



CCMW

Canadian Council of Muslim Women
Le conseil canadien des femmes musulmanes

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المجلس الكندي للنساء المسلمات

CANADIAN COUNCIL OF MUSLIM WOMEN
LE CONSEIL CANADIEN DES FEMMES MUSULMANES

Salaam,

Although we have sent some updates informing members and friends of our activities, we think it is timely to let you know what we are doing.

UPDATE OF CCMW BOARD ACTIVITIES

CCMW has been very busy this year because of our regional meetings held across the country, as well as responding to what is happening to Muslims in Canada and around the world. We continue to address issues affecting Muslim women by our various projects.

NO RELIGIOUS ARBITRATION:

In January 06, CCMW, along with other organizations such as METRAC and the YWCA, submitted recommendations to the Standing Committee of Ontario Legislature, regarding the amendments to the various Acts: the Arbitration Act, the Child and Family Services Act, the Family Law Act and the Children's Law Reform Act. The new law is the Family Statute Law Amendment Act, 2005.

In May 06, CCMW was invited to a consultation with the staff of the Attorney General's Office regarding the Regulations of the Arbitration Act.

The Regulations cover such important issues as the training of arbitrators, the professional accreditation organizations, a screening process for violence in the family, record keeping and evaluation of the new Act by the government.

The Regulations are to be finalized by this fall. CCMW wrote and received responses from all the provinces' Attorney Generals that they are aware of the issue of religious arbitration.

FUNDS TO DEVELOP PUBLIC EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH MATERIALS:

As part of the changes, the Ontario government is to provide funds for the development of materials which will allow women to understand the changes which have been implemented. A consortium of organizations was formed, including CCMW, with the YWCA being the administrative organization, to develop these materials.

MUSLIM AND CANADIAN FAMILY LAWS: A COMPARATIVE PRIMER

We are very excited that this primer is almost complete and we hope to have it published by November 2006, in time for our Consultative Forum. It was apparent that we needed information regarding a comparison between the two systems of laws and so are grateful to

Professor Lynda Clarke and lawyer Pam Cross who kindly took on this huge task. The writers consulted at the 2005 Symposium, which was followed by focus groups across the country, and by some individual readers as well.

The book will be in English and French. There is no such book and we know it will be vital for women and those who work with them.

MUSLIM AND CANADIAN FAMILY LAWS: BOOKLET

As the book is fairly comprehensive, we are developing a series of booklets of the main points to make the information more accessible to a wider audience. Our aim is to circulate the booklets widely and translate the booklets into various languages such as Somali, Arabic, Farsi, Urdu and French.

MUSLIM WOMEN'S NEEDS ASSESSMENT: ENGAGING MUSLIM WOMEN

NEEDS AND ISSUES

During the past year, CCMW has been engaged in conducting a needs assessment based on several issues identified in our earlier reports on Muslim women in Canada. The assessment instruments included an extensive survey questionnaire and focus groups. We were fortunate to have had Dr Daood Hamdani design a questionnaire so that we could gather data on the needs and state of Muslim women. The questionnaire was tested and then posted on the website. Responses were gathered online and in person to ensure access to women who could not respond through the internet.

Focus groups were also conducted during CCMW's regional meetings earlier this year. The data from the survey and focus groups have been analyzed, a report written and will be finalized by the end of October, 06. This report is groundbreaking work and we know will be useful not only to us but to others as well.

This report's findings and recommendations will assist us to develop further projects as well.

The previous reports, Muslim Women: Beyond the Perceptions, Triple Jeopardy: Muslim Women's Experience of Discrimination, and Muslim Women from Polling Booths to Parliament are being used extensively, not only in Canada, but around the world

COLLABORATION/PARTNERSHIPS

We have continued to maintain the collaboration which occurred with the Coalition against Any Religious Arbitration and are working with some of them, plus some new ones on the development of materials for women.

We will work with the Afghan Women's Organization on their project and with some scholars/academics on other projects resulting from the Consultative Forum. We are closely lined with Women Living Under Muslim Laws and hope to continue working with them. We are asked for advice/consultation from other international organizations as well.

RECENT CONFERENCES ATTENDED

We are proud that we have been invited to speak at a number of international conferences over the last year. CCMW attended a conference in Britain organized by the British Foreign Affairs and the Organization of Islamic Conference on Stereotyping of Muslims; another conference in Sri Lanka on Women's Human Rights; twice to speak at the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe and the WLUML conference in Senegal. We also spoke at the Metropolis Conference held in Toronto, and continue to speak at various other events such as the AGM of the Canadian Federation of University Women.

Upcoming speaking engagements include an invitation from Trier University

MEDIA

CCMW has developed positive relationships with the media. Due to the media attention on the NO religious arbitration issue, CCMW was contacted often about other issues. This development of a relationship between CCMW and the has been very positive, and CCMW is now called upon often for assistance and to speak on issues affecting Muslims. Fortunately, we have been told that our calm and reasoned approach is appreciated by them. CCMW has made the deliberate choice of not speaking against fellow Muslims although this does not mean that we are not critical of what may be happening within our communities. CCMW continues to make the points that Islam is not homogenous, that diversity and plurality of voices is intrinsic to Islam. There is no one community, we should speak of communities to show the breadth of Muslims. We have tried hard not to be defensive or aggressive and hope to continue contributing to discussions.

DEVELOPMENT OF MATERIALS

We developed an Information Kit which contained various documents regarding the No religious arbitration issue and these were distributed widely, including overseas. We have re-done our brochure and are proud of its new look.

WEBSITE RE-DESIGN

We are exploring the design of our website as it is used often and we have ended up with a lot of documents on it. We hope to have this completed in the next few months.

EMERGING ISSUE

We were contacted by the Toronto SOUTH ASIAN LEGAL CLINIC [SALCO] to be on a task force to research the emerging issue of "forced" marriages, which is very different from "arranged" marriages. The task force is in abeyance and we look forward to participating when the group re-convenes.

NEXT PROJECT: CONSULTATIVE FORUM: November 17-19/06, Ottawa.

Our next major project is to have a public discussion as to why so many Muslims are choosing to segregate rather than participate. We have some ideas as to what are the causes but this needs open discussion.

The plans for this forum are developing well. We have the eminent scholar, Dr Mai Yamani, and have invited the Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, to be our keynote speakers. The theme is "From Integration to Segregation?" (did

we no change the title?) is based on our consultation with Muslim women across the country, as well as the findings of the Needs Assessment. It is urgent that we as Muslim women actively support full participation in all aspects of living in Canada.

As part of this initiative, CCMW will develop some community research papers. More information on the Forum will be sent as details are finalized, please mark your calendars for these dates.

PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT US IF YOU WOULD LIKE FURTHER INFORMATION.

Thank you,

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