

SECRET

**Strategy for the Government's Response to the Report
of the Parliamentary Committee on Equality Rights:
"Equality for All"**

The Proposal

The Minister of Justice seeks support for his proposed strategy and schedule to govern the development of the Government's response to the report of the Parliamentary Committee on Equality Rights by February 21, 1986. Highlights of the Report are attached at Annex 2.

Background

At CCSD's November 6 meeting, Mr. Crosbie briefed his colleagues on the proposed strategy and sought their commitment to ensuring a timely and substantive response. In recognizing the importance of the response to the Government's social policy profile, Ministers appeared ready to support some process of advance consultation with Mr. Crosbie on initiatives with which they might wish to proceed during the preparation of the comprehensive response and which touch on the subject matter of the Parliamentary Committee report.

In recognition of the controversial nature of some recommendations and the complexity of determining the Government's position, Ministers requested a second discussion on this subject. Not only did they wish to review a draft timetable, but, more importantly, they wished a full discussion of the manner, substance and timing of caucus consultations. Ministers emphasized that the report was of keen interest to caucus. Ian Shugart undertook to develop an approach to caucus discussions in consultation with the Minister of Justice for review. In view of the sensitive nature of the issue, you may wish to hold a Ministers' only discussion of this item.

Comments

Coordination of Related Initiatives while the Response is being Developed

The draft CR (attached at Annex I) will be available for Ministers' review. It should be returned at the end of the meeting. Mr. Crosbie should be asked to reinforce earlier discussions on the need to provide him with a chance to comment in advance on any initiatives which could preempt the government's final response in any way. The draft CR reflects this requirement. (The need for this process is demonstrated by the next item on the agenda, the Strategy to Improve the Status of Disabled Persons in Canada, which Justice officials suggest should be reviewed in the context of the response to the Parliamentary Committee's particular recommendations on the disabled.)

The Timetable

Ministers will wish to note that the timetable at Annex I to the draft CR has been accelerated to ensure Departments provide the Minister of Justice with substantive responses by December 13 so that he may provide CCSD before Christmas with an oral update on progress achieved. Although this tight timeframe may be challenged by some Ministers as being unrealistic, every effort should be made to adhere to it and to bring the comprehensive response to CCSD at its first meeting in January .

A discussion on caucus consultation could follow using Ian Shugart's scenario (attached).

Conclusion

The endorsement of the draft CR by CCSD and its subsequent ratification are required to give impetus to the response process throughout the Government. Mr. Crosbie also may follow up with further letters to his colleagues and with bilateral and substantive discussions at the ministerial level on problem areas where warranted. (We understand that discussions with Mr. Nielsen on the significant number of recommendations impacting on DND already have been initiated).

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