

rights NGOs have the possibility of submitting “counter-reports” to the competent UN organ (or, on an informal basis, to individual members²¹). Counter-reports are usually valued for the balance they bring to the normally benign view of laws, programmes and policies presented in the official report. Canadian NGOs have made strategic use of the possibility of submitting counter-reports in the past. The presentation of these parallel reports - with NGO representatives being officially or unofficially present at certain committee sessions - have influenced the examination of Canada’s reports and, in some well-publicised cases, a committee’s concluding observations and comments.²²

Public funding for independent monitoring does exist, but so far only with respect to the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, ratified in 1991 by Canada.²³ Three federal departments contribute financially to a project initiated by the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children to monitor the implementation of the Convention in Canada. The objective of the project is to encourage broad social participation in the development of a monitoring framework.²⁴ In the course of the project, the Coalition is expected to submit a counter-report²⁵ to Canada’s second official report, due to be examined at the UN in the year 2000.

Provincial jurisdictions seem to lag behind in terms of encouraging civil society participation. No formal solicitation of NGO views is made prior to the preparation of reports - despite the fact that provincial laws, policies and programmes are just as susceptible of being criticised at the UN as their federal equivalents. As far as could be

²¹ Only the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Committee Against Torture officially solicit the views of NGOs.

²² See, e.g., the Concluding Observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, following the examination of Canada’s third periodic report under the Covenant (Economic and Social Council Document E/C.12/1/Add.31, 4 December 1998).

²³ *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), A/RES/44/25.

²⁴ CANADIAN COALITION FOR THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN, *Canada and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Developing a Monitoring Framework* (1997).

²⁵ The Coalition has announced 18 November 1999 as the launching date.