

THE MANITOBA
HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION



LA COMMISSION DES
DROITS DE LA PERSONNE
DU MANITOBA

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Manitoba Human Rights Commission Releases 2005 Annual Report

Commission Balances Education and Outreach with Enforcement

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission has released its 2005 Annual Report, which reveals that one of the challenges facing the Commission is balancing its enforcement activities with the promotion of human rights and public education.

“The Commission places a high value on providing education,” says Chairperson Janet Baldwin, adding that although resources are extremely limited, she is proud of its many accomplishments.

For example the Commission, in partnership with the Office of the Ombudsman and Children’s Advocate, launched a series of publications called *The Rights of Youth*. The first three, published in 2005, were: *The Rights of Youth – You and School*, *The Rights of Youth – On the Job and*, *The Rights of Youth – Human Rights*.

“It was the lack of information available to young people that was the driving force behind the project,” says Executive Director Dianna Scarth. These unique publications offer a combination of practical information about employment and education, as well as providing contact information. All the *Rights of Youth* publications are available on the Commission’s website www.gov.mb.ca/hrc.

In 2005, the Commission also built on its highly successful youth conferences by holding its first Westman Youth Conference in Brandon, Manitoba. The Respect Reloaded Youth Conferences were also held in Winnipeg and Thompson.

The Commission continues to provide human rights presentations, round table discussions, new publications and educational workshops. In 2005 the Commission added a new workshop, *How to Investigate a Human Rights Complaint*, to its already popular programs.

The Code states that “much discrimination is rooted in ignorance and education is essential to its eradication.”

Other highlights of the 2005 Annual Report include:

- The provincial government's directive, following the federal *Civil Marriage Act*, that marriage commissioners perform same-sex marriages or resign, gave rise to two complaints of religious discrimination by marriage commissioners. The Board of Commissioners had to balance competing rights to freedom from discrimination on the basis of religion, and sexual orientation. The board dismissed the complaints. (One of the complainants made an application for Judicial Review in 2006).
- The Commission continues to expand the use of mediation and conciliation to resolve human rights complaints.
- A research project revealed that pre-complaint mediation results in an equal level of satisfaction among complainants and respondents
- The Commission sought intervener status before the Supreme Court of Canada in the *Council of Canadians with Disabilities v Via Rail Canada* case (This intervention took place in 2006).
- The greatest number of complaints (37%) continues to be those based on physical and mental disability. The second highest was sex, including pregnancy (25%).

The 2005 Annual Report is available on the Commission's website www.gov.mb.ca/hrc

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