

*Routine Proceedings*

root causes of discrimination against women, and we are profoundly disturbed at the depth of that discrimination and frequently at the horror of its manifestation.

In this battle to eliminate discrimination, the convention is the legal instrument setting out the basic standards necessary to achieve women's equality. It covers areas as wide-ranging as employment equity, equal access to education and health care, participation in public life and equal treatment before the law. Its adoption in 1979 represented the culmination of decades of work by women's organizations and by the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

Canada was proud to ratify this convention in 1981, recommitting itself nationally and internationally to the goal of eradicating discrimination against women in all its forms. As of today, 98 other nations have also pledged to embody and enforce its principles.

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In Canada as a society we see the necessity for economic self-sufficiency for women as fundamental to the elimination of discrimination. The ability to economically sustain oneself and one's family is as important to women as it is to men, not simply for survival but for pride, dignity, self-confidence and optimism for the future of one's children.

We also know that violence toward women and sexual harassment are linked at least in part to women's lack of economic self-sufficiency. Unhappily, our struggles to achieve equality and self-sufficiency have failed to eliminate the humiliating and tragic consequences of these most ancient and obscene forms of discrimination.

There is no clearly marked map which delineates the boundary where natural and healthy sexual tension between men and women begins to break down into offensive and demeaning behaviour. Men, as well as women, are struggling to redefine their relationships with each other so that the end result is sexual expression with dignity and mutual respect.

However, for too many still in our society as in other societies there is no boundary. There are still some men who view harassment and violence as their right and as their legitimate means of expressing superiority. It is, in other words, their right to discriminate against women. In recent days, we have been made more acutely aware than ever of where the aberrant form of that manifestation of this so-called right may lead.

The stark tragedy which we have been faced with in Canada can lead us to oversimplify the causes of the barriers we, as women, have still to overcome. It can reinforce our view of ourselves as constantly vulnerable, as perpetual victims.

Let us remember today, as we celebrate this tenth anniversary, that much has been done, that in every avenue of Canadian life, there is activity that is building a better life for all of us. Let us take pride in the fact that women have been the leaders in defining the means to eliminate discrimination and in promoting a broad social agenda that has been embraced by political parties of all stripes and that is changing the way we deal with each other. Let us remember as well that men as well as women must consciously, in their every day behaviour, seek to end the discrimination that diminishes all of us.

In February 1990, Canada will present its second progress report to the United Nations on the measures we have taken to implement the convention. Although much is still to be done, Canada can be proud of its record on women's rights. On the legislative front, the principles of the UN Convention have been embodied in Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Our employment equity legislation reflects the fundamental principle that business and employers, as well as governments, must become responsible for solutions to discrimination in the workplace. Proposed amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act will enhance maternity and parental benefits. We have put in place measures to enforce court-ordered support and maintenance payments and programs to encourage women entrepreneurs, to name a few, among a broad range of initiatives.

In addition, we are urging the provinces to examine women's training needs and health concerns with us and together we are working on the availability and affordability of child care.

There are urgent objectives still to be met. For example, obstacles remain much more acute among certain groups such as aboriginal women, immigrant women, visible minority women, disabled women, elderly women, and, as a government, we are paying particular attention to their needs and concerns.

As a signatory to the convention, Canada has also made a commitment to implement measures that enable parents to combine work and family obligations in new ways that deal with our new social forms, and here governments at all levels are developing strategies to prompt changes in attitudes, programs, services and