

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (CCCABC), in partnership with the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC), is proud to announce our new project, “Child Care is a Right.”

Our child care advocacy began as a central issue of the women’s rights movements, so it’s natural for us to return to our roots and focus on child care from a women’s, children’s and family rights position.

The core of the project is to explore Canada’s international treaty obligation to women, children and families as they pertain to child care. We are focusing on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and related General Comment #7, the Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (check our websites for links to these documents – www.cccabc.bc.ca / www.ccaac.ca).

Initially our focus will be to engage in the UN review process of Canada’s obligations under the CRC – scheduled for 2011.

Does the UN really care what we have to say?

The answer is a resounding yes! While the process may be a bit difficult to navigate, the UN expects organizations like ours to inform its work of reviewing Canada’s record and to suggest questions that should be asked of Canada’s government representatives.

“The Committee on the Right of the Child seeks specific, reliable and objective information from NGOs in order to obtain a serious and independent assessment of the progress and difficulties encountered in the implementation of the Convention.”

(A Guide for Non-Governmental Organizations Reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Third Edition)

So, it is our responsibility, as concerned and engaged citizens of Canada, to be part of the review process and demand the rights of children are upheld in our country.

What’s the process?

CRC is monitored through reports submitted by countries (called States) on a regular basis (5 years). Canada has already submitted its 3rd and 4th periodic reports on the CRC for the period January 1998 – December 2007, which can be found at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/future.htm>

A committee of international experts meets in Geneva, Switzerland three times a year to review reports from various countries and examine whether each country is abiding by the agreements of the treaties.

The CRC states clearly that it is the responsibility of Canadian governments (provincial/territorial, federal and municipal) to provide assistance to working parents including quality child care services. It is our job to tell the UN Committee whether our government(s) reports reflect the evidence and lived experience of Canadians and whether Canada is fulfilling this and other obligations.

Review committees (called pre-sessional working groups) meet prior to the formal meeting with each country. NGOs can submit a brief and ask for permission to present their brief, in person, to the committee in Geneva. This is also a time when NGOs can informally meet with members of the committee to provide them with as much background as possible regarding the real situations Canadians are facing. (Each country tries to paint as rosy a picture as possible to the UN.)

If our fund raising efforts are successful, we are hoping to send a delegation of child care advocates to Geneva to present our brief in person, and to do everything we can to ensure that the committee hears the true story about child care in Canada.

The pre-sessional working group also decides what issues they will raise with each country, often preparing a list of questions that the country is expected to answer. NGOs, like CCCABC and CCAAC, have an opportunity to influence the questions the review committee asks by submitting a list of questions. For instance we might suggest that the pre-sessional working group ask Canada “to provide a rationale for cancelling the bilateral child care agreements” (as of March 31, 2007).

Three to six months following the meeting of this pre-sessional working group, the country is slated for its formal review (called the plenary session) where issues raised by the pre-sessional working group are discussed. Canada provides its answers to the questions, updates its report and/or defends its policies. After this plenary session, the Committee prepares concluding observations which are made public for citizens of the country to examine.

Project Timelines

The Review Committee has preliminarily scheduled its examination of Canada’s reports in its 57th session in May/June 2012. The pre-session working group will take place in February 2012. NGOs must submit their reports 3 months before the pre-session. For us, that means November 2011.

CCCABC and CCAAC take action

While reports to the Committee usually address national issues, our brief will focus on both national and provincial (BC) issues.

Briefs carry more weight when they are endorsed by other NGO groups. So, in the fall of 2010 we will contact organizations who care about child care and ask them to endorse and support our brief.

We are also hoping to develop a series of public education “tools” to help others understand and spread the word, that child care really is our Right.

Child care activists have been advocating for over 30 years and still there is no national plan for a comprehensive system in Canada. Since our own government(s) won’t listen, it’s time for us to take our demands to the international stage. We cannot sit back and allow Canada to rank last in its commitment to our children.

What can you do?

- 1. Contact us at info@cccabc.bc.ca if you think your organizations would endorse our brief.**
- 2. Join CCCABC. The more voices we have, the more powerful our submission will be.**
- 3. Visit www.weneedchildcare.ca and post your personal or family story about child care. The more examples we can provide from “real life” Canadians, the more legitimate our submission will be.**
- 4. Spread the word about our project. Encourage others to speak out for our human rights – including child care. Our children are counting on us.**