



News Release: The Manitoba Human Rights Commission

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 30, 2001**

MANITOBA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT UNDERSCORES SUCCESSFUL YEAR

Record Number of Files Dealt With In 2000: MHRC

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission has made significant progress in resolving complaints by closing a record number of files in 2000 and eliminating the backlog of complaints that once plagued the Commission. MHRC also has reduced the average length of time to deal with a complaint to 8.2 months, while 1 in 5 complaints were closed within thirty days. During the year, 5895 Manitobans contacted the Commission.

This progress is outlined in the Commission's 2000 Annual Report, which was released today.

The Annual Report also reveals progress over the years in terms of the number of cases, which have been settled. For example, in the year 2000, 44% of cases were settled, compared with 22% in 1994.

According to the Annual Report, the largest number of complaints continues to be those dealing with disabilities, although the nature of the disability is changing. Complaints based on mental disabilities (a term that includes depression, bi-polar disorders and psychiatric conditions) have increased to 25% of the total number of disability complaints. Approximately one third of the disability complaints deal with the requirement of reasonable accommodation. Gender complaints remain the second largest percentage of complaints. About two thirds of all complaints received by the Commission arise in the workplace.

Another emerging trend is that fewer complainants are abandoning their claims. This suggests that with no backlog and the reduced time for resolution, people are seeing their complaints through to resolution.

Commission Chairperson, Janet Baldwin, says part of the Commission's success can be attributed to offering people a means of settling complaints by either pre-complaint conciliation or mediation. The more time consuming investigation process only takes place when a settlement cannot be reached.

The Commission also continued its tradition of working closely with multicultural groups. In 2000, it assisted the Thompson Citizenship Council Inc./ Multi Culture Centre with their book, *Discovering the Many Faces of Discrimination in Northern Manitoba*. The Commission is committed to continuing to develop programs, which offer services to aboriginal people in a more accessible way.

The Commission continues to raise awareness of human rights issues throughout Manitoba. In 2000, the staff gave 110 presentations; almost one third of these were in Manitoba schools. Its other educational activities included 18 seminars offered throughout the year on such topics as harassment in sport, employment and reasonable accommodation. Over 3300 people participated in these combined activities.

Ms Baldwin would like to thank outgoing chairperson, Kenneth Filkow, for his contribution to the Commission over thirteen years. She plans to continue the progress shown in the 2000 Annual Report.

"The Commission hopes in the coming year to place even greater emphasis on systemic complaints, such as the Brandon settlement highlighted in the Report. The Commission also intends to continue to speak out publicly on important human rights issues," Ms Baldwin said.

-30-

For more information, contact
Patricia Knipe
Communications Coordinator
945-5112