A Call to Action: UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Making Domestic Implementation Real and Meaningful

March 11, 2011, marks the first anniversary of Canada’s ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Canada is a State Party to the CRPD and is committed to fully implementing its obligations. The CRPD is the first international human rights instrument of the 21st century. It reaffirms that persons with disabilities throughout the world should enjoy the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Government of Canada and the Canadian disability community both played leading roles in the creation of the CRPD. As a result, the CRPD has a Canadian feel to its content and implementation.

By ratifying the Convention, Canada has reaffirmed its commitment to take progressive steps to improve the living conditions of persons with disabilities. Now is the time for action. It’s time to take the practical steps necessary to implement the CRPD and to make substantial progress toward building an inclusive and accessible Canada.

We call on the Government of Canada to take the following actions in order to deliver on the intent of the CRPD, begin implementing its obligations, and fulfill the obligations laid out in the CRPD.

- Develop national mechanisms for implementation, monitoring and reporting.
- Establish a high-level federal focal point and coordination mechanism to implement the CRPD.
- Demonstrate federal policy leadership on key priorities of the disability community to better serve persons with disabilities.
- Create a parliamentary committee for input and leadership.
- Ensure an independent monitoring mechanism to measure progress and impact.
- Establish a process for Canada’s first Comprehensive Report to the United Nations on progress made. This report will be submitted in 2012.

A Robust Participation Strategy

Design a robust participation strategy to ensure that Canada meets its obligations in Article 4 of the CRPD: “to consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations” in implementing the CRPD.

A National Framework for Implementation

Design a National Framework for Implementation, or a National Action Plan, to ensure that Canada meets its obligations in Article 33(2) of the CRPD and to provide the vision and overarching framework for successful implementation of the CRPD. A detailed implementation action plan would identify necessary mechanisms for collaboration, benchmarks for monitoring and reporting, and strategies for priority areas for action in the disability community that has identified, including:

- Access to disability supports: Disability supports are the foundation for meaningful citizenship and effective participation in all aspects of life. Many articles of the CRPD contain elements of disability supports.
- Poverty alleviation: Canada’s disability rates face shameful rates of poverty. Canada must find the mechanisms and political will to address this problem.
- Labour force participation: Canadians with disabilities are under-represented in the labour market because of inadequate accessibility, low rates of poverty. Canada must find the mechanisms and political will to address this problem.

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