

12h15

Lunch, New Zealand Room, Parliamentary Restaurant

Around the table, your guests will include Minister Eggleton and Secretary of State Blondin-Andrew, as well, two representatives from civil society: Reverend Lois Wilson, Chairperson of the Board of the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development and Ernie Regher, Programme Director of Project Ploughshares (see attached guest list). At this time, you may wish to engage in a conversation about the Optional Protocol.

Canada has taken a strong position in pushing for an early adoption of the Draft Optional Protocol. As you know, Canada supports 18 as the minimum age of involvement in hostilities. The Department of National Defence is considering policies that might preclude placing individuals under the age of 18 in direct or indirect support of hostilities. On the age of recruitment, current Canadian legislation allow recruitment of persons aged 17 and 16 under certain conditions.

At the Child Soldiers Roundtable and in recent media interviews, you have spoken out in support of the NGO-led Coalition against the use of child soldiers. You are also supporting that Geneva-based Coalition through a \$50,000 dollar contribution.

You may want to ask the Minister of Defence to outline DND's position on recruitment. You may also want to solicit views around the table regarding the legislation of other countries towards recruitment and deployment of under 18 (see Child Soldier Brief).

POINTS TO REGISTER

- * LAST MONDAY (March 23) MY DEPARTMENT HOSTED A ROUNDTABLE ON CHILD SOLDIERS WITH LEADING NGO EXPERTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD. THEY ASKED CANADA TO JOIN IN A GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY-LED COALITION TO STOP THE USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS AND RAISE THE AGE OF RECRUITMENT INTO ARMED FORCES.
- * WHILE CANADA IS VERY INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROCESS, WE WILL FIRST HAVE TO REVIEW OUR CURRENT DOMESTIC SITUATION. WE ARE CURRENTLY EXAMINING THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK RELATED TO RECRUITMENT WITH A VIEW TO ADOPTING THE MEASURES NECESSARY TO BE IN A POSITION TO SUPPORT ACTIVELY THE OBJECTIVES OF THE COALITION.
- * IN THE MEANTIME, WE ARE PUTTING \$50,000 DOLLARS TOWARDS SUPPORTING THAT COALITION AND PREVENTING THE USE OF CHILDREN AS SOLDIERS IN THE WARS OF ADULTS.

After lunch, you will leave the delegation and re-unite with them for a joint meeting with the media.