



Canadian Coalition
for the Rights of Children
Coalition canadienne
pour les droits des enfants

Issue 7, April 2010

Newsletter

Complaints Process Moves Ahead

The UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution to begin drafting a new Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Its purpose is to establish a complaints mechanism for children's rights. An Intergovernmental Working Group will negotiate a draft for presentation to the full council in the fall of 2011. An international coalition of NGOs will facilitate civil society input in the drafting process.

In Canada, the CCRC plans to meet with government officials to discuss Canada's concerns about a complaints process. A CCRC committee, chaired by board member Sara Austin, will channel input into the drafting process and provide progress reports on this initiative.

Updates will be posted to our website.
For further information, contact Sara_Austin@worldvision.ca.

Upcoming Event:

Mother's Day Rally for Child Care

Saturday, May 8, 2010
2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Parliament Hill, Ottawa

Also related web-based
activities.

Organized by several
groups.

For details, see:

www.womensequality.ca

CCRC Membership

You are invited to become a member of the CCRC for 2010. The board thanks the organizations and individuals who faithfully support this work. We invite others to consider supporting collaborative efforts to advance children's rights by joining the coalition.

A membership form is available on our website. You can also contact any one of the board members listed on our website.

MP Moves to Improve the Way Canada Implements International Human Rights

MP Wayne Marston took the first step to have parliament give direction on how Canada will implement international human rights obligations in Canada. He presented a motion at the Human Rights Sub-committee that calls for review and reform of current mechanisms for implementation, monitoring, and reporting. Major reform was recommended during Canada's first Universal Periodic Review at the Human Rights Council. This is a step toward a long-standing goal of the CCRC and other human rights groups. We appreciate MP Marston's leadership on this matter within parliament.

Canada made commitments to improve its implementation mechanisms for all international human rights agreements one year ago, as part of the Universal Periodic Review process, but nothing has been done so far. The CCRC has been active in efforts to raise the profile of this in the House of Commons and work for improvements. Watch for progress reports on our website.

Children's Rights in Parliament

The CCRC is pursuing the following children's issues on the parliamentary agenda:

1. A National Injury Prevention Strategy

The CCRC welcomes this initiative because injury is a major cause of death among children in Canada. We would like to see the scope of the strategy broadened beyond accidental, physical injuries to include injuries that result from maltreatment and violence against children. A broader national strategy could contribute to prevention of violence against children as well as reduce accidental injuries.

2. Proposed Changes to Youth Criminal Justice Act

The CCRC is concerned about a shift from rehabilitation of young offenders to adult punishments in proposed changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act (Bill C-4). As a first step we would like to see the results of an extensive consultation on the effectiveness of the current act tabled in the House of Commons. We believe the proposed changes do not reflect evidence from those who work in the field of youth justice or available research into effective ways to prevent youth crime. If the proposed changes are not based on evidence of effectiveness, they should be withdrawn, because there is potential harm for young people in some of the proposals. In addition, some of the proposed changes are contrary to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and well-established international standards for youth justice. The CCRC hopes the bill will die on the order paper; if it moves forward, we will address specific provisions of the bill. Check the website for CCRC actions as this develops. At the same time, more important is the evidence that young people are more recipients of violence than perpetrators of it. What should be on the parliamentary agenda is a National Strategy to Prevent Violence Against All Children.

3. Aboriginal Children

The Throne Speech contained promises of action on violence against aboriginal women and children and access to clean water on reserves. These are steps forward. We are waiting for details. The CCRC will continue to advocate for equitable treatment of aboriginal children in funding for child welfare and quick resolution of the appeal before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. Full implementation of Jordan's Principle is another practical step that parliament could take for Canada's aboriginal children.

4. Children's Commissioner

Bill C-418, to establish a national children's commissioner, was reintroduced in this session. It is a private member's bill sponsored by MP Marc Garneau. The CCRC advocates that all parties support this measure and make it happen soon.

5. Senate Revives Bill S-204

Bill S-204 in the Senate would make all forms of violence against children illegal by repealing section 43 of the Criminal Code. This proposal has been on parliament's agenda for years now. Meanwhile other countries, such as New Zealand, have moved ahead of Canada, and report positive results.

Children's Rights and Polygamy

The CCRC has intervener status for the upcoming hearing of a reference by the BC Government on the constitutionality of the criminal code provisions that prohibit polygamy, before the BC Supreme Court.

We will focus exclusively on the duty of governments involved to protect the rights of children involved. In preparation we are compiling national and international research on impacts for children; this includes research on relevant provisions of the Convention, including traditional practices and religious rights.

If you know of any research that might be relevant, please contact Kathy Vandergrift at kathyvandergrift@rogers.com.

Rights of Children with Disabilities are Recognized

Canada ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in March. This convention, promoted by the CCRC, has more specific measures for children with disabilities than the provisions in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The challenge now will be implementation.

For more information about the Coalition, visit our website:
www.rightsofchildren.ca