

Fall 1999 National Consultation of the Human Rights Linkages Initiative

INTRODUCTION

A national consultation on human rights was held November 26-27, 1999 in Ottawa. It was convened by the Honourable Lois M. Wilson, Senator. The consultation was organised in collaboration with Iris Almeida, from the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development (ICHRDD); Tom Clark, from the Inter-Church Committee for Refugees (ICCR); Bruce Porter, from the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA); and Laurie Wiseberg, from Human Rights Internet. These five individuals formed the Ad Hoc Organising Committee for the consultation.

Three discussion papers were produced for the consultation, and sent ahead of time to participants:

- "The Protection of Social and Economic Rights under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*," by Martha Jackman and Bruce Porter (Annex 1);
- "Civil Society Participation in the Process of Reporting and Monitoring Implementation of International Human Rights: The Domestic Dimension," by Pierre Bosset (Annex 2); and
- "Implementing International Human Rights Commitments: The Difficulties of Divided Jurisdiction," by David Schneiderman (Annex 3).

The 1998 *Concluding Observations* on Canada by the United Nations' Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the 1999 *Concluding Observations* on Canada by the United Nations' Human Rights Committee (Annex 4) were also sent to the participants to prepare for the Consultation.

The consultation was attended by invitation only. Difficult choices had to be made in selecting from the large number of competent human rights activists and academics in the country, but limited resources forced us to restrict the number of participants. Participants were selected on the basis of their expertise in the field of human rights, and with a view to bringing together as inclusive and regionally representative a group as possible. Among the constituencies represented were: aboriginal peoples, refugees, women, visible minorities, disabled people, religious communities, the poor and the homeless, prisoners, victims of torture or war crimes, children, workers, and the development community. A total of 44 participants (including 24 women) attended the Consultation. The complete list of participants is available in Annex 5, with their contact information.