Simcoe County. These Community Planning Forums, of which CASs are active members, are key to realizing more integrated children's services at a local level, and developing the continuums of service that should be available to children and families across the province. Simcoe and York have introduced a 'single plan of care' to reduce administrative overlap and integrate delivery based on assessed needs.[37]

The alignment of local community and CAS plans with provincial priorities and targets falls short of what would is desirable for a well-aligned, performance focused system. As described in the previous section, this short-coming arises in part as a result of lack of a child-focused strategic planning framework for the province as a whole.

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[37] http://www.simcoecountycoalition.ca/en/home.aspx; the single plan of care materials can be accessed at: http://www.ctn-simcoeyork.ca/

5.3 What Should the Future Look Like?

Looking to the future, we would envision a re-purposing and strengthening of existing mechanisms to result in several changes at the provincial and local level. Exhibit 6 provides a conceptual framework for the revised planning and goal setting environment for child welfare. This framework would result in overall alignment between provincial-level directions and priorities with on-the-ground local translation and execution of these priorities incorporating unique community circumstances.

Creating Alignment in Provincial and Local Planning and Priorities for Child Welfare: Conceptual Framework
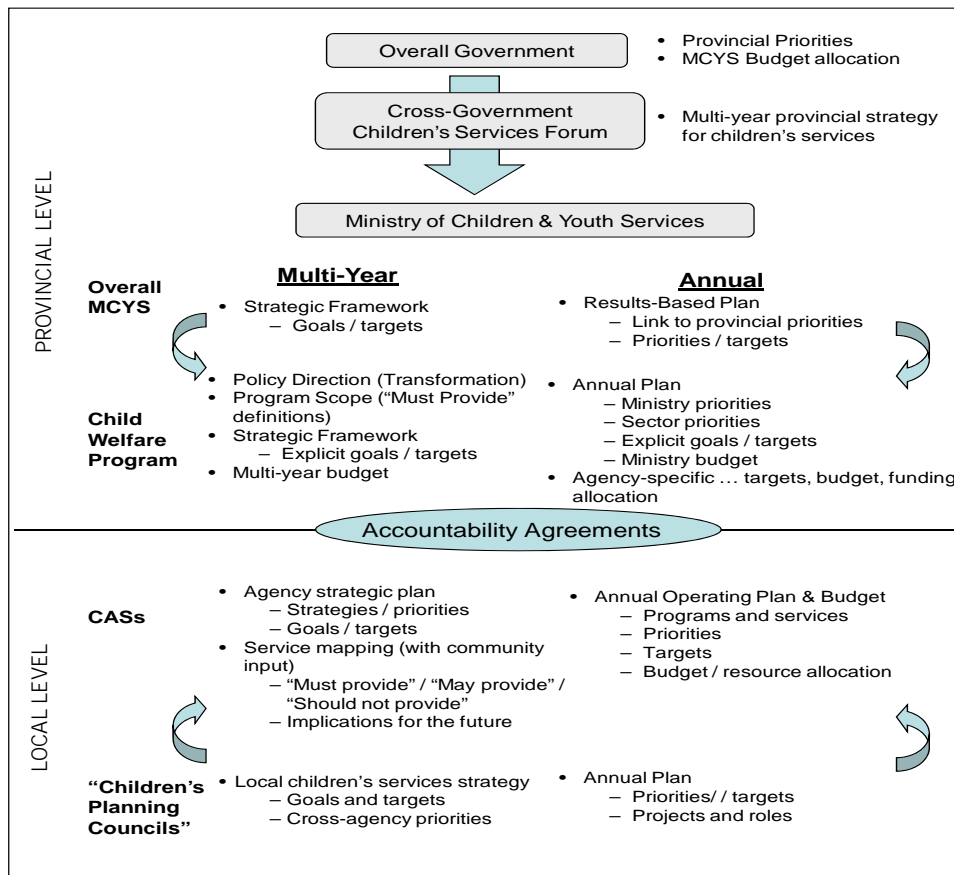
Exhibit 6

This conceptual framework is envisioned to include the following features:

A Strategy for Children's Services for Ontario: Government Level

- Cross-governmental "Children's Services Forum" is established to develop and agree a multi-year, provincial strategy for Children's Services in Ontario, and set priorities that transcend ministry and program boundaries. i.e. schools, training, child and family health, child care, municipalities.
- That this forum be led by the Deputy Minister for Children and Youth Services, with full support of the Minister, the Premier and the Cabinet.

- Children services strategy provides a common direction and goals that are reflected in all Ministry plans and transfer payment agency priorities.

Government's overall budget allocation to the children's services sectors is informed by this Children's Services Strategy, and the cross-government "Children's Services Forum" is responsible for cross-Ministry oversight and reporting.

- Individual Ministries, including MCYS, are charged with responsibility for delivering results within the Children's Services Strategy and budget allocation.

Children's Mental Health, Youth Justice, Special Needs and Child Welfare: Ministry Level

- A multi-year strategic framework is in place that aligns the scope, policy and priorities for the children's services which are the responsibility of MCYS with the government-wide Children Services Strategy, and for the child welfare sector specifically (and other MCYS programs). This framework provides clear policy direction, backed up by goals and targets with performance metrics. It is a five-year framework that is reviewed and revised every three years. The framework spells out the "what", devolving the "how" to the CAS, with regular monitoring and action taken when system management and performance improvement requires it.
- Clarity on scope of the child welfare program is provided by the Commission's recommendation to clarify and define "must provide" services for CASs.[38] Similar clarification is provided for other children's services and programs in order to develop the continuum of service that every child and family should be able to expect across the province.
- On an annual basis, the strategic framework is reflected in the MCYS RBP with explicit priorities, goals and metrics for the child welfare sector, and executed through accountability agreements with individual CASs.
- Through these interconnecting planning and budgeting processes, MCYS takes action to address barriers and augment enablers to advancing the Transformation policy agenda as the Commission's recommends in its report on the Scope of Child Welfare Services.[39]
- The Ministries strategy and RBP will inform agency-specific budget allocations and the targets that are subject to negotiated accountability agreements with CASs.

Local Children's Services Strategies: CAS/Local Community Level

- Each CAS acts on the recommendation of the Commission in its Scope report to map programs and services based on "must provide", "may provide" and "should not provide". As a result of this exercise, the CAS has identified future service implications, in consultation with community partners and MCYS.
- Each CAS has a multi-year strategic plan which reflects provincial and local priorities founded on the agency's mission, vision, and local circumstances. Implications from the program and service mapping exercise are incorporated in this local strategic plan.

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[38] Refers to recommendations #2 and #3 in the Commission's report on the Scope of Child Welfare Services.
[39] Refers to recommendation #1 in the Commission's report on the Scope of Child Welfare Services

- Each CAS has an annual Plan and Budget that brings into sharper focus the short-term actions stemming from its multi-year strategic plan and specifies goals and metrics against which to assess performance.
- Each CAS negotiates and enters into an Accountability Agreement with MCYS that is aligned with their local plans.

CASs do not act in isolation in meeting local community needs. A degree of collaboration with other local providers is essential to ensuring children and families have access to a consistent range of services. The service mapping recommended in the Commission's report on scope provides a valuable tool in realizing this objective. The service mapping exercise will challenge CASs, and other local children's services, to categorize their current programs and services in the context of provincial intentions for child welfare services. CASs can then use this initial categorization to engage their community partners and subsequently MCYS in verifying what should remain the same, what should change, and how to get from here to there. These conclusions can then be incorporated in the agency's strategic plan and actioned through annual plans.

Beyond this discussion of planning at the level of the CAS, a local children's services strategy is developed incorporating the respective roles and priorities of each community partner in achieving local goals. The Government-wide Children's Services Strategy provides the overall policy direction and vision. In the Exhibit 6, we have used the term "Children's Planning Council" in a generic sense. Many Ontario communities already have active planning bodies. The intent is that all Ontario communities would have some kind of structure enabling local agencies serving children, youth and families to assess needs, agree on service gaps, set common goals and change priorities, and manage cross-agency projects. The Regional Offices are well positioned to play a facilitating role in enabling this level of local planning and integration, within the province-wide planning framework.

Appendix A provides additional advice about the lines of enquiry that the proposed mapping exercise is intended to generate within CASs and between CASs and their community partners.

Strategic Planning and Target Setting: Recommendation 2

MCYS should design and implement a multi-year strategic planning and target setting process, in collaboration with the sector, in order to set clear directions for more child-focused programs and services across government and its local delivery network. The provisions of such a planning framework are outlined in the Commission's A New Approach to Accountability and System Management report and include:

a) An Ontario Strategy for Children's Services developed by a new cross-ministerial Deputy Minister's Forum and led by the Deputy Minister of Children and Youth Services, with full support of the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Premier and Cabinet;

b) A 'Supporting Children Strategy' that aligns the scope, policy and priorities for the programs for which MCYS is directly accountable, including a child welfare strategy;

c) Local Children's Service Strategies and Plans developed for CASs with their community partners.

d) The introduction of Children's Services Accountability Agreements between local CAS boards and MCYS to make clear what is expected of the Ministry and local agencies in delivering these strategies and plans.

e) Accountability Agreements will include requirements to identify all Aboriginal children served, to engage with Bands, and otherwise recognize the unique needs and relationships of Aboriginal children.

6. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

6.1 Ideas Into Action

Performance measurement is the second mechanism which the Commission considers a priority for strengthening accountability and system management in Ontario child welfare. Measurement is not the only tool, but it is an important one. Numbers condense a great deal of information about performance on services and results across the system. Numbers allow comparisons to be made over time and between agencies, more effectively than text-based reporting alone. With performance measures, targets can be set and achievement monitored against them. The efforts, activities and results of many staff within and across agencies can be compiled and used to gauge how well things are going and improvement that is being made. Measures must be supplemented by the multi-year plans and qualitative assessments made in agency reviews. Together, they provide a more rounded picture.

While there is long history of financial and statistical reporting in Ontario child welfare, a consistent complaint from Ministry and agencies alike is the lack of accurate, timely, longitudinal child-related information. In the absence of longitudinal child-level service data, there is a tendency to focus only on volumes and finances, thereby missing out the important 'value' dimension of the accountability proposition. As many people told us, what's the point of knowing exactly how much is being spent or the financial health of an agency, if you don't know about the 'return on investment'.

The Commission's work in this area was to start collecting child- and service-related performance data to address this question. To do so we made a positive decision to overcome the tendency to wait for conditions to be more right. We recognise that with more optimal conditions – a fully implemented information system, more comprehensive measures, more clarity about program scope and policy priority, more equitably allocated funding – performance measurement would be better. However, the sector told us that it had waited long enough for the perfect conditions. The time was right to "just do it".

Therefore performance measurement is an 'ideas into action" element of our work on accountability. Working closely with the OACAS Accountability Advisory Group, and with the agreement of MCYS, the Commission identified and proceeded to collect a set of performance indicators across 24 phase one agencies. This initiative is the subject of a separate report which describes the process and results from Phase 1, summarized below.

6.2 Rationale and Selection of Performance Indicators

In selecting measures to serve as performance indicators (PIs), the Commission drew on the many examples of CASs using Performance and outcome reports (which were obtained from the OACAS), the National Outcomes Matrix across Canada, the report of the Child Welfare Outcomes Expert Reference Group and the performance measures used in the U.S., U.K. and Australia. Front of our minds throughout this initiative, is both improving services and outcomes for children and strengthening governance of agencies and the system as a whole. What is important about the work that CASs do?

How can we better understand the impact services are having on children and families? Guided by these principles, we identified two categories of indicators geared to this goal of improvement: 1) service performance and outcome indicators that address "How well is this CAS serving children and families?" and 2) agency capacity indicators that provide insights into "How likely is this agency to continue to improve?"

We proceeded in three steps: first, we needed to agree on a definition of the 'key dimensions' of child welfare services. As this was done before the Commission had concluded its recommendations on scope, our reference point was the *Child and Youth Family Services Act's (*CFSA) description of "purpose", "functions" and "services", and advice from CASs about the areas that were considered common and important to all agencies. A long list of possible PIs was assembled that were seen to have potential. From this long list, a shortlist of 24 PIs was selected, using the following set of criteria agreed upon by the Reference Group and MCYS representatives:

Criteria for selecting short list of Performance indicators

1. *Availability – can be found in current information systems, is part of information workers / agencies already collect*
2. *Feasibility – can be extracted without too much difficulty*
3. *Validity – a reasonable measure of the construct of interest*
4. *Reliability – data is thought to be reasonably reliable and accurate*
5. *Good enough – start with what we've got and refine as we go along*
6. *Purposeful – is a reflection of the core mandate of CASs and will inform service improvement*
7. *Relevant to funder – provides the funder with necessary information to assess benefits to clients and value for money*

After further consultation, it was agreed that the 24 performance indicators were 'good enough' to get started. For a variety of reasons to do with data availability, feasibility, validity and reliability, there were many important areas of child welfare about which it was not possible to define and collect performance information. If the data was not already being collected in a standardized way, it was not eligible for inclusion in this 'first generation PI set'. As a result the 'child-focused' data is largely about children in care and does not include services to children and families in the community which represent 80% of the children served by CASs. This is a shortcoming to be addressed in future system and PI work.

However, for this generation, the PIs include measures that address service performance and outcomes as well as agency capacity. The definitions, rationale and full set of PIs are set out in accompanying Supporting Document 1.[40]

There are three sources for the data required to construct these 24 PIs (Exhibit 7). For the 16 Service performance and outcome measures, 13 (safety and permanence) are drawn from the existing CASs case management systems into the Ontario Children Abuse and Neglect Data System (OCANDS) held by the University of Toronto and three (well-being) are drawn from the OnLAC database held by the University of Ottawa. The eight organizational capacity measures are drawn from CASs administrative

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[40] CPSCW. (2012). *Implementing Performance Indicators in Ontario Child Welfare: Phase 1.*

systems and survey returns made to OACAS i.e. quarterly financial and activity reports, HR surveys. The Commission produced a Technical Guide with detailed definitions of each measure and its data components (available on the Commission's website).[41]
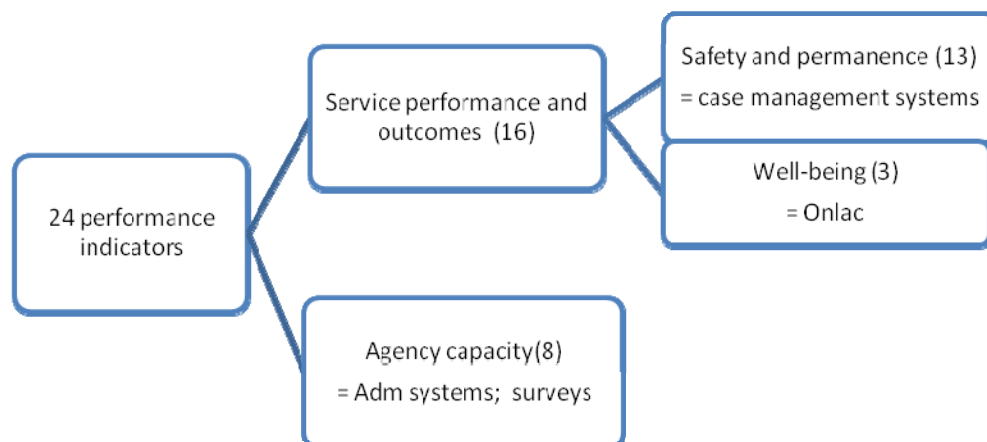

Exhibit 7

6.3 Aboriginal PIs

The distinct character and needs of Aboriginal children and families is a critical issue that runs throughout the Commission's work. Given the contested governance and legal powers, accountability for the safety and well-being of Aboriginal children cannot be expected to be simply applied to Aboriginal communities. An element of the Commission's work has been to ask Aboriginal CASs about the relevance of the 24 "First Generation" PIs adopted by the Commission and to identify what additional and different measures would also be necessary to effectively reflect their hopes for Aboriginal children engaged with the child welfare system. Based on these discussions, and input from the OACAS Aboriginal Advisory Group, we found strong support for the applicability of the 24 PIs to Aboriginal CASs. They would like to see this information collected not only for children served by their own agencies but also for Aboriginal children served by all CASs in Ontario. We believe that this is an important goal, which we took on during phase 1.

We also did some research scanning what has been done to develop an accountability framework suitable for Aboriginal communities. The product of this work is written up in a working paper "Child Welfare Outcomes for Aboriginal Children and Youth" which serves as a companion document to this report[42]. Our intention is that this paper and the results of our consultation serve as a starting point for the deliberations of the Strategy Forum which is recommended in our Report calling for a new Strategy for Aboriginal Child Welfare in Ontario.

6.4 Phase 1

A brief summary of this exercise, the results achieved and the logical next steps are outlined here.

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[41] CPSCW. (2012). *Service and Organizational Capacity Performance Indicators: Technical Guide*.

[42] CPSCW (2012), *Child Welfare Outcomes for Aboriginal Children and Youth.* Working paper.

To realize the full benefits of system-wide performance measurement data from all CASs is necessary. However, MCYS favoured a phased approach. A sub-group of CASs was included in Phase I selected with the following criteria in mind:

> 1) CWA: Committed (support the idea of PIs), willing (want to start collecting PIs in their CAS) and able (can demonstrate the capacity necessary);
>
> 2) Required limited modification of their case management system; aiming to include at least two of the most common IT systems currently used by CASs;
>
> 3) Sufficient in number to provide a dataset of a scale to allow some interpretation at provincial level and on a comparative basis; and
>
> 4) Representation across regions, agencies of different sizes, Aboriginal and with multi-service profile.

Originally, the Commission's plan was for each CAS to put together these measures locally and report them for use province-wide. As the measures became more complex and concerns about the limits of CASs' capacity became more evident, it was decided to take a more centralized approach. OACAS contracted OCANDS at U of T to further develop its central database to extract, clean and report data from each agency's case management systems (CMS).

This contracting process took from October 2011 to end of February 2012, and was overseen by a steering group composed of the Commission, OACAS and OCANDS. In a few weeks, PI data was collected, analyzed and presented to workshop of Phase 1 CASs in April 2012 and then at a sector-wide "Summit" on May 10, 2012. The results of the first phase were presented, and a discussion took place on how best to make use of this information and improve the process for subsequent phases.

Early Results and Further Analysis

The results have been subject to early interpretation and reveal several areas for further investigation, in policy relevant areas. The details are contained in the report from OCANDS. [43]

- incidence of substantiated abuse and neglect,
- re-occurrence following a case closed at intake or ongoing,
- rates of children into care, length of time in care,
- time to permanence.

Measurement also reveals several areas where there is not a common definition of terms and where information is not being collected on a common basis from one CAS to another. For example, data on the three indicators related to response times and what constitutes an "authorised departure" are different across the province, data on Aboriginal children is not reliably collected, and there is not a standardized set of 'placements' .

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[43] See Companion Document 2: OCANDS. (2012). *Results* and *Lessons from Phase 1 Performance Indicators*. Report submitted to OACAS, June 2012.

In other areas, standardized instruments are required to collect province-wide data. Despite work done by OACAS on standardizing CAS collection of client feedback; this is not being done in most CASs. An instrument is also required to systematically collect feedback from community partners. The lack of common definitions and standardized recording and data collection has also limited the activities that are reflected in the PIs. We remain concerned that although most CAS services are provided to children and families in the community, the measures it is possible to collect are largely about children in care. Another priority is to develop and ensure the implementation of common definitions for the Transformation Agenda such as Differential Response and Alternative Dispute Resolution. The issues revealed by the collection of indicators are set out in detail in the accompanying reports.

6.5 Next Steps – Move to Phase 2

The Commission has identified a series of actions necessary to follow-up its work on performance indicators, to be undertaken in the short and medium term.

The actions for the short run are those necessary to make full use of the first generation indicator set for system wide analysis and comparison. The value of the work done on performance measurement design and implementation will be realized by continuing to have the same measures collected in Phase 2. Minor clarifications and corrections will need to be made (where practically possible) to improve data definition and quality, but not making any fundamental changes. Only by moving quickly to include all or most CASs in Phase 2 will the data be of use to understand and interpret what is happening system-wide in child welfare. Moving to Phase 2 will also allow the resource represented by the University of Toronto's Ontario Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (OCANDS) to be more fully realized, and extend the capacity-building and impact of performance measurement across CASs in a timely manner.

The lessons from this phased exercise – both technical and substantive – provide a valuable platform on which to build an effective implementation and use of CPIN data. Any delay in moving forward to include all CASs risks a loss of momentum and motivation which the sector has demonstrated so far in this process.

The use to be made of performance indicators is the subject of Section 8. It underlines the importance of using data to improve the transparency and thereby inform funders and public about the services, and results, provided by CASs in different parts of Ontario. Even with some amalgamations of smaller CASs, there are still 47 agencies and, with that number, comes both the challenge and potential value of benchmarking.

To support the power of comparison the Commission has developed an early prototype of a **Statistical Neighbours Model** – that allows CASs to look at themselves in relationship to their closest neighbouring CAS, not by geographic but by statistical proximity (including performance as well as demographic data). This is a model that has been developed in other jurisdictions and sectors [44] with success. To build the CAS Statistical Neighbours Model, requires selected performance indicators for all or most CASs. This is

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[44] See: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/osneng.pdf ;
http://www.cipfastats.net/resources/nearestneighbours/profile.asp?view=select&dataset=england

another reason for moving to Phase two as soon as possible. The Commission has published a working paper describing its CAS Statistical Neighbour's prototype. [45]

Priorities in the short term also include having CASs collect complete and accurate data about **Aboriginal children,** immediately, given the moral and demographic importance of doing so. Our experience also reveals that our ability to understand what is happening to Ontario's children from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds is made impossible by the absence of a common classification system. Each CAS has a large, and different set of categories for culture/ethnicity. A standard classification scheme is needed. We recognize the challenge and sensitivity of attempting to classify the diverse individual and community identities in modern Ontario but suggest that the categories used in the 2006 Canadian long-form census would be a good starting point.

Our work on PIs has maintained regular communication with the CPIN project teams, and its many collaborative working groups. One simple message throughout this effort has been to underline the importance for CPIN to be designed so that it can track children's service pathways and outcomes on a longitudinal basis.

We have also identified a number of actions that are necessary in the medium term. Reliable and consistent feedback from clients and community stakeholders is a valuable source of organizational learning and improvement. We appreciate that simple satisfaction scales are of limited use in this sector, but we remain convinced that some form of standard instruments should be developed by OACAS and used by all CASs to collect client and stakeholder feedback.

The trend to introduce public reporting in the child welfare sector has increased in the years that Performance Measurement has been being discussed in Ontario. A quick scan of the Canadian provinces shows that some form of public reporting is now the norm. Though variable, most provinces report measures that have much in common with those included in the National Outcomes Matrix developed over many years in collaboration with provincial Child Welfare Directors from across Canada by Trocmé's team. We heard a commitment from many officials to base future reporting on the National Outcome Matrix (NOM) and to improve their use of data.

In our view, the primary purpose of public information at provincial level should be to demonstrate good governance; rather than trigger service improvement at local level. In agreeing the measures on which the Minister will report, the Ministry is publicly committing to the terms that it wishes this program to be held to account. Currently, it is a raw count of adoptions completed[46]. In addition to the NOM measures, other provinces include measures such as overall number of children and families served, incidence of maltreatment or neglect (as a ratio of total children in the population), family reunifications or adoptions. We encourage MCYS to introduce public reporting of a selection of performance indicators, to demonstrate results against the targets it sets for the system.

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[45] CPSCW. (2012). *Statistical Neighbours Model: Rationale and Prototype*. Working Paper.
[46] MCYS. (2011). *Results Based Plan Briefing 2011-12*: http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/about/Results_2011-2012.aspx

There is also important developmental work to be done to develop additional indicators and measures to address important areas of service performance and agency capacity not addressed in the first set. These include: CAS Governance; community and family-based services for ongoing cases; transformation policy (i.e. differential response, alternative dispute resolution); and the quality of placement resources. With the criteria guiding the Commission's selection of PIs, it was not possible to adopt measures in these domains. However, work will need to be done soon, to ensure that CPIN has the data necessary and that the system has the ability to better represent its activities and results as soon as possible.

Finally, it is not enough to collect data which is the subject of experts review and criticism. The objective is for performance indicators to be used to strengthen accountability and system management, and foster a culture of curiosity and learning across the sector and MCYS. This major change in approach **using data and performance measures** is set out in the Commission's recommendations for a transformed Accountability Framework which calls for enhanced local governance, more evidenced-based, multi-year plans and cyclical agency reviews.

Performance Indicators: Recommendation 3

In the short run, the Commission recommends:
a) The first generation of Performance Indicators (24) be adopted and continue to be collected in phase 2, clarifying and correcting the problems of data definition and quality, wherever practical – but not making any fundamental changes that would impede comparison or progress.
b) Phase 2 of the PI project be rolled out to all CASs, led by OACAS and executed by OCANDS as in Phase 1.
c) The Statistical Neighbours Model should be further developed as performance data from CASs becomes available from phase 1 and 2, and used for benchmarking performance.
d) CASs be required to collect complete accurate data about Aboriginal children, immediately.
e) CASs be required to collect accurate data about children's cultural and racial backgrounds, in a standard set of categories such as those used in the Canadian long form census (2006).

In the medium term, we recommend:
f) Aboriginal specific outcomes and indicators be developed through the strategic forum that the Commission has recommended in its Aboriginal child welfare report, building on the consultations and the PI working paper produced by the Commission.
g) OACAS develop standard instruments for all CASs to collect client and stakeholder feedback, for implementation from April 2013.
h) MCYS introduce public reporting of a selection of these performance indicators, to demonstrate results against the targets it sets for the system in its strategic and results-based plans.
i) Additional indicators and measures be developed to respond to important areas of service performance and agency capacity that were not addressed in the first set, for example: CAS governance, community and family-based services for ongoing cases, transformation policy (i.e. differential response, alternative dispute resolution), the quality of placement resources.
j) Performance indicators be used to strengthen accountability and system management, and foster a culture of curiosity and learning across the sector and MCYS, as set out in the Commission's proposed Accountability Framework (to enhance governance, inform multi-year plans, and cyclical reviews).

7. CYCLICAL AGENCY REVIEWS

7.1 Introduction

While strategy provides direction and clarity of goal, and performance indicators monitor progress and outcomes, it is the capacity of the agency that is the best predictor of how likely an agency will achieve its strategy and hit its targets. Agency reviews will serve this purpose, if well-designed and professionally executed to focus on how well children are being served. This section will briefly look back on past 'review' processes undertaken of CASs by the MCYS, and make recommendations for the future. We will contrast our proposals with the risk assessments conducted by the MCYS Regional offices and Accreditation processes in use in this and other human service sectors in Canada.

7.2 Background and Context

Recent Ontario Experience

In the past, the Ministry (MCYS and its predecessor, the Ministry of Community and Social Services), developed and implemented a number of approaches to reviewing CAS performance. Although they were largely ad hoc, and focused on processes, some features of these past approaches have merits worth considering in establishing cyclical reviews. For example, Operational Reviews and Comprehensive Audits were the approach of choice for many years.

Using a set of "Lines of Enquiry" and pre-established questions, multi-disciplinary teams were engaged by the Ministry to conduct Operational Reviews (ORs) of CASs. Over one two-year period in the 1980s, all CASs in the province were the subject of such reviews. While these ORs were seen as burdensome and attempted to cover a much wider range of agency management and operations than the Commission is proposing, the way they were organized and resourced was widely regarded as helpful to agency improvement.

Each Review Team was led by an external consultant, and team members with a specific focus (either on service/programs or finance and administration) were assigned from the Ministry and/or seconded from another CAS for the duration of the review (typically six to eight weeks). The Lines of Enquiry, developed in advance, applied to all of the reviews so that while the Teams were temporary, the information gathered was consistent and comparable. The Team was ultimately accountable to the Ministry but under the Terms of Reference for each review, the Team was obliged to report back to, and work with, the CAS senior staff and Board to identify corrective actions required to improve Board functioning, management of the organization (planning, organization design, resource management, controllership, direction-setting and self evaluation), relationships with the community and direct service to clients (both organization of services and actual service to clients).

In addition to the standardized focus of these reviews, key to their success was the objectivity, background and skill sets of the reviewers. In subsequent years, CASs were reviewed if there were

concerns/complaints or significant funding issues and some CASs were reviewed each year under the direction of the Comprehensive Audit and Evaluation Branch of the Ministry as part of its cycle of audits of Ministry Programs. Maintaining some coverage of all CASs over several years was of benefit to learning and improvement. It's an approach which the Commission recommends for Reviews recommended here.

CAS Experience with Accreditation

OACAS operated an Accreditation program until 2008/9, at which time, with only 13 CASs accredited and a lack of interest from the field, the recommendation made by a program review was adopted to discontinue the program and reinvest the resources to a more productive endeavour. The feedback from the field was that the process was cumbersome and difficult to maintain, though many multi-service agencies pursued the process for all of their services because children's mental health services are required to be accredited.

More recently, the OACAS joined forces with five community-based health and social service sectors to form the Canadian Centre for Accreditation (CCA).[47] This initiative included Children's Mental Health Ontario, Community Organizational Health Inc. (with the Association of Ontario Health Centres), Credit Counselling Ontario and Canada, Family Service Ontario, and Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. CAS response to the e-mail survey on CCA Child Welfare Standards was not supportive and met the question "What is the evidence base for this particular standard?" It was suggested to the Commission that the sector's resources would be better focused on outcomes (how our clients are doing) rather than our internal service and admin processes (how we are doing)…. "as we try to free ourselves from the onerous requirements of compliance to MCYS standards we should be wary of adopting other just as onerous standards from independent but possibly irrelevant standard setting organizations." This seems important advice for future reviews of agency capacity and performance.

The Commission is also aware of positive support for accreditation; for example, Peel and York CAS are following the Progressive Excellence Program® (PEP) from Excellence Canada[48]. PEP Peel is working on its final stage for full certification and, after two years, York is about mid-way through the process. Many hospitals in Ontario support Accreditation Canada's Qmentum programme, which also has a well-established structure for its accreditation approach.[49]   There will be many common elements between these accreditation regimes and what we would like to see, but also some important differences. Any

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[47] Canadian centre for accreditation. http://canadiancentreforaccreditation.ca/

[48] **Excellence Canada -** "Excellence Canada's Progressive Excellence Program® (PEP) is the implementation model for the Framework for Organizational Excellence that helps organizations across Canada nurture a quality and/or healthy workplace focus. The Framework is a comprehensive and practical framework for improvement. The Principles for Excellence permeate the six drivers to form the foundation for long-term improvement, and to achieve sustained organizational performance and results. Companies that have participated in the PEP program have seen lower attrition rates, reduced sickness and absenteeism, lower payments to Workers' Compensation, reduction in employee grievances and staff turnover, savings in operating cost through increased productivity, and many other benefits". www.nqi.ca

[49] Accreditation Canada introduced Qmentum in health services in 2008. "Based on the latest research and evidence and extensive feedback from clients, surveyors, board members and staff, Qmentum emphasizes health system performance, risk prevention planning, client safety, performance measurement, and governance". It includes extensive lists of standards, required operating procedures, and performance measures for patient safety and palliative care. http://www.accreditation.ca/accreditation-programs/qmentum/standards/

new approach would need to be reconciled with the existing approaches and certifications that have been adopted by CASs.

The Commission has reached a view that though some agencies may well find one or more of the available quality certification processes helpful, it would not be fruitful to make any of them a universal requirement.

7.3 Rationale for Introducing Agency Reviews Now

Most reporting provides a retrospective snap shot of an agency's past activities or results. While track record may often be a good predictor of the future, organizational capacity – primarily excellent leadership and management – is a better one. Ultimately it is the quality of the services and outcomes provided that matter, and therefore the rationale for the proposed agency reviews is securing good prospects for quality and improvement.

CASs are often the largest children's service provider in many communities, but many are nevertheless relatively small agencies which are usually the sole service in the area, are thinly resourced and dependent on a few key people. Therefore, agency performance may be affected by unforeseen events; too much or too little change may create instability or complacency that may take some time to become evident. By then, vulnerable children may have been exposed to avoidable risk or overall performance may be deteriorating unnoticed even though financial health remains strong. Agencies serving vulnerable people have to work hard to avoid becoming too closed or defensive, and therefore benefit from some degree of expert external challenge, that brings an element of transparency and independent scrutiny to their activities. The Commission has heard repeatedly from CASs that currently external scrutiny is largely focused on finances and agency viability; while the Commission sees a need for greater attention to securing better value for children.

The proposal that regular and professionally executed reviews of agency capacity and performance will support improvement is the rationale underlying the Commission's recommendation. In contrast with compliance-oriented operational reviews that are informed by paper-based audits of client files assessed against ministry standards, the reviews the Commission is recommending will be more strategic, systemic, and results-focused. The assumption is that where responsive/responsible leadership is well-served by organizational processes and good feedback loops, there is no need to scrutinize the transactional level of an agency's day to day operations.

7.4 Trends in Public Service Review

It may be helpful to appreciate the trends that public service inspection and review has undergone, and for Ontario child welfare to position itself in relationship to these trends. One the earliest forms of inspection that covered this sector was the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) in England which was set up in 1985 as an independent agency of the Department of Health.[50] It adopted a standards-based

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[50] For information about the Social Services Inspectorate see
http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_4016177.pdf

compliance approach to inspecting services which began the process of standardization further strengthened in powers provided in the 1989 *Children's Act* and 1990 *Community Care Act*.

The professional compliance approach was seen to require additional financial and management expertise, and in 1996 the SSI joined with the Audit Commission to produce Joint Reviews of all social services departments. As social services became organized around children and adults, powers for inspecting children's services were invested in The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) and for adults in the Commission for Social Care Inspection and more recently the Care Quality Commission. At the same time as inspection was becoming more 'client-centered', joint inspections of various kinds were introduced to align the expectations and directions of different policies and programs. The introduction of the outcome framework for Every Child Matters led to the Joint Area Reviews (JARS), which brought a traditional inspectorate approach involving detailed elaboration of outcomes, standards, criteria and evidence. The results of the 78 JARS conducted from 2007 to 2008 were subject to a report, which highlights the issues relevant to joint working between children's services.[51] For an example of the reports produced for the Joint Area Reviews see Appendix B.

At a broader scale, Comprehensive Performance Assessments[52] covered all services provided by local government bringing together the combined scrutiny of the SSI, Ofsted and Audit Commission. Ever more ambitious, Comprehensive Area Assessments were then introduced to reviews services and agencies across a local authority area; involving six inspectorates (Audit Commission, Care Quality Commission, Ofsted, Her Majesty's (HM) Inspectorate of Constabulary, HM Inspectorate of Prisons and HM Inspectorate of Probation).[53]

What is the Evidence about this Approach to Reviews?

In England, star ratings and public reports were introduced from the mid 1990s to 2009, under the responsibility of the SSI, CSCI and then Ofsted (where responsibility currently rests). Although the star rating system had its critics (that it overly simplifies complex systems), there is evidence that it produced improvements in the social service departments (and later all local services) in which it was applied. The impact of the Joint reviews conducted by the SSI and the Audit Commission from 1996 to 2003 reported features associated with successful Social Service Departments (SSD) and feedback from people subject to inspection.[54] In the first monitoring period after the Best Value star ratings were introduced, there were six more 3-star SSDs, and three fewer zero star rated SSDs in 2005 than there were in 2004, with a greater proportion on a positive improvement track than in decline (Exhibit 8)

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[51] Ofsted. (2009) *Results of the Joint area Reviews 2007-8:*.http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/joint-area-reviews-2007-08

[52] Audit Commission, *Comprehensive Performance Assessments* http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/inspection-assessment/cpa/pages/default.aspx

[53] Audit Commission. (2009). *Comprehensive Area Reviews*, http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/MethodologyAndTools/Guidance/caaframework10feb09REP.pdf

[54] Audit Commission/SSI.(2003). *Old Virtues, New Virtues: An Overview Of The Changes In Social Care Services Over The Seven Years Of Joint Reviews in England 1996-2003*. p. 50

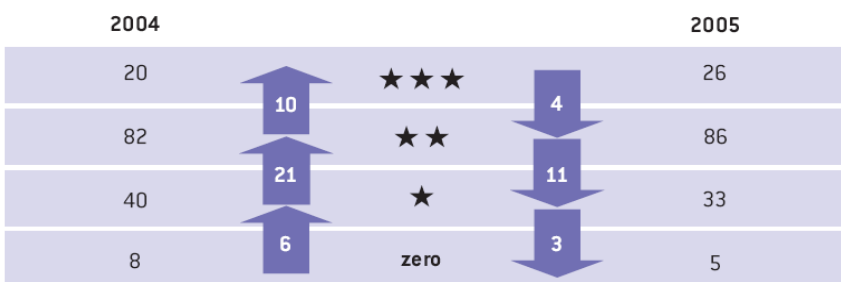| 2004		2005
20	↑10 ★★★ ↓4	26
82	★★	86
40	↑21 ★ ↓11	33
8	↑6 zero ↓3	5

Exhibit 8: Changes in Inspection Rating of English Local Authorities between 2004 and 2005

Qualitative evaluation of the inspection approach also showed positive results in the early introduction of Best Value. 79% of elected members found inspection reports informative and useful, 77% supported the star rating system and 70% the improvement rating.[55]

The results of the Comprehensive Performance assessments showed that between 2002 and 2008:

- excellence increased, with 42% of councils judged to be in the highest category of performance by 2008; an increase from 15% in the first year
- weak performance became rare, with no council receiving a zero star rating in 2008 and only four at the next level, compared with 34 councils rated as 'weak' or 'poor' in 2002.[56]

However, inspection became a favoured mechanism for accountability and improvement in U.K. public services, and the introduction of many layers of reviews became onerous and over time was called into question. A review of all public service inspection was commissioned by government which led to a rationalization of inspectorates and a more proportionate approach was introduced.[57] The Coalition government has further streamlined public service regulation in many areas including the implementation of the Munro recommendation to move from planned to 'surprise' inspections of children's services.[58] Children's services will continue to be inspected and a report published on the results every year.

7.5 Designing CAS Reviews

There are many ways of analyzing organizations – with many examples and much experience to draw on – but the single feature that stands out in what the Commission is recommending is a "focus on improving service performance and outcomes for children".

Getting the right design of the reviews is critical; it needs to have clear criteria for each grade on each item reviewed, and point to transparent evidence base to form judgements on these criteria. The focus and balance between the different areas which are subject to "lines of enquiry" will need to be

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[55] P. 37, Audit Commission. (2001). *Changing Gear*. http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/AuditCommissionReports/NationalStudies/nrchanginggear.pdf

[56] Audit Commission. (2009). *Final Score: the Impact of Comprehensive Performance Assessments in Local Government*, http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/AnnualReports/2009/050320009FinalScoreSummary.pdf

[57] Office of Public Sector Reform. (2003). *Inspecting for Improvement*. https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/27881-0703-D8.pdf

[58] *The Munro Review of Child Protection, Final Report, A child-centered System*, Cm 8062, presented to parliament by the Secretary of State for Education , May 2011 http://www.education.gov.uk/munroreview/downloads/8875_DfE_Munro_Report_TAGGED.pdf

developed in partnership with the sector, with care given to ensure the effort invested pays off in better services. In general, reviews would be expected to cover the following elements.

- ❖ Governance & leadership
- ❖ Experience and outcomes of families and children served
- ❖ Strategy, planning, monitoring and review: processes (the cycles and procedures for making strategies and plans) but also their substance (are they challenging, tackling issues that matter, informed with smart metrics)
- ❖ Program and service management – how it satisfies its child welfare mandate, adequacy in relation to the local population needs, service standards and quality
- ❖ Partnerships with child-related community services
- ❖ Stewardship of resources – including financial management, value for money, human resources, Information systems, organizational development, learning
- ❖ Diversity and cultural competence

A valuable step in the development of the review design is the process itself: identifying what is important in each of these areas, establishing broad support for continuing to challenge existing practicesnorms, and the basis for making judgements in each area. It is through engaging people across the system in this process that the reviews will generate learning, develop common understanding of good practice, gain credibility and deliver improvement.

Review Teams and Support

It is also important that the teams undertaking the cyclical Agency Reviews are seen to be credible by CAS Directors and staff. In line with our aspirations for generating a culture of curiosity and learning, the feedback from reviews would be a source of challenge and a step towards further improvement and innovation. Review teams would be composed of two or three people, with a skill mix in management, finance, Information and child welfare. Recognizing the resource reality, it should be possible to redirect resources now invested in policy development (as the priority is now on policy implementation) and compliance oriented reviews (given the commitment to reducing administrative burden). To ensure the integrity of the teams, we suggest that the reviews are led by independent consultants with suitably experienced people drawn from CASs, MCYS and possibly other parts of government.

To design the Reviews, develop methodologies and tools, ensure consistency of execution and reporting, a small central resource will be required. This could be an arms-length body or housed within MCYS. Thought could be given to developing an 'improvement service' through statute, as has been done in other jurisdictions and sectors.

Frequency and Duration

Over a three-year program, it would be possible to cover all CASs. The value return from reviews in terms of tracking progress and making improvement over time will be greater, if there is consistency in the design and reliability in execution.

There may be value in beginning the process with a planned approach, programming around 15 CASs per year. Including a mix of CASs each year will provide a more solid evidence base for the review process, than selecting those considered to be 'weak' on the basis of performance data and MCYS regional office assessment. It will also avoid reviews becoming perceived as a punishment for poor performance.

The review process would have five stages:

1) CAS produces and submits a self-study, drawing on data for agreed performance
2) The review team reads the self-study and produces a 'site visit plan' to enable the CAS to develop an itinerary, and make whatever preparations are necessary.
3) Site visit takes place over two days and concludes with a face-to-face meeting with the Board of Directors, Executive and Senior management team. It is expected that recommendations will be made for actions to be taken by both CAS and MCYS, and possibly areas for attention by other parts of government responsible for children's services. Results of the review are discussed and CAS and MCYS are informed of the team's preliminary judgments.
4) Final report is produced within one week of the visit (to ensure its findings and recommendations are accurate and timely), and published on the websites of both the MCYS and the CAS (to encourage transparency)
5) CAS and MCYS are expected to respond with an action plan within one month.   Further follow-up visits and/or reporting take place as required, depending on the urgency of the review's recommendations.

Much of the value of the Agency Cyclical Reviews would be realized through the quality of the exchanges between CASs, the Review team and MCYS in the course of the process. Each step is an opportunity for strengthening communications, clarifying roles and expectations, and enriching feedback across the system.

7.6 Reporting the Results of Each Review

To make an impact, reviews need to conclude with a judgment about the performance and capacity of the agency. One of the drawbacks of many review and accreditation processes is this dimension – the conclusions they reach. To be avoided:
a) Descriptive reports that are overly long on context and circumstance, and short on measurement and clear judgment. The result may be a classic problem of missing the forest for the trees. This is a comment we heard about accreditation processes, from many sources in and outside child welfare. In a human services sector, with a consensual culture and little experience of explicit performance assessment, the tendency to 'draft' around issues and

provide an overly ambiguous view, such an approach may be more comfortable but less effective.

b) "Yes" or "no" checklists, supported by spreadsheet tools, may seem preferable to long prose-based reports. They are less labour intensive and provide a percentage score that lends itself to comparison and aggregation to system-wide reports. The shortcoming is that there is no incentive or recognition for excellence – the agency either has the identified feature or it doesn't. There is also the risk that the list of features in the checklist may not produce better results for children, nor reflect a consistent base of evidence.

The review should conclude with a transparent assessment of every CAS that states clearly:

 How well is this CAS serving children?
.... Based on a snapshot in time visit + performance data

AND

 What is their capacity to improve?
…. Based on agency capacity assessments informed by (self-studies + site visit).

Thematic Reports

Over time, the reviews will provide a rich source of knowledge and learning about the 'sector', the services it provides and the outcomes children experience. When reviews are conducted systematically and supported by professional methodologies, they will allow thematic studies on cross-cutting issues to be produced and disseminated, identifying emerging needs and challenges and capturing promising practices for replication where appropriate.[59]

Reporting Judgments

In the course of developing a methodology for agency reviews, there will need to be engagement with the sector and a clear policy and operational purpose set for the activity. One example is the rating scale used in service inspections in England which locates services/agencies in one of four quadrants based on their performance and capacity rating, indicating their 'direction of travel' as well as their current performance.[60] The performance ratings (Exhibit 9) ranged from Grade 4 (for the poorest) to Grade 1 (for the best). In some versions, the grades were reflected in star ratings.

➢ **No** (GRADE 4)

A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users, is not cost-effective, and makes little or no contribution to wider outcomes for the community.

➢ **Some** (GRADE 3)

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[59] See OFSTED thematic reports: http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/hc0910/hc00/0011/0011.pdf ; http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/edging-away-care-how-services-successfully-prevent-young-people-entering-care ; http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/outstanding-childrens-homes
[60] http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/AuditCommissionReports/NationalStudies/archive_jrannrep01.pdf

A service that delivers minimum requirements for users, but is not demonstrably cost effective nor does it contributes significantly to wider outcomes for the community.

➢ **Most** (GRADE 2)

A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users, has some innovative practice and is increasingly cost-effective whilst making contributions to wider outcomes for the community.

➢ **Yes** (GRADE 1)

A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users, is innovative and cost-effective and fully contributes to raising expectations and the achievement of wider outcomes for the community.

Prospects for improvement were also rated …

➢ Poor

➢ Uncertain

➢ Promising

➢ Excellent

Exhibit 9: Performance Rating for English Local Authorities

Agencies in the lower left quadrant – which are serving people poorly with poor prospects for improvement – would be a priority for concern and Ministry involvement. In contrast, an agency in the top right hand quadrant – serving people well with positive prospects for improvement – would not require the same degree of oversight and controls, but rather be a source of best practice and capacity sharing for other parts of the system. This approach – differentiating strong and motivated agencies from weaker and complacent agencies – is a means of investing effort in proportion to success. It also avoids alienating those who are doing well and suppressing innovation.

	People served well?
Served well, Poor prospects for improvement	Served well, Excellent prospects for improvement
Poor prospects **for Improvement?**	**Excellent prospects** **for Improvement?**
Served poorly, Poor prospects for improvement	Served poorly, Excellent prospects for improvement
People served **Poorly?**	

The 'differential' approach to controls and reporting, which is outlined in the section on "making results matter" requires a clear grading of assessments – in order to differentiate an agency's relative position on the performance/capacity continuum. The Commission recognizes that this approach represents a

stretch for many in the sector, where consensus and an inclusive, supportive culture are a cherished strength. It is possible – in fact may be more conducive – to combine assessment with collegiality and collaboration.

7.7 Implementation Considerations

Stage 1

The first step in establishing Cyclical Agency Reviews would be to adopt an explicit vision and strategy for this new approach:
- results-oriented rather than process-oriented: part of a big culture change
- finding alignment between the views of the sector and the Ministry
- reconciling the proposed Reviews with existing approaches to accreditation and quality improvement in use in agencies

Next, would be to design a review methodology covering
- Subjects with lines of enquiry
- Criteria for assessment
- Information sources, evidence base
- Basis of judgment
- Format for reporting
- Making sure improvement happens

Stage 2

Next, it would be necessary to make a program for scheduling CAS Reviews over a three-year period, and deciding the basis of selecting the order and coverage for each year.

Assembling the people to form the teams, and developing the capacity to conduct the reviews is another important component of the preparation necessary. Given the importance of the judgments being made by these teams, they need to be selected on clear criteria and recruited on merit. The skill set for the review teams needs to be agreed, as well as the sourcing of the people to be involved (a mix of secondees and short-term contracts from the sector, the Ministry and consultancies). The review methods and tools will have to be operationalized and teams trained in the use of the framework and methods. The value of the Reviews depends heavily on reliable, consistent and timely judgments informed by evidence and professional experience; results that require people with the necessary analytic and communication skills.

Cyclical Agency Reviews: recommendation 4

MCYS should introduce a program of agency reviews to monitor how well CASs are serving children and families and their prospects for continuing to improve.

That the design of these reviews be:

a) Conducted with a professional management framework focused on capacity for improvement, not compliance with processes and standards.

b) Guided by clear criteria, backed up by performance indicators and other forms of evidence, developed in partnership with the sector.

c) Conducted by mixed disciplined teams led by external consultants and composed of experienced local managers, consultants and senior policy analysts.

8. MAKING RESULTS MATTER

Accountability is strengthened and outcomes improved only if all the activity generated by the introduction of these mechanisms makes a difference – when the plans made, performance information reported and cyclical reviews concluded – are used as tools for improvement. What we are suggesting is quite different from what we observe in many forms of public service reporting today. Throughout this report, we have identified the ways that information about expectations and results can be used to support decision-making – for children, families, agencies and the Ministry. A number of themes run through our proposals – the importance of transparency, the power of comparison, the value of proportionality (what we are calling a 'differentiated' response), and a culture of curiosity and learning. And because for many people 'incentives' means 'money', we argue that money is NOT the best incentive for this sector at this time.

8.1 The Importance of Transparency

We introduced this report by demonstrating why accountability is so important to sustainability – for child welfare. CASs are exercising powerful protective powers, authorized to intervene in the lives of children and families, in many instances with lifelong consequences. This sector faces some challenges in gaining better public understanding of its mission, the services it provides and the outcomes achieved for children. In contrast to health and education, most people will not have direct experience of the services provided by the CAS and be unfamiliar with what child welfare is or does. There tends to be a child welfare language, used inside the sector but not well-understood more widely. The local connections that CAS have to their community goes some way to filling this gap of understanding.

Clear expectations set out in published plans that incentivize integrated service planning will also bring greater transparency to the priorities of CAS and its role in the broader children's services continuum. Partnerships are fostered around common goals which would infuse planning for programs and services as well as plans for individual children.

Performance measures provide transparency around results in key areas reflecting children's safety, permanency of care, and well-being. Many CASs produce excellent annual reports and scorecards and these provide transparency. Province-wide measures provide a further view that allows local results to be put in a broader context. Transparent information is a proxy for the 'bottom-line' for many public services and public attention provides potentially a positive spur to improvement and accountability.

8.2 The Power of Comparison

Clear expectations, standard performance measures and Cyclical Agency Reviews also make it possible to employ the power of comparison. Differences between agencies are fruitful ground for generating better knowledge and identifying best practices. For instance, if one CAS can place most children in family-based care or unify families more quickly or successfully find permanent homes more quickly, its experience can be studied. It is important to understand why this is the case and what changes could be

introduced to improve results more widely. Comparison to past performance allows people to track their improvement over time, and reduce the risk of falling behind.

Of course for comparison to be valuable, information needs to be accurate, reliable and reported on a timely basis. Information will be used for different purposes by different parts of the system. Local teams need to track their performance and use their understanding of data to support decisions about their clients. CAS senior management need to monitor key areas and identify priorities for dedicated action. CAS Boards need information to satisfy their role as responsive and responsible governors, holding Local Directors to account and being held to account by local agencies, community and clients.

MCYS needs information to meet its public accountability to the public, ministers and legislature. With information from accountability agreements, performance measures and Agency Reviews, MCYS will be better equipped to interpret data to build the knowledge necessary to exercise its role as system manager; it can set province-wide targets and negotiate better informed local targets with an appreciation of what's desirable and realistic. CASs will have a better grasp of how they compare, a basis for identifying areas they want to examine more closely and make a priority for improvement.

8.3 The Value of "Proportionality"

The performance regime that the Commission is advocating is one that strikes a balance between rewarding excellence and addressing failure. The overall design is intended to align positive incentives for achieving good results and improvement; where poor performance is made transparent and where necessary improve to meet clear expectations. This 'proportionate' approach has a similar rationale in part to the policy of offering a 'differential response' for families depending on their strengths and need for support. Such a differential response should be both more effective and better value for money.

The challenge is to create a 'self-improving' system where excellent agencies with ambitions are encouraged to be better, and to disseminate their knowledge and experience to bring about improvement in other children's services in the system. The prize is to inspire better quality and efficient outcomes, and avoid the distraction and demotivation caused by one size fits all reporting and compliance audits. Where performance is poor and readiness to change is weak, it cannot be acceptable for agencies to achieve 'just enough' to satisfy minimal requirements or give reasons why it isn't reasonable to expect anything more.

Unless there are consequences attached to the results achieved through – plans, accountability agreements, performance data, and agency reviews – people will treat them with indifference and the resources and effort will not ultimately be shown to be a good investment. Positive incentives might include less frequent reporting, more flexible use of funding, freedom to partner with other local children's services, time release to write up and disseminate best practice models, training and development opportunities. Negative incentives would be more tightly drawn accountability agreements, frequent reporting and closer monitoring of improvement plans through to the use of the powers conferred on the Minister by the CFSA.

8.4 A Culture of Curiosity and Learning

Learning how a system 'learns' is a key to being able to adapt and ultimately improve. Some foundational ideas from systems theory were introduced in the Commission's first report, developed more fully in the Systemic Comparison of other Jurisdictions, which are helpful in this regard. One is that of a system requiring 'feedback', or data about what is actually going on at the frontline, where goals, structures, reforms, policies, procedures, etc. come together in direct work with children, young people and families. Linked to the notion of 'feedback' is the concept of 'loops' of learning, whereby corrective action is taken on the basis of the feedback. 'Single-loop learning' focuses on compliance with prescribed behaviour; it is like a thermostat that learns when it is too hot or too cold and turns the heat on or off. 'Double-loop learning' goes further to reflect on the appropriateness of the original prescription, focusing not only on whether we are doing things right but whether we are doing the right things.

It would be a big mistake to make assumptions about what is good or poor performance, based on early results from the mechanisms recommended in this report. Everyone needs to resist the temptation to move too quickly from data to judgments to solutions; first must come curiosity and questions. These include: I wonder what that means? Can the data be right? Why is that CAS able to produce its results when our CAS produces a very different picture? Child welfare is part of a complex system, with many interlocking parts. The challenge is to identify the configuration of data and interpretation of results that allows good enough decisions for improvement. As understanding improves, so will the ability to form more confident judgments and directive actions.

8.5 The Question of Financial Incentives

The idea of 'incentives' is often linked in people's minds to payment – paying more to individuals or agencies that produce better results than those that do not. There is a common sense appeal to this approach; why not reward those who do a good job better than those who do a poor one?

There are several reasons why the Commission is not recommending that CAS or their staff be rewarded financially for their performance.

The first reason is practical – child welfare policy goals are not sufficiently clear, nor CAS services sufficiently standardized that funding payments could be made on a performance basis. As well, 'in care' out-of-home placement services are the most easily costed and refundable, but are also those that are the most costly and least desirable in policy terms. There is not sufficient or reliable data that is necessary to monitor performance and pay out on results. The policy goals, and practical experience of working with smart targets, are not sufficiently clear to provide a sound basis on which to pay for results. There is not a well-developed 'contracting' system, especially as there is no tradition or apparent interest in separating the 'purchaser' from the 'provider' of services.

LHINs might be considered one of Ontario's early efforts at service commissioning and contracting, but even in health where case costing and data has a much longer experience, performance payment is just now being introduced and even then it is on the margins. To make these changes in child welfare would require new (and most certainly larger) structures to separate commissioning from service provision,

performance contracts, transparent performance components reliable linked to marginal or full costs. The systems are not currently in place to benefit from such a payment for performance approach. Making the changes necessary in Ontario's child welfare system would be significant indeed. Yet all these are necessary prerequisites for introducing such a system.

Another reason is policy-related. It is tough enough if communities are being poorly served by CAS that are not delivering their priorities, but were the CASs to have resources taken away from their services, the community loses out even more. When the policy goal is for all communities to be well-served by continually improving CAS, it does not make sense to make financial penalties or sanctions a significant part of the accountability incentives. If there were to be competition between CAS and more choice between services, then the system might reallocate resources to follow the clients and the choices they make to be served by excellent agencies. However, this is not possible within the current policy framework, nor would such an approach have the necessary conditions in place to operate (clear service continuum, transparency of service offer, data, etc.).

Paying for Performance – Early Experience

Even in well-developed, private market systems with long established contracting approaches, there is little experience of introducing payment by results in child welfare. In a 2009 review of 47 states commissioned by the U.S. Children's Bureau, 14 states reported introducing some form of performance-based contracting[61] the majority of such contracts had been introduced in the previous two to four years, and therefore have had little time to yield reliable results. However, an early review of these contracting practices in the U.S., concluded that some are not truly 'performance-based'.

"Some contracts (ID, MN, NC) do not explicitly list performance measures in their contracts and instead incentivize (or pay for) the delivery of certain services…. Other contracts incentivize *improved* performance in casework activities….. Some contracts incentivize a combination of both casework activities and client outcomes…. Other contracts incentivize only client-level outcomes, most involving child safety and permanency … some pay flat amounts for each completed adoption, some pay higher rates for expedited adoptions, some pay higher rates for the adoption of target (or hard-to-place) children…. Residential care contracts incentivize (but in different ways) shorter lengths of stay in residential settings."

So it's a pretty mixed picture, even where a private market system has standardized service offers, sets pricing and contracting mechanisms, and collects costing and performance data. Performance related contracts generally require that assessments and investigations are conducted 'in-house' by government employees; care plans are then outsourced.

This research identified six themes for 'lessons learned' from this early experience of performance-based contracting which are worthy of note here:

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[61] P. 4-5, Quality Improvement centre on the Privatization of Child Welfare Services (2009). *Examples of Performance-based Contracts in Child Welfare services*, commissioned by the Children's Bureau, U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services. http://www.uky.edu/SocialWork/qicpcw/documents/2009/Performance%20Based%20Contracts%20in%20Child%20Welfare.pdf

- Need for continuous communication between public and private agencies. The complexity of administering these contracts made it necessary to discuss challenges and problem solve on an ongoing basis.

- Need for clear performance measures, operationalized over time, and to create tools to standardize case practice.

- Need for transparency of fiscal penalties and incentives as well as need for clarifications of these in light of any modifications to the performance measures and in light of performance itself. Some State officials also discussed the value of sharing performance across providers and have set up "performance dashboards" on State websites to inform contractors how they are performing in relation to each other.

- Data collection on performance has to be reliable and trusted by both the public and private partners. Both Illinois and Tennessee describe the value of using a third party (generally universities) to gather and analyze performance data.

- Contracts need to clarify roles and responsibilities of both private and public agency workers. Some State officials discussed the realization that in order to meet system goals expected in these contracts, contract language had to specify what was expected from both the private providers as well as what was expected of (and in what timeframe) public agency workers.

- These contracts are a "work in progress". After over a decade of designing, refining and implementing performance based contracts, Illinois reports that its contracts are still a "work-in-progress." While not explicitly discussed by other State officials, the ongoing refinements to contract language, performance measures and the structure of the contracts themselves demonstrates the complexity of linking payment to performance relative to traditional contracting models. [62]

Were Ontario to decide to privatize its children's services, it would have to restructure and establish a track record that would make the system ready. Additional considerations have to do with the political and cultural readiness to support such a system.

A more common approach has been to base individuals' pay on performance, as has been done in the senior ranks of the Ontario Public Service (OPS) and for hospital CEOs in the Excellent Care for All legislation[63]. We have not found evidence thus far about the performance benefits achieved as a result of these, particularly performance pay schemes; however the research evidence on the impact of performance-related pay is at best modest to uncertain.[64]

A recent study of 25 OECD countries where Performance Related Pay had been introduced found that the impact of the schemes was related to a separation of interests between politicians and civil servants. According to this study, "the challenge in any social organization is not to find an efficient incentive

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[62] P. 6-7, *Ibid*., 2009

[63] http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/legislation/excellent_care/

[64] Carl Dahlström and Victor Lapuente. (2010). Explaining Cross-Country Differences in Performance-Related Pay in the Public Sector. *Public Sector J Public Adm Res Theory* 20, 3, 577-600 published doi:10.1093/jopart/mup021

system – this is relatively easy to design – but to find an efficient system that members believe will not be opportunistically subverted by the superiors".[65] Another recent study of performance-related pay in the public sector employed an experimental design in an effort to understand the hidden costs and 'modest impact' commonly the result of such arrangements.[66] A study evaluating the influence of Hirschman's theory of exit, voice, loyalty and pay concluded that voice and loyalty are strong motivators for reasons given to stay; while dissatisfaction with pay is most often cited as a reason to exit, particularly by senior executives. Noteworthy for child welfare workers is the finding that "competing control mechanisms like pay may in fact ''crowd out'' individual responsiveness to relational or psychological contract elements like commitment and empowerment, like voice and loyalty".[67] People familiar with the challenges involved in child welfare work recognize the value of vocational commitment.

Performance related pay for teachers is perhaps the most studied area in the public sector. Insights from a recent study by the OECD's PISA unit concluded with the following graphic (Exhibit 10).

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[65] P.20 *ibid*.

[66] Wiebel, A., Rost K., & Osterloh, M. (2010). Pay for Performance in the Public Sector- Benefits & Hidden costs. *Public Administration and Research Theory* 20, 2, 387-412. doi: 10.1093/jopart/mup009

[67] Lee, S-Y., and Whitford, A. (2008). Exit, Voice, Loyalty, and Pay: Evidence from the Public Workforce. *J Public Adm Res Theory*, 18, 4, 647-671. doi:10.1093/jopart/mum029

**Average performance difference between countries
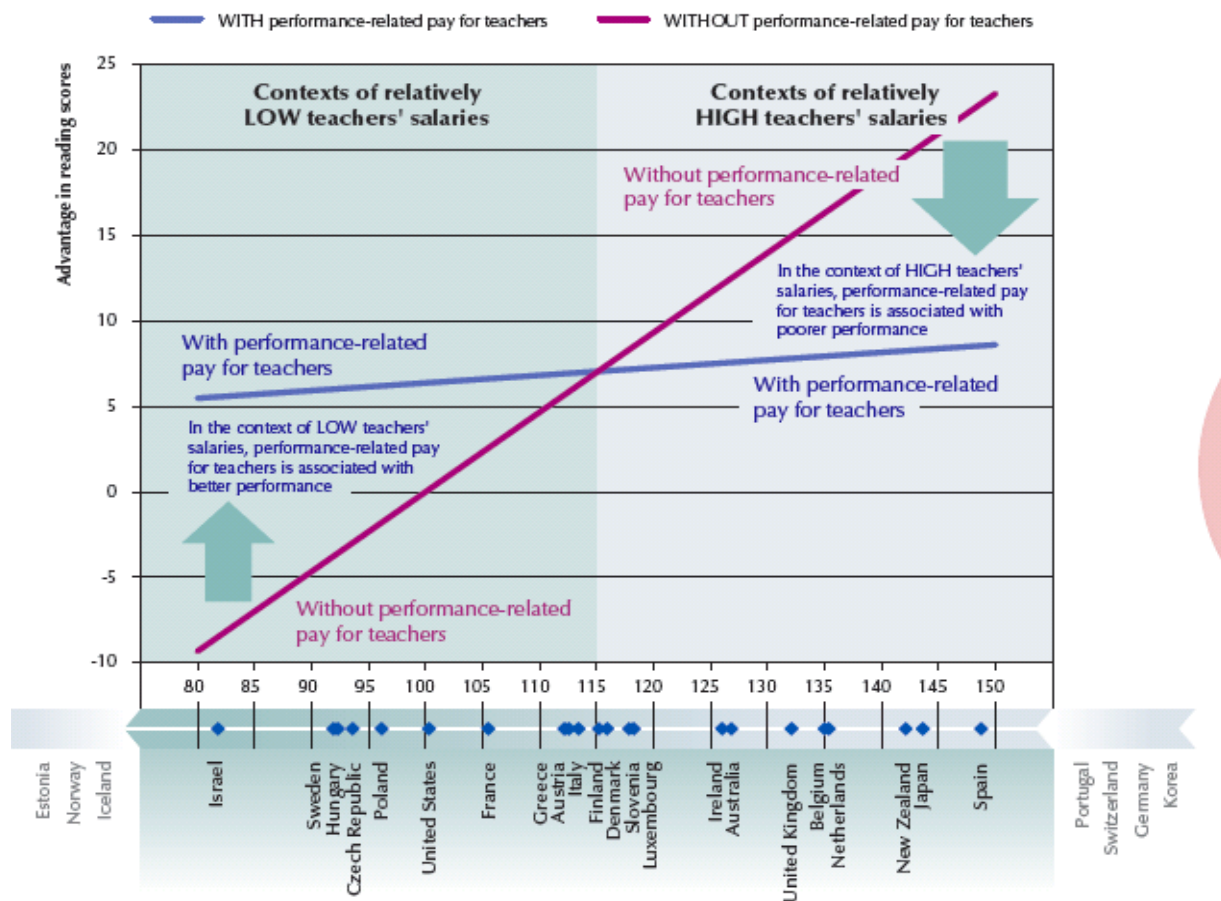with and without teacher performance payments, by the levels of teachers' salaries**

Exhibit 10 – Performance Differences Between Countries With and Without Teacher Performance Payments[68]

Unfortunately Canada did not provide data for this OECD survey (the only country that did not), nevertheless the results concluded that "in countries with comparatively low teachers' salaries (less than 15% above GDP per capita), student performance tends to be better when performance-based pay systems are in place, while in countries where teachers are relatively well-paid (more than 15% above GDP per capita), the opposite is true."[69]

The subject of performance based payments is a subject that merits dedicated study in itself, and should a decision be taken to introduce some form of performance-based rewards or contracting in Ontario child welfare it should ensure that the conditions necessary are established. The recommendations outlined in this report on Accountability provide some of the necessary foundations – a fair and transparent funding allocation system, and greater policy direction, are important precursors. Without

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[68] OECD. (May, 2012). *Does performance-based Pay Improve Teaching*? http://www.oecd.org/pisa/50328990.pdf
[69] P2, IBID 2012.

the groundwork necessary, the risk is that valuable resources will be paid out with little additional benefit, as has been the case in many benefit payment systems introduced in public sector activities.

Making performance and results matter: recommendation 5

a) CASs should report their performance against expectations set out in their Accountability Agreements with MCYS, and produce plans to address areas where improvement is required to meet targets.

b) MCYS should develop a user-friendly format for comparative reporting of CASs' performance on targets agreed in their Accountability Agreements, and the conclusions and actions arising from agency reviews.

c) OACAS should develop further the Statistical Neighbours Model to facilitate benchmarking between CASs, drawing on CASs' performance data as well as the socio-demographic factors used by the Commission.

d) MCYS should implement a detailed set of provisions for recognizing CASs' successes and addressing weaknesses, to realize the 'differential response' to achieving performance results and improvement.

e) The success of the new Framework of Accountability approach should be secured by fostering transparency, curiosity and learning, rather than handing out sanctions and blame.

f) Following the full and effective implementation of the Commission's recommendations, no financial incentives should be considered until there is full confidence in the data and judgments being made about CASs

9. BUILDING THE CAPACITY TO BECOME A SELF-IMPROVING SYSTEM

9.1 Interdependent Parts of a Self-improving System

One of the keys to sustainability in child welfare in Ontario is creating a system from the CAS and other community services which were founded and evolved historically, largely from the bottom up. With greater family mobility, and growing expectations of clients, partners, communities as well as funders, agencies are increasingly required to operate as a system. Often we have been told that what is important is a 'shared accountability'. We agree. However, each part of the system needs to be clear about its role and perform it fully and in concert with others.

Ideally, complex adaptive systems are designed to work best when they have the drivers necessary for self-improvement. In Section 4, we outlined the elements of a self-improving system, and through this report we have recommended the introduction of some accountability mechanisms that will take the child welfare system closer to that model. CASs' ability to respond flexibly to meet the diverse and personal needs of vulnerable families and children – the 'bottom-up' factors driving improvement – are as important as the targets and reviews that lend themselves more easily to government action from the 'top-down'. Efforts to gain clarity of expectations must include clients and community expectations as well as that of government. Accountability needs to be strengthened locally to Boards, local community partners and clients. And improvements must be appreciated and recognised 'on the ground' as much as they may be reflected in performance data.

Any framework of accountability should be regularly reviewed, and changes made with an overarching design and coherence in mind. Should there be a growing interest and stronger capacity for realizing outcome-based funding, with or without a contracting framework, the purpose and steps necessary should be examined in five years or so.

9.2 Strengthening CAS Governance

As noted earlier in this report, independent governance of CASs in a province the size of Ontario provides a level of local accountability and responsiveness that could not be achieved through a model in which services were directly delivered and administered by government. Strong governance by CAS Boards is the critical link in optimizing local accountability to the community on one hand, with accountability to the province as funder, on the other hand.

Strong CAS Board governance is also the critical link in enabling MCYS and CASs to realize the respective roles described in Section 4.3 and a relationship between CASs and MCYS that is based on clear expectations, targets and measurable results. With strong local governance, MCYS will be able to focus more exclusively on system issues, integration and planning while CASs focus on strategy, planning and service delivery at the local level. With the more efficient, results-oriented governance at both the MCYS and CAS level, better outcomes for children and youth and a more sustainable system will result. In moving to strengthen CAS governance, there are many strengths on which to build. Over the past decade, increasing attention has been placed on strengthening the governance of public and not-for-profit sector organizations. There is more information than ever – and more examples than ever, many of them found in CAS — of what good governance looks like in publicly funded organizations. In 2012, with the support and encouragement of the Commission, the OACAS established a Governance Advisory Committee which will support CASs across Ontario to strengthen governance practices. The Committee has designed a multi-year project with three objectives:

- Achieve clarity of role by defining the respective roles and responsibilities of MCYS, OACAS and CASs in system and local governance.
- Build organizational performance capacity and promote accountability by leveraging the new province-wide performance indicators to drive more focused governance and ongoing improvements.
- Champion leading governance practice by creating a toolbox of resources for CAS boards relating to governance best practices, with a near-term emphasis on tools to support ED/CEO compensation, performance and succession planning.

This project will help realize the new Accountability Framework described in this report. New mechanisms such as the province-wide performance indicators, statistical neighbours, cyclical reviews, and CAS accountability agreements will all work together to better inform and strengthen the capacity of CAS boards in fulfilling their governance role. The Commission urges OACAS and the sector to continue to actively move forward in the governance project and urges MCYS to continue to support and inform this project**.

9.3 Streamlining Existing Accountability and Audit Processes

The overarching goal of a more coherent streamlined framework of accountability will not be served by introducing new mechanism alone, a message which the Commission has conveyed consistently since its inception. The MCYS has taken steps to address the administrative burden, with the establishment of a Gateway and early efforts at streamlining processes such as Crown Ward reviews and Licensing. To take forward the accountability framework recommended in this report, further rationalization is necessary:

- The multi-year plans and focus on results reflected in the Accountability Agreements and the proposed set of PIs, could replace much of the **service volume and activity information required in the quarterly reports**. The new funding approach would also reduce the need for information to feed the funding factors;
- The cyclical reviews could be designed to satisfy the requirements of the **Crown Ward reviews and agency licensing audits**. We understand that these are statutory mechanisms, but there seems to be some scope for meeting this duty through the reviews as well as exploring the scope for making legislative change.

The strength of the new framework, and the compelling case for streamlining around single points of accountability for clearly defined standards, also reinforces the need to:

- stem the flow of additional standards and reporting on an ad hoc basis, and
- carefully scrutinize existing requirements such as:
  - Children in Care Standards
  - Child Protection standards
  - Serious occurrence reporting

Introducing new mechanisms for accountability between MCYS and CASs, heightens the importance of making progress on the Commission's recommendations on reducing administrative burden.

9.4 Shared Services for Improving Evidence and Quality in Child Welfare

The approach to accountability and improvement recommended in this report will require more capacity across the system for knowledge exchange, data analysis, benchmarking, applied research and improvement support. Currently this capacity is unevenly distributed across CAS, in disparate independent organizations such as Practice and Research Together, the Child Welfare Institute, university research centres and various divisions of MCYS). Our experience in introducing performance indicators has led us to conclude that these arrangements are not good enough for the knowledge-rich environment facing CAS now and in the future.

Therefore as part of its work on Shared Services, the Commission is recommending that Quality/Performance Improvement be included as part of the Shared Services Initiative, developed and managed on a province-wide basis.[70] It is neither necessary nor desirable to maintain separate Quality functions in every CAS across the province. Pooling resources will enhance the concentration of expertise, make a more professional quality function available to all CASs, deliver greater value for money and allow for knowledge exchange. Consequently, the accountability framework outlined in this paper will have an organizational "home" in the sector.

9. 5 MCYS Structure and Capacity

Leadership and responsibility for this Accountability Framework for Ontario child welfare rests with the Ministry and, as it integrates more closely with other services for children, across government as a whole. The Ministry will want to ensure that its child-focused vision infuses value through the system and attracts support for the stronger strategic role it must play, in providing smart policy, system design, accountability, and resource stewardship. The Accountability Framework that the Commission is recommending has implications for how the Ministry is organized, the role it plays in the system, its policy-making and implementation, the way it does business, and the skills and capacity required of its workforce. Some of what we say here about the Ministry is also relevant for the culture, capacity and organization of local CAS; but the commitment to change has to start at the top.

The direction of travel the Commission is advocating supports broader government initiatives on 'transformation' and many of the recommendations of the Report of the Drummond Commission. It echoes some of the enduring principles from 're-inventing' government[71] which many around the world continue to embrace as a touchstone for transformation in response to a fast changing world and an uncertain economic context. These principles include: aiming to steer rather than row (i.e. focus on the strategic and devolve the operations), empowering rather than owning, delivering on mission and results rather than enforcing rules and controlling inputs, giving priority to prevention rather than cure. Principles not easily put into practice but valuable place markers in tough times.

Getting the Right Functions and Structures

In reflecting about top ministry structures, we have drawn on current thinking about public administration that has moved on from traditional theories about the separation of policy and administration. Seeking to get the right links between policy, politics, implementation and outcomes is today's challenge. Jocelyne Bourgon, President Emeritus of the Canada School of Public Service, sums up her experience: "We learned that policy formulation and policy implementation are an integrated

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[70] CPSCW. (2012). *Re-configuration of Ontario's Child Welfare Sector - Shared Services*.
[71] Osborne, D. and Gaebler, T. (1992). *Reinventing Government*. New York: Addison Wesley Publishing Co.

and interactive process of discussion involving both policy makers and administrators."[72] Similar thinking runs through the U.K.'s 2012 Policy on Civil Service Reform, "Implementing policy should never be separate from making it. Successful outcomes depend on designing policy with clear objectives, creating realistic timetables and professional project planning. Policy that is difficult to implement wastes time and money."[73] The processes and outcome of the policy process are as important as the letter of the law or intended policy purpose. So structures designed to provide clarity and focus with single points of accountability, but are aligned in response to feedback, are key to achieving better governance, policy and delivering better results.

The strategic direction of policy for child welfare is set and broadly supported; the challenge now lies in policy implementation. This stage of the policy process requires a tight integration between careful design of policy and metrics, target-setting, data collection and analysis, design of smart metrics and service improvement.

Any structure can be made to work with the right culture, effective working relationships, and good will, but as the Ministry develops its next three-year strategy now is an opportunity to consider the structures required for delivery. Large complex bureaucracies are inevitably challenged to provide sustained focus and simple structures, as new units are set up for new projects, divisions of labour are increased, functions are separated and multiple tiers of hierarchy made necessary. A large province like Ontario needs some decentralized presence to work with local agencies, and deal with the inevitable challenge of issues management.

The Ministry's arrangements for managing these challenges needs to be continually assessed in terms of its role, current priorities and resource realities, and changes in structure made whenever necessary. Practical project and program management systems are needed to deploy effort and resources efficiently to ensure results are delivered to time, cost and quality requirements. Single points of responsibility need to be established for specific policy priorities and targets, and held to account for results.

With a strategic corporate centre which exercises more effective accountability for results and improvement, the Regional Office should become more of an enabler, facilitating effective central-local exchanges of relevant information and not an additional tier of approvals requiring reports.

Policy: Made for Implementation, Informed by Evidence, Executed with Transparency

Since the introduction of the Transformation Agenda, child welfare can point to an impressive record of improvement – relatively fewer children requiring out of home care, shorter lengths of stays in care, more permanency. As we argue in the Commission's report on Scope, to take these trends to the next step will require a tighter policy focus and clearing away the obstacles that are currently undermining progress. High quality policy-making is required, designed with an eye on implementation and drawing on a wide range of views and expertise, informed by data and knowledge of how the system works and what needs to be done differently to make it work better.

Playing its role in the Commission's vision for a 'self-improving' system for child welfare, the Ministry needs to have adaptive capacity – investing in horizon scanning, changing conditions, taking action in real time, supporting innovations, correcting its actions through feedback and learning. As

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[72] Bourgon, J. (2007). Responsive, Responsible and Respected Government. *International Review of Administrative Sciences,* 73, 1: 7-26.

[73] P. 18 The Civil Service Reform Plan (June 2012), HMSO, London. http://resources.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Civil-Service-Reform-Plan-acc-final.pdf

accountability for results and resources is strengthened in the relationship with CAS, the Ministry will want to ensure that it is setting itself as an example of the practice it expects from others. Building on its results-based planning, it will want to identify the measures by which its responsibility for performance in child welfare can be assessed and improvement managed.

Skills, Capacity and Culture

A system that is more strategic, provides tighter direction over a few priorities, and relies more on metrics and knowledge to manage and improve requires people in the Ministry at every level who have the skills required. As the Ministry is required to develop more performance and outcome-based approaches to system management in the years to come, quantitative and evaluative skills will be ever more critical.

Ever tightening resources, pressure for stronger accountability and a growing appetite for learning, require staff to be rewarded for innovating and delivering results. Many will be required to have project management and data analysis skills. The system of accountability will require that staff stay long enough in their role to take responsibility from project initiation to completion.   To attract and retain highly skilled, IT-literate people, the Ministry needs to be seen as *the* place to work for everyone who wants to make a difference for vulnerable children – modern, less hierarchical, more focused on results than rules. We appreciate that the OPS is well aware of these change management challenges, and the need to continually assess their implications for staff and ensure the right Human Resource strategies are in place. We add our support to the importance and urgency of such initiatives.

Building capacity for a Self-improving system: recommendation 6

a) MCYS should commit to a model of self-improvement for the child welfare system, and make explicit the part played by its new "Framework of Accountability" that the Commission recommends be published without delay.

b) The Deputy Minister of MCYS should review the functions and capacity of the Ministry's corporate and regional offices and introduce the changes necessary for them to carry out their role effectively and efficiently.

c) The OACAS Governance Advisory Committee should implement its plans for strengthening CAS governance, including Boards' capacity to use data for better governance and improvement.

d) MCYS should increase its effort to streamline existing accountability and auditing processes to align with the new Framework recommended by the Commission – making regulatory changes where necessary.

e) The system's requirements for research, data and improvement services to support this evidence-based approach to accountability should be determined as a matter of urgency and the resources reorganized to deliver the capacity required.

f) These services, which are referred to, as "Quality and Improvement Services" should be a priority for implementing the Commission's recommendations on Shared Services.

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10. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE PRIORITIES FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

RECOMMENDATIONS

Accountability Framework

MCYS should introduce a new Framework of Accountability – that enables responsible and responsive governance and secures improvement by:

a) Aligning MCYS, CASs and OACAS roles and responsibilities with those outlined by the Commission;

b) Publishing a Framework for Accountability in Child Welfare, which brings greater coherence and transparency to the system founded on the principles and roles provided by the Commission;

c) Making the changes necessary to align existing policy and practice with this framework through the mechanisms outlined by the Commission;

d) Determining the features of a distinctive Accountability Framework for Aboriginal Child Welfare as part of the agenda of the Strategic Forum that the Ministry should establish with Aboriginal leaders to develop a new strategy and approach for Aboriginal Child Welfare, consistent with those outlined by the Commission.

Strategic Planning

MCYS should design and implement a multi-year strategic planning and target setting process, in collaboration with the sector, in order to set clear directions for more child-focused programs and services across government and its local delivery network. The provisions of such a planning framework are outlined in the Commission's *A New Approach to Accountability and System Management* report and include:

a) An Ontario Strategy for Children's Services developed by a new cross-ministerial Deputy Minister's Forum and led by the Deputy Minister of Children and Youth Services, with full support of the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Premier and Cabinet;

b) A 'Supporting Children Strategy' that aligns the scope, policy and priorities for the programs for which MCYS is directly accountable, including a child welfare strategy;

c) Local Children's Service Strategies and Plans developed for CASs with their community partners;

d) The introduction of Children's Services Accountability Agreements between local CAS boards and MCYS to make clear what is expected of the Ministry and local agencies in delivering these strategies and plans;

e) Accountability Agreements will include requirements to identify all Aboriginal children served, to engage with Bands, and otherwise recognize the unique needs and relationships of Aboriginal children.

Performance Indicators (PIs)

In the short run it is recommended that:

a) The first generation of Performance Indicators (24) be adopted and continue to be collected in Phase 2, clarifying and correcting the problems of data definition and quality, wherever practical – but not making any fundamental changes that would impede comparison or progress;

b) Phase 2 of the PI project be rolled out to all CASs, led by OACAS and executed by OCANDS as in Phase 1;

c) The Statistical Neighbours Model should be further developed as performance data from CASs becomes available from phase 1 and 2 and used for benchmarking performance;

d) CASs be required to collect complete, accurate data about Aboriginal children, immediately;

e) CASs be required to collect accurate data about children's cultural and racial backgrounds in a standard set of categories such as those used in the Canadian long form census (2006).

In the medium term it is recommended that:

f) Aboriginal specific outcomes and indicators be developed through the strategic forum that the Commission has recommended in its Aboriginal child welfare report, building on the consultations and the PI working paper produced by the Commission;

g) OACAS develop standard instruments for all CASs to collect client and stakeholder feedback, for implementation from April 2013;

h) MCYS introduce public reporting of a selection of these performance indicators, to demonstrate results against the targets it sets for the system in its strategic and results-based plans;

i) Additional indicators and measures be developed to respond to important areas of service performance and agency capacity that were not addressed in the first set, for example: CAS governance, community and family-based services for ongoing cases, transformation policy (i.e. differential response, alternative dispute resolution), the quality of placement resources; and

j) Performance indicators be used to strengthen accountability and system management, and foster a culture of curiosity and learning across the sector and MCYS, as set out in the Commission's proposed Accountability Framework (to enhance governance, inform multi-year plans and cyclical reviews).

Cyclical Agency Reviews

MCYS should introduce a program of agency reviews to monitor how well CASs are serving children and families and their prospects for continuing to improve.

That the design of these reviews be:

a) Conducted with a professional management framework focused on capacity for improvement, not compliance with processes and standards;

b) Guided by clear criteria, backed up by performance indicators and other forms of evidence, developed in partnership with the sector;

c) Conducted by mixed disciplined teams led by external consultants and composed of experienced local managers, consultants and senior policy analysts.

Making Performance Matter

a) CASs should report their performance against expectations set out in their Accountability Agreements with MCYS and produce plans to address areas where improvement is required to meet targets;

b) MCYS should develop a user-friendly format for comparative reporting of CASs' performance on targets agreed in their Accountability Agreements, and the conclusions and actions arising from agency reviews;

c) OACAS should develop further the Statistical Neighbours Model to facilitate benchmarking between CASs, drawing on CASs' performance data as well as the socio-demographic factors used by the Commission;

d) MCYS should implement a detailed set of provisions for recognizing CASs' successes and addressing weaknesses, to realize the 'differential response' to achieving performance results and improvement;

e) The success of the new Framework of Accountability approach should be secured by fostering transparency, curiosity and learning, rather than handing out sanctions and blame; and

f) Following the full and effective implementation of the Commission's recommendations, no financial incentives should be considered until there is full confidence in the data and judgments being made about CASs.

Building the capacity

a) MCYS should commit to a model of self-improvement for the child welfare system, and make explicit the part played by its new "Framework of Accountability" that the Commission recommends be published without delay;

b) The Deputy Minister of MCYS should review the functions and capacity of the Ministry's corporate and regional offices and introduce the changes necessary for them to carry out their role effectively and efficiently;

c) The OACAS Governance Advisory Committee should implement its plans for strengthening CAS governance, including Boards' capacity to use data for better governance and improvement;

d) MCYS should increase its effort to streamline existing accountability and auditing processes to align with the new Framework recommended by the Commission – making regulatory changes where necessary;

e) The system's requirements for research, data and improvement services to support this evidence-based approach to accountability should be determined as a matter of urgency, and the resources reorganized to deliver the capacity required; and

f) These services, which are referred to, as "Quality and Improvement Services" should be a priority for implementing the Commission's recommendations on Shared Services.

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Interviews with Staff in Other Jurisdictions

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Alberta – Alberta Child and Family Division, Ministry Human Services (responsible for Child and Family Services Council for Quality Assurance): Mark Hattori (Assistant Deputy Minister), Nancy Reynolds, Joni Brodziak, Diane Thompson, Maureen Mooney, Fred Anderson. Personal Communication March 15, 2012.

Connecticut – Connecticut Children and Family Services, Allon Kalisher (Regional Administrator, Region 3 and former Director of Office for Research and Evaluation). Personal Communication March 29 2012.

Health Quality Ontario – Nizar Ladak, (Vice President and Chief Operating Officer). Personal Communication April 12 2012

Ministry of Education, Ontario – Eric Ward, Barnabus Emenogu, Julin Yang and Carem Quintero, Education Statistics and Analysis, Ministry of Education. Personal Communication November 16, 2011. Lucie McCartney, Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, Ministry of Education. Personal Communication January 25 2012.

New York – Office of Child and Family Services: Claire Strohmeyer (Director Continuous Quality Improvement). Personal Communication February 2, 2012.

Tennessee – Youth Villages, Pat Lawler, Founder and Chief Executive Officer. Personal Communication March 16 2012.

Quebec – Jean-Pierre Hotte, secretaire d'office, Directeur General, association des centres de jeunesses de quebec.; Nico TrocméTrocmé and Toni Esposito, Centre for research on children and families, school of social work McGill University.

England – Prof Eileen Munro, Munro Review of Child Protection, Professor of Social Policy, London School of Social Policy, England.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A#

Using the Child Welfare Service Mapping Framework

QUESTIONS FOR THE <u>MUST</u> PROVIDE CATEGORY

- Are we adequately meeting needs in the *must provide* category? Where are the gaps?

- Are the "right people" getting the services? In the "right amounts"? How do we know? How do our service levels compare against benchmarks from other CASs like us?

QUESTIONS FOR THE <u>MAY</u> AND <u>SHOULD NOT</u> PROVIDE CATEGORIES

- Are there unmet needs in our community that are placing pressure on the "may" and "should not" programs and services?

- Are there *current* alternatives to delivering any of these services in partnership or by referring them to a community provider? Have we exhausted all options for these services to be provided by another agency?

- What circumstances necessitate us to deliver these services? Gap filling? Other reasons? What would be the impact of us discontinuing or reducing our role in these areas? Are there alternative funding sources could be pursued (by our CAS or by community providers)? What support do we require from MCYS to pursue?

- Is our current role in the *may provide* category the ideal role? Are there alternatives that should be pursued *in the future?* How could we support the development of community capacity to meet these needs?

OTHER QUESTIONS

- Do services in the "other funding sources" category complement our core mission? How stable are the funding sources? What would be the impact on our core mission if these services could no longer be supported? Are there new funding sources or new complementary services that we should pursue?

- How is our community changing in terms of the population and its needs? What changes do we anticipate in the nature and volume of needs for children and families in our community? How will this impact the "*must", "may", and "should not"* services?

EXAMPLE OF REPORTING TEMPLATE FOR JOINT AREA REVIEWS OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES