

**Presentation to the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of the CRPD Committee,  
March 20<sup>th</sup> 2017, Geneva, Switzerland**

**Phyliss Fehr**

Board Member of Dementia Alliance International (DAI) and Vice Chair of the  
Ontario Dementia Advisory Group

I am pleased to be here today on behalf of Dementia Alliance International, and also as Board Member of the Ontario Dementia Advisory Group.

Dementia Alliance International is a global organization run by and for people with dementia.

It's an exciting time to be involved in the global movement to gain human rights for people with cognitive impairments.

Framing dementia as a disability is still very new, but it is being discussed as a policy direction and human rights issue.

When it comes to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, our goal is simply to ensure that people with cognitive impairments are treated like people with other disabilities.

DAI has been working to inform that debate and influence its direction.

We are making progress.

The World Health Authority, in its proposed Global Action Plan for a Public Health Approach to Dementia, has placed the human rights of people with dementia; empowerment and accountability as three of its seven cross-cutting principles. These reflect the core elements of CRPD and all other Human Rights Treaties deriving from the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

Not only is progress being made at the global level, but also in my home country of Canada.

For the first time in Canadian history, a group of people with dementia, The Ontario Dementia Advisory group and our national Alzheimer's organization have joined with a coalition of disability groups to speak with a common voice for the inclusion of people living with dementia in the implementation and monitoring of the CRPD.

This approach to human rights and the CRPD reflects the model being used at a global level by Dementia Alliance International and Alzheimer's Disease International.

The Board of the Ontario Dementia Advisory Group, all of whom are DAI members, included access to CRPD as one of their recommendations in testimony before a committee of the Canadian Senate.

"The CRPD is important as it helps to spell out practical steps to ensure persons with dementia enjoy human rights on an equal basis with others."

I am often asked how the CRPD will apply to the human rights of people with dementia.

Let me give you an example - a medical diagnosis of dementia frequently results in the automatic loss of a driver's license.

Is it not our fundamental right to have our ability to drive evaluated by an independent assessment of functioning?

That's why people with dementia need full access to the CRPD.

The issue of human rights has been an interesting journey so far.

We still have lots of work to do.

People living with dementia are included in the broad definition of disability in Article 1 of the Convention, but have not been included in its implementation.

We need a seat at the table.

We also have to improve knowledge about why human rights are important to people with dementia and why they need to fight for their rights.

People with dementia need to think of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a tool to enable them to access fundamental human rights to which they are currently excluded.

I am looking forward with great anticipation to this 17th session of the CRPD and the committee's consideration of the initial reports submitted by Canada and other countries.

Dementia Alliance International welcomes the election of Robert Martin, a person with an intellectual disability as a member of the CRPD Committee. Over the next 8 years, if not sooner, we would like to see a person with cognitive disabilities caused by dementia elected to the Committee".

Thank you for your attention.

**Phyliss Fehr**

Vice Chair of the Ontario Dementia Advisory Group and Board Member of Dementia Alliance International