

Chinese counterpart the same thing, and I continue to discuss these issues whenever I meet Chinese leaders such as Vice-Premier Zou Jiahua.

Of a different bilateral nature, but in many respects more important, is the area of development assistance. Indeed, development assistance is an increasingly important way of advancing human rights. Human rights projects, such as the strengthening of legislatures and independent judiciaries, are a major priority of our aid program.

In China, we are co-operating in legal reform areas related to justice, equity and participation. Examples of these areas include women's rights, labour laws, criminal law and employment equity. We are also working with China to improve the generation, circulation and dissemination of information and are endeavouring to strengthen civil society by improving the capacity of non-governmental organizations to engage in development activities.

We are focussing on such things as the transparency and accountability of government operations, public accounting and auditing, and public consultation mechanisms. We believe this approach will ultimately contribute to the development of the rule of law and the respect of human rights in China.

Our government is focussing on undertaking specific and progressive initiatives to engage decision makers at all levels in programs that facilitate positive changes in China. We are undertaking these multilateral, bilateral and development initiatives because we believe they are the right course of action. Our government is working diligently to help improve the human rights situation in China.

In particular, Canada has been working to promote human rights, good governance and the rule of law. A program between the University of British Columbia and Beijing University is preparing a plan to help reform China's criminal procedure to protect the rights of the accused. As well, the University of Ottawa's Human Rights Research and Education Centre and the Beijing University of International Law are helping to foster the development of joint research and education in the area of human rights, international law and human development in China. The Canadian and Chinese Bar Associations are organizing conferences on bar and legal practices in Canada.

Already in the planning stage are programs to improve the skills of women entrepreneurs, a statistical information management program and a project to support the equality of women in China. Canada will be supporting the development of the China Institute of Judges, and helping Chinese institutions to develop economic and social policy options.