From Wanda Yamamoto, CCR President

As I reflect on the first year of my term as CCR President, I can say it has been very busy. We have had much to do to respond to new issues and a worrying change in public opinion.

2010 began with the CCR’s response to the earthquake in Haiti. The CCR’s proposed special measures were broadly covered by the media and many elements were taken up by the government of Quebec.

Asking the question: ‘Are we being fair?’, the CCR and its members have brought significant public attention to long delays in processing at Canada’s overseas visa posts, especially Nairobi. The good news is that the government has allocated some new resources to speed up processing, but more work needs to be done to ensure that all applications are treated fairly and in a timely manner.

Spring 2010 was spent addressing Bill C-11, “Refugee Reform” legislation which raised many issues and concerns for our communities. While there was a need for changes, the Bill had serious flaws that would potentially lead to refugees being deported to persecution.

Thanks to the hard work of many individuals and organizations, with leadership from the CCR, Members of Parliament from all political parties were persuaded to make important changes to the bill. As a result, the bill that was passed ensures all refugee claimants – regardless of country of origin – are able to tell their story and have access to an appeal.

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During this legislation process, we were concerned at how unaware the general public is of the realities faced by refugees. Unfortunately the government hasn’t helped in this area. To address this, the CCR started a process to develop a communication strategy to enable CCR and its members to “persuade more Canadians that refugees deserve a high level of protection, both in Canada and abroad, and that Canada’s refugee protection systems can be made to work well”. We will be pursuing this strategy in the coming year – obviously the need is great!

I must give my thanks to Janet Dench and the staff at the CCR office for their dedication and hard work to keep on top of all of the issues. I also want to thank the Executive Members and the Working Group Chairs who provide the leadership in raising the issues and working with member agencies to address their concerns. In borrowing from the United Way messaging, “Without YOU, there would be NO WAY” we can do the work the CCR does.

We have much to do and the work is made easier with many hands and minds to move forward with our work.

### Highlights of Activities 2009 - 2010

**Best interests of the child:** The best interests of the child have been a major theme in the last year. The CCR has highlighted its concerns for children in detention and children made stateless by Canada’s new citizenship laws. The upcoming review of Canada by the United Nations on our compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2011 will provide another opportunity to address these concerns.

**Haiti:** The CCR joined many other groups in urging the government to respond to January’s earthquake in Haiti with special immigration measures for Haitians, many of whom arrived in Canada as refugees.

**Long delays in processing:** In the past year, the CCR issued several reports, including *Nairobi: Protection Delayed, Protection Denied*. This report highlights the extraordinarily long processing times at overseas visa offices, focusing on cases of refugee family reunification and privately sponsored refugees. There was significant media coverage generated by the report. CCR members found it a useful tool in explaining the situation to a variety of audiences, including members of private sponsorship groups, members of the general public and even families waiting for resettlement overseas. The success of the report led to the creation and distribution of related public education materials, including the pamphlet *Refugees from Africa: Are we being fair?*.
Highlights of Activities 2009 - 2010

> **Fairness in decision-making:** The CCR highlighted serious problems in decision-making at Canada’s overseas visa posts. The report *Concerns with refugee decision-making at Cairo* focuses on decisions at one particular visa office, but the CCR believes the problems there reflect systemic shortcomings. The report provides an analysis of 17 cases, all Eritrean refugee applicants rejected at Canada’s visa office in Cairo since September 2009. The CCR has since received information about further rejected cases showing similar problems. They include Iraqi and Zimbabwean applicants. Many of the rejected applicants have been recognized as refugees by the UN Refugee Agency. The CCR continues to press the government to take the necessary actions to address the concerns.

> **Reforming the refugee protection system:** The CCR was fully occupied in the spring of 2010 responding to the government’s legislation reforming Canada’s refugee protection system (Bill C-11). The CCR played a key role in informing its members, Parliamentarians and the public about the bill. The final version of the bill, which was approved in June 2010, was significantly better for refugees than the original.

> **Transportation loans for refugees:** The impacts of transportation loans for refugees are a major concern in many Canadian cities. It’s terrific to see that a wide range of groups, including the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, have publicly called on the government to absorb the costs of these loans. Making an easier transition possible for refugees in their new communities makes community life better and more affordable for everyone in the long term.

> **Youth Network:** The CCR Youth Network has grown and expanded in the last year. The CCR has hired a dedicated Youth Coordinator and together we are producing more youth-related resources. We have created an online space to encourage idea-sharing.

> **CCR Consultations:** The CCR held two successful and well-attended national consultations, in Windsor (fall 2009) and Ottawa (spring 2010). Participants were able to learn from each other in a common effort to protect and resettle refugees and support the effective integration of newcomers in Canada.

> **Resources from the CCR:** To help inform and educate the public about the realities of refugees and immigrants, and the contributions they make to Canadian society, the CCR produced and distributed numerous resources, available in print, on the internet and even increasingly in video format!

> **National Forum on Trafficking:** The CCR organized a national forum on trafficking in December 2009, bringing together persons who have experienced trafficking, NGOs and government officials, to discuss how best to respond to trafficked persons in Canada.

Over the past year, the CCR continued to play an important role in informing refugee and immigrant serving NGOs across Canada about new developments. The vital listserv, ccrlist, has over 900 subscribers and is always a lively forum!
From Jacqueline Rumiel, 
Fundraising Committee Chair

Are you a Friend of the CCR?
Did you know the CCR receives no core funding from government? Instead the CCR relies on the support of those who believe in the Council’s mandate and mission. About 40% of all CCR revenue comes from private donations.

We would like to thank all those who support the Council, including the more than 150 Friends of the CCR who currently donate monthly to the organization.

> To continue our mandate we need everyone’s support, including present and future donors, to:
> Advocate for the rights of refugees and immigrants through government and media relations, research and public education.
> Offer opportunities for networking and professional development through conferences, working groups and meetings.
> Strengthen the defence of refugee rights.
> Advance policy analysis, create publications and fortify information-exchange on refugee and related issues.

So please join your colleagues and become a Friend of the CCR. You can give $10, $15, $20 or any amount you prefer. The important thing is that we all participate in the support of the CCR, to guarantee there continues to be a voice protecting refugees around the world.

To donate or to become a Friend of the CCR please visit our website at: ccrweb.ca/en/donate

The above is a summary. Copies of full audited statements, including notes, are available from the CCR office.

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