



17th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Standing Committee on Government Operations

Report on the Review of the
2010-2011 Northwest Territories
Human Rights Commission
Annual Report

Chair: Mr. Michael M. Nadli

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS**

**REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE
2010-2011 NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT**

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2010-2011 NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Government Operations has completed its review of the 2010-2011 Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission Annual Report. The Committee would like to thank Ms. Mary Pat Short, Chair of the NWT Human Rights Commission, and Ms. Thérèse Boullard, Director of Human Rights, for their appearance before the Committee on February 13, 2012.

2010-2011 ANNUAL REPORT

Mary Pat Short of Fort Smith, Rita Mueller from Behchoko, Roger Wah-Shee from Yellowknife, Yacub Adam from Yellowknife, and William Turner from Yellowknife were members of the Commission during the year. The Standing Committee observed that one membership has been revoked, while the terms of three of the four remaining members conclude on June 30, 2012.

In 2010-2011, the Director of Human Rights received 352 inquiries, about half of which originated in Yellowknife. There were twenty-two new complaints of discrimination on grounds prohibited under the NWT *Human Rights Act*. Nearly three-quarters of new complaints alleged discrimination in employment. Disability was the ground with the highest number of complaints (nine), as it has been for the last six years.

The Standing Committee is deeply concerned by the high number of complaints of discrimination on grounds of disability. The Committee appreciates the Human Rights Commission's work to educate the public on the rights of persons with disabilities, including a new brochure on Human Rights and Disabilities and a workshop for employers on the duty to accommodate. The Committee believes that the Government of the Northwest Territories should lead by example in following the Act and recognizing the human rights of persons with disabilities.

Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories continue its efforts to recruit and accommodate workers with disabilities in the public service and report on these efforts to this House within 120 days.

The Human Rights Commission received a 2010-2011 base funding increase of \$50,000 to launch a multi-year pilot project in which it became a party to all complaints referred for hearings to the separate and independent NWT Human Rights Adjudication Panel. There are few inexpensive legal supports in the NWT for human rights complainants going forward to hearings. The purpose of the pilot project is to ease the burden on self-represented parties by ensuring that all relevant information is before the adjudicator. The Standing Committee commends the Commission on its pilot project, which will assist in the fair and effective administration of the Act, and supports its continued funding.

2011-2012 WORK PLAN

During the public hearing, the Committee learned that an increase in inquiries from communities follows Commission visits. The Standing Committee strongly supports the NWT Human Rights Commission's plans for informing more NWT residents of their rights and responsibilities in 2011-2012, especially residents of smaller communities. The Commission planned visits to Norman Wells, Deline, Paulatuk, Behchoko, Lutsel K'e and Fort Smith during the 2011-2012 year. The Standing Committee urges the Commission to visit as many communities as possible each year, and to expand its workshop offerings to smaller communities as well as regional centres.

The Committee also heard with interest that the Commission will establish a "teachers' corner" on its website. The Human Rights Commission has done a great deal of work to develop a Social Studies Curriculum Guide and learning activities to accompany the publication "Know Your Rights." The Standing Committee is pleased that these resources will be made available online and encourages the Commission to maintain and expand its presence on the Internet and in social media in all official languages in future years.

CONCLUSION

The Standing Committee applauds the Human Rights Commission's 2010-2011 report and looks forward to progress toward its vision of "a North at peace with its diversity where everyone is safe, confident and respected on their journey."

