

discussions with the new Chief Commissioner and his colleagues concerning the findings set forth in this report.

B) Central Definitions

Age and discrimination are among the central ideas defining the scope of this study. It is appropriate, therefore, to discuss them at the outset.

The committee is aware that limitations of human rights are experienced by young as well as older Canadians. As well, people can suffer human rights deprivations on the grounds that they are "too old" even while they would normally still be seen as relatively young. The committee has, in view of these observations, noted human rights concerns of the young as an area for future study.

For practical reasons, the scope of the present study has been restricted to human rights issues related to advancing age. We have deliberately not limited the study to the concerns of people above a hard-and-fast age threshold. We have found, however, that advancing age is not associated with widespread problems below the age of 45. The study thus predominantly deals with those aged 45 - 65 (referred to below as the aging), and those over age 65 (referred to below as the elderly).

For the purposes of this study, discrimination is taken to refer to deliberate behaviour originating from prejudice, negative stereotyping, or bigotry, and involving consequences detrimental to people merely because of their membership in particular groups. The committee is aware of recent decisions by the Courts which would broaden this definition of discrimination to include practices or behaviour which unintentionally subject members of particular groups to adverse effects. Problems which can be addressed under this broadened definition can, however, also be addressed as human rights concerns. The committee has taken this latter approach so that the traditional focus of the idea of discrimination, on attitudes, can be retained.

The idea of discrimination has increasingly made its way into the thinking and conversation of ordinary Canadians. We believe that this is a positive development, but are concerned at a growing tendency to equate discrimination with virtually any form of unfair treatment. Discrimination, we would stress, is a particularly vicious form of unfairness. It denies fundamental human equality, which underlies all moral behaviour, and