



News Release: The Manitoba Human Rights Commission
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 26, 2006

Number of Complaints Continues to Increase

2004 Annual Report Released

As revealed in the 2004 Manitoba Human Rights Commission's Annual Report, the most significant trend was the increase in the volume of complaints. In total 382 complaints were received, including both formal complaints and those resolved informally. This was a 12% increase over the past year.

According to Dianna Scarth, the Executive Director of the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, this trend has been steady over the years. In comparison, ten years ago in 1994 the number of complaints received was 150.

“We cannot be certain why there is an increase of over 250% in ten years but positive responses from the public suggest that outreach initiatives have had an impact in raising awareness of both the Commission and human rights protections,” she said. It also suggests, she added, that harassment and discrimination continue to be serious issues in today’s workplaces and schools.

Ms. Scarth also noted that despite the significant increase in the number of complaints, the Commission has continued to deal with its caseload efficiently by offering alternative processes such as pre-complaint resolution and mediation. Almost 42% of the matters disposed of in the year, were completed at a pre-complaint or pre-investigation stage, in an average time of 3 months or less.

When mediation is not attempted or not successful however, the complaint is immediately assigned to an investigator. According to Ms Scarth, the average time of a formal investigation was 9.1 months, which compares favourably to commissions of similar size in the country. Some of these commissions have set goals to reduce the average investigation time to 12 months.

A major achievement for the Commission was the high rate of settlements. Of the 427 complaints dealt with in 2004, 61% were settled. Generally speaking, mediation is not only faster than the investigation process, there is also a higher satisfaction rate among the parties who have more control over the process and outcome. Ms Scarth said that it is also encouraging to see that many of the resolutions included policy development and human rights education.

Another important trend is the continual dramatic increase in complaints based on physical and mental disabilities. Disability complaints reached an all-time high of 42.5% of the total complaints dealt with during the year. Again looking back ten years, only 19% of complaints were based on disability.

Ms Scarth says that the difference could be related to the fact that the “issues raised by disability complaints have become much more complex.”

The Commission also reports that it is continuing to place a greater emphasis upon proactive activities, especially in the area of public education, including human rights seminars and youth conferences. Also, a new outreach position was created to make the Commission more accessible and responsive to the multicultural community, especially to new immigrants.

The full report is available on the Commission's website at www.gov.mb.ca/hrc

For more information, contact
Patricia Knipe
945-5112