

**REPORT ON EMPLOYABILITY INITIATIVES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
RESPONSE TO
MOTION 39-16(5) ON EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

BACKGROUND

On February 28th, 2011 Members of the Legislative Assembly carried Motion 39-16(5) on Employment of Persons with Disabilities. This motion prompts the Government of the Northwest Territories to a) develop a reliable, confidential measuring tool to verify the percentage of persons with a disability within the GNWT work force; b) reassess the staffing priority assigned to persons with disabilities under Section 101 of the Human Resource Manual; c) develop a plan to ensure that the percentage of persons with a disability employed by the Government of the Northwest Territories be maintained at no less than five percent of the total work force within five years; and d) report to the Legislative Assembly on the Government's plan to achieve the goals of the motion every five years.

Although motion 39-16(5) recommends the GNWT ensure that five percent of Public Service employees are persons with disabilities the GNWT is hesitant to commit to a percentage that is less than the percentage of individuals with disabilities available in the NWT labour market. Having said this, it is important to note that the GNWT is unlikely to ever have a number that provides an accurate reflection of the number of employees in the Public Service with disabilities due to the personal choice of some employees to not self identify their disability.

Increasing the representation of persons with disabilities within the GNWT workforce is an important goal established by the *20/20: A Brilliant North* public service strategic plan. Employability is a part of Goal 2 "Engage Magnetic Attraction, Attraction and Recruitment." The action for this part of the strategic plan is to coordinate the delivery of education and awareness programs about disabilities issues and create an inclusive environment which will encourage GNWT employees to self-declare that they are persons with disabilities, mitigating a long-standing gap in Government employee metrics.

The Government of the Northwest Territories Advisory Committee on Employability (GACE) was created in March, 2010 to strengthen the collaborative relationship between government, non-government organizations and unions and to provide recommendations aimed at increasing the representation of persons with disabilities within the public service.

In 2010 the Department of Human Resources established the Diversity Officer and Duty to Accommodate Advisor positions. These positions work with managers and employees across the public service to ensure that the needs of employees with

disabilities are accommodated. They are also responsible for promoting awareness about disabilities and inclusion in the workplace.

CURRENT STATUS

1. With the goal of acquiring a more reliable measurement of the number of employees who self identify as persons with disabilities, the Department of Human Resources has developed a confidential, anonymous survey which will be distributed to all GNWT employees by the NWT Bureau of Statistics. The aim of the survey is to gather accurate information about employees with disabilities and to identify if employees requiring disability related accommodations are receiving them. The survey has been modelled after one used by the Yukon Government which yielded a high response rate among members of the Yukon's public service. The Government of the Northwest Territories' Advisory Committee on Employability participated in the development of the survey and particular attention was paid to defining disability in such a way that will encourage employees to self identify. The definition is currently under review.

In addition to the employee survey, the Government's new on-line recruiting tool, eRecruit, is now capable of tracking applicants' Affirmative Action categories. Using this information, the Department of Human Resources will be able to accurately measure the number of applicants and new hires who fall under a particular Affirmative Action priority, including persons with disabilities. The definition of "persons with disabilities" for the purposes of eRecruit is currently under review but it will likely mirror the definition used by the employee survey and be stated in a manner which encourages applicants to self-identify.

2. The Department of Human Resources is currently developing a Framework to Increase the Representation of Persons with Disabilities in the public service. The framework will serve as a component of a broader overall diversity strategy, currently under development. The framework includes but is not limited to the following initiatives:
 - The development of a disabilities awareness and inclusion training program to be delivered throughout the public service via face-to-face training sessions and internet-based learning. A request for proposals for assistance in the development of this training program will be tendered in August, 2011.
 - A communications strategy to promote diversity and inclusion of all people in the GNWT. This strategy is currently under development with completion planned within the next fiscal year.

- A comprehensive review of recruitment strategies for persons with disabilities. This review will be carried out by the Department of Human Resources in the next fiscal year.
3. On August 4, 2011, the Financial Management Board approved the Duty to Accommodate Injury and Disability Policy. This policy provides a public commitment by the Government of the Northwest Territories to accommodate employees with injuries, disabilities, and other medical conditions as well as clarifies the roles and responsibilities of all parties in the accommodation process. It is hoped that by making this public commitment the Government of the Northwest Territories will further encourage employees to self-identify as persons with disabilities.
 4. The Government of the Northwest Territories expects that the initiatives outlined above will make a more effective contribution to increasing the number of persons with disabilities in the NWT Public Service and involve a smaller potential for disruptions to other Affirmative Action priority categories than redefining the priorities assigned to specific groups under section 101 of the Human Resource Manual.
 5. The Government of the Northwest Territories has committed to providing regular updates on the progress of the initiatives under *20/20: A Brilliant North* and this includes the Government's progress towards the goal of increasing the representation of persons with disabilities within the public service.