



15th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight

Report on the Review of the
Human Rights Commission
2005-2006 Annual Report

Chair: Mr. Jackson Lafferty

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Northwest
Territories

Legislative Assembly

Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight

March 14, 2007

SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Speaker:

Your Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight is pleased to provide its Report on the Review of the Human Rights Commission 2005-2006 Annual Report and commends it to the House.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Lafferty'.

Jackson Lafferty, MLA
Chairperson

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT**

**REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
2005-2006 ANNUAL REPORT**

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT**

**REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
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INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight met on February 14, 2007 to review the 2005-2006 Annual Report of the NWT Human Rights Commission. The Committee would like to thank Ms. Mary Pat Short, Chair of the Human Rights Commission, and Ms. Thérèse Boullard, Director of Human Rights, for appearing before us.

The 2005-2006 Annual Report does not include any recommendations, however, the Committee would like to take the opportunity to comment on other issues that were discussed during our public meeting.

The 2005-2006 Annual Report was the second report of the Human Rights Commission since its establishment on July 1, 2004.

The Committee was pleased to hear of the progress the Commission has made in raising awareness about human rights through its website, public service announcements and community meetings. In particular, we would like to congratulate the Commission for the success of their public service announcements in partnership with the Yukon Human Rights Commission, one of which won an award at the Houston International Film Festival.

We acknowledge the Commission's efforts to bring education and awareness workshops on Human Rights and the *NWT Human Rights Act* to all regions of the Northwest Territories. The Committee supports visits to smaller communities, as they will give Commission members a chance to increase their understanding of traditional approaches to human rights and to ensure residents of smaller communities are aware of their rights under the *Act*.

The Committee was pleased to hear that the Commission met with elders from the Deh Cho region and suggests further work with elders from other communities will assist in building valuable bridges.

We encourage the Commission to continue expanding its efforts to make the public aware of human rights issues and underline the importance of making it as easy as possible to obtain information and to make complaints in all official languages.

In last year's report, the Commission made two recommendations for amendments to the *Human Rights Act*, one regarding systemic remedies, the other regarding discrimination on the basis of unrelated criminal convictions. In its response, the Government provides reasons why it considers both recommendations inadvisable. The Committee was interested in hearing the Commission's opinion on the GNWT's reply. Due to the timing of the tabling of the GNWT Response and the 2005-2006 Annual Report, it was not possible for the Commission to evaluate the reply before appearing for the public hearing with the Committee.

The Commission indicated that their members will discuss the response soon and that they would be happy to share the outcome with Members. We are looking forward to a follow-up and further discussions with representatives of the Human Rights Commission.

CONCLUSION

The Committee commends the Commission's work and achievements to date and looks forward to monitoring the continued evolution of human rights in the Northwest Territories.