

NEWS

UNILATERAL DECLARATION OF CANADA AGAINST TORTURE

The honourable Charles Lapointe, Minister of State (External Relations), announces today that following the wish expressed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 32/64, the Government of Canada has decided to make a unilateral declaration of its continued compliance with the "Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment".

The unilateral declaration, conveyed in a note addressed to the Secretary General of the United Nations, confirms solemnly the intention of the Canadian authorities to continue to act in conformity with the Declaration. This moral commitment entails no change in present Canadian law or practice which continue to be consistent with the principles contained in the Declaration of the United Nations.

The UN Declaration against torture, which

was adopted by the General Assembly on 9 December 1975, does not include legally binding obligations for States. To date, over thirty governments, including the Canadian Government, have declared unilaterally that the competent authorities within their respective territories intend to act in conformity with the provisions contained in the Declaration.

The Government of Canada intends, in addition, to continue to work within the UN Commission on Human Rights for the early completion of the drafting of an

"international convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment" that has been under consideration in Geneva since 1978. Canada believes it is important that the international community provide itself with the legal instruments necessary for the effective suppression of the practice of torture in the world.

HELP WANTED

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THE P.E.I. ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

During the past ten years, the federal and provincial (except for Alberta and British Columbia) governments have established advisory councils on the status of women. Most advisory councils have very similar mandates despite their varying budgets.

The P.E.I. Advisory Council on the Status of Women was established by the Executive Council of the Provincial Government in January 1975 with the following terms of reference:

- . To assist the Minister Responsible in the development of public awareness of issues affecting the status of women.
- . To promote a change in attitudes within the community in order that women may enjoy an equality of opportunity.
- . To encourage discussion and expression of opinion by Island residents on recommendations contained in the Federal Royal Commission Report of the Provincial Advisory Committee on the Status of Women.
- . To advise the Minister with respect to

matters relating to the status of women as the Minister Responsible may refer to the Advisory Council for its consideration or as the Advisory Council considers appropriate.

The Advisory Council consists of nine members who are appointed for three year terms by the Executive Council. The Chairperson is appointed for a term of one year. The members usually meet once a month for a full day. The Advisory Council reports to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women who is presently the Hon. Leone Bagnall.

Some of the past activities of the Advisory Council include:

- . Lobbied for change in human rights legislation to prohibit discrimination with respect to sex and marital status and to establish a Human Rights Commission to enforce the P.E.I. Human Rights Act.
- . Lobbied for three years for the Family Law Reform Act (1979) which recognizes marriage as an equal partnership.
- . Sent over 700 letters to Island businesses outlining the income gap

between women and men.

- . Prepared and submitted briefs to the provincial and federal governments on issues of concern to women in the areas of employment, education, health, social services, pensions, law etc.
- . Lobbied for maternity leave legislation which was finally achieved in 1982.
- . Sponsored several provincial conferences and various panels and workshops on women's issues.

Due to limited resources and the sheer number of issues that affect women, the Advisory Council must carefully choose three or four issues it will work on each year. These priorities are decided upon in response to concerns raised by women's groups and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. One main purpose of the provincial conference organized by the Council every two years is to seek direction from Island women.

Many reforms or programs needed by women in P.E.I. require resources greater than any one group possesses. The council is committed to cooperating with women's groups to improve the situation of women in this province. Some of the groups the Council has or is working with are:

- . Transition House Association which administers Anderson House for battered women and their children.
- . Women's Network Project which publishes the Island women's journal, Common Ground
- . Women in Support of Fishing
- . Island Women's Art Festival.
- . Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Centre.

The Council has no enforcement power; it is an advisory body. Its strength depends on the support and concern of Island women and men. The Council relies on you and your organizations to keep us informed of your concerns and interests, and of the recommendations you want to make to the Provincial Government. The Chairperson is Margaret Ashford. The Council's Executive Assistant is Maureen Mallou.

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