

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is a central part of our Constitution. Laws passed by any level of government in Canada must ultimately be shown to meet the requirements of the Charter. This is an effective system of interlocking laws and institutions for guarding against human rights violations and correcting them when they do happen.

The Canadian Human Rights Commission, in support of the Charter, works to end instances of discrimination and to ensure that victims receive financial or other kinds of appropriate compensation. The Commission handles approximately 1500 complaints a year, and it tries to resolve each within nine months.

As stated in the Canadian Human Rights Act: "Every individual should have an equal opportunity with other individuals to make for himself or herself the life that he or she is able and wishes to have, consistent with his or her duties and obligations as a member of society."

We are a country that promotes harmonious labour-business-government relations. Canada is committed to bringing openness and transparency to government operations. Citizen engagement is essential to an informed and legitimate policy-making process. On nearly every facet of national policy we undertake extensive consultations with the public, including business, non-governmental organizations and citizens' groups.

For example, Canada's federal and provincial governments are working with representatives of our Aboriginal peoples to resolve disputes and address their needs. The new territory of Nunavut has been created, bringing self-government to Canada's Inuit with control over one fifth of Canada's land mass.

In northwestern British Columbia, the Nisga'a land claim has been resolved with a treaty that gives Aboriginal people almost 2000 square kilometres of land, a payment of \$196 million over 15 years, access to natural and economic resources, and self-government.

These agreements are only the beginning of our efforts to develop, with our Aboriginal peoples, a permanent resolution to their concerns. This is a process that will continue, because Canadians regret the injustices of the past and we want to keep making efforts to rectify them.

To ensure our society is liveable, Canada maintains high standards in its public health care, its legal and judicial system, its social services and its education system. Canadians are living longer, and Canada's life expectancy of 79 years is second only to Japan's. A key reason is that Canada's health insurance system is available to