



16th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Standing Committee on Government Operations

Report on the Review
of the 2009-2010
Human Rights Commission
Annual Report

Chair: Mr. Kevin Menicoche

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS**

**REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2009-2010
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
2009-2010 Annual Report	1
Recommendation 1	2
Recommendation 2	2

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2009-2010 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Government Operations has completed its review of the 2009-2010 Human Rights Commission Annual Report. This report covers the Human Rights Commission's sixth year. 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 their appearance before the Committee.

2009-2010 ANNUAL REPORT

In 2009-2010, the NWT Human Rights Commission had a national presence as Ms. Short held the position of president, and Ms. Boullard, treasurer, of the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies (CASHRA). The Committee congratulates both of these women on their leadership of CASHRA.

Rita Mueller from Behchoko, Yacub Adam from Yellowknife, and Tammy Rogers from Inuvik were the members of the Board of the Human Rights Commission. The members and chair deserve recognition for their contribution to human rights in the Northwest Territories (NWT).

The Annual Report provides an overview of the NWT Human Rights Commission's activities. Over the year, Commission staff responded to 280 inquiries and 26 new complaints. Two complaints were forwarded to the NWT Human Rights Adjudication Panel for hearing.

The Commission provided information sessions and workshops to GNWT Human Resource staff, Hamlet staff, secondary school students, and students at Aurora College Learning Centres. The Commission visited Fort Smith, Fort Providence, Hay River, Deline, Tulita, Ulukhaktok, Detah, and Yellowknife.

The Commission also distributed a human rights handbook to all teachers for use in offering related educational activities in their classrooms. The Committee recognizes the effort and accomplishments of the Commission and how staff follows through with plans.

In partnership with the Yukon Human Rights Commission, the NWT Human Rights Commission published "Know Your Rights", a well-presented, plain

language document that explains on what grounds a person is protected from discrimination in the NWT and the Yukon.

When the Committee reviewed “Know Your Rights”, it observed that the Yukon prohibits discrimination based on “unrelated” criminal convictions or criminal records, while the NWT does not. The Committee asked Ms. Short to speak to its possible value in the NWT *Human Rights Act*. Ms. Short advised that its inclusion was recommended in the Commission’s 2004-2005 report. The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight brought the recommendation forward to Government in its report on the review of the 2004-2005 Annual Report of the Human Rights Commission. At its meeting on December 3, 2010, the Standing Committee on Government Operations expressed interest in a review of this matter to ensure NWT residents receive proper protection from discrimination and because it may be in the best interest of people in the NWT to allow more people to have access to work that is presently unavailable to them.

Recommendation 1

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Justice review and assess the advisability of prohibiting discrimination based on “unrelated” criminal convictions or a criminal record.

CONCLUSION

The Committee commends the Commission’s work and achievements to date and looks forward to continued progress in informing NWT residents of their rights and responsibilities so that justice and fairness is strengthened.

Recommendation 2

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a comprehensive response to this report within 120 days.