

CANADA RATIFIES HISTORIC UN TREATY ON DISABILITY RIGHTS

New York, NY and Toronto, ON – March 11, 2010 – Today, at the United Nations headquarters in New York, Canada ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This is a historic and profound moment in our country's history. It is Canada's declaration to Canadians and the international community that disability is at last to be recognized as a matter of fundamental human rights – at home in Canada and internationally. By ratifying this first international treaty that comprehensively recognizes the rights of persons with disabilities, Canada binds our governments to its implementation. The Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) applauds the Government of Canada for this landmark decision, and indeed all Provincial/Territorial Governments for their support in taking this step. The Convention creates a new and lasting foundation on which to build an inclusive and accessible Canada where rights can no longer be diminished on the basis of disability.

“Across the country, Canadians with disabilities and their families are celebrating,” said CACL President, Bendina Miller who participated in the ratification ceremony at the UN Headquarters in NY this morning with the Honourable Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Foreign Affairs. “This is a historic moment we should be proud of. Canada played a lead role in developing the Convention and is recognized as an international leader on disability and human rights. By ratifying the Convention, Canada commits to holding itself accountable to making real the rights of persons with disabilities. We are grateful for the efforts of the many people involved in getting us here today, including those in the government of Canada, from all the political parties, and our many partners and advocates in civil society. We are excited to continue to work alongside governments in Canada on implementing and monitoring the Convention.”

Michael Bach, CACL Executive Vice-President, reflected on the development of the Convention: “The Convention was influenced by a Canadian perspective and is a document that all Canadians should be proud of. Canadian concepts about inclusive education, living in the community and supported decision-making infuse the Convention. The Convention also recognizes the valuable role that families play in making rights a reality for their family members with disabilities. The Convention is also unique for the way it was developed. It is the first time in UN history that people affected by a treaty were actively engaged in the development of its text. It is a Convention that is informed by the lived experience of people with disabilities and their families.”

Moving forward, the Convention provides people with disabilities and their families a new tool to promote and advance the rights of people with disabilities and to building an inclusive and accessible Canada. Miller commented that: “The Convention is much more than a listing of entitlements. It is a road map that explains where, why and how the rights of people with disabilities have been neglected and what steps are required to realize human rights for people with disabilities in meaningful ways.”

Bach is optimistic that, “ratification provides Canada an opportunity to play a critical leadership role domestically and internationally on key issues in the Convention. The 2010 Federal Budget has already shown that Canada is providing leadership on key disability issues it advanced in the Convention. We hope to see Canada on the Committee of Experts associated with this Convention and demonstrating leadership on removing barriers and securing the full inclusion of people with disabilities.”

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About the Canadian Association for Community Living

The Canadian Association for Community Living is a Canada-wide association of family members and others working to advance the human rights and inclusion of persons of all ages who have an intellectual disability.

Founded in 1958 by parents of children with intellectual disabilities who wanted supports and services within the community instead of in institutions, CACL has become one of Canada's ten largest charitable organizations, and has grown into a federation of 10 provincial and three territorial associations comprising of 420 local associations and over 40,000 members.

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