



Human Rights Commission

Activity Plan 2014-17

Message from the Chair

As Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission, I am pleased to present the 2014-17 Activity Plan of the Human Rights Commission.

The Human Rights Commission is classified as a Category 3 Government Entity and, as such, must prepare an activity plan taking into consideration the strategic directions of the Provincial Government as communicated by the Minister of Justice. Those strategic directions have been taken into account and it has been determined that none are applicable at this time.

As Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission, I, on behalf of the entire Commission, accept accountability for the preparation of this plan and the achievement of its goals and objectives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Remzi Cej".

Remzi Cej

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Introduction

The Human Rights Commission was established by legislation in 1971. The Commission is responsible for promoting an understanding of, acceptance of and compliance with the *Human Rights Act, 2010*. Commissioners, including one who serves as Chairperson and one who serves as Vice-Chairperson, are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

In June 2010, the Human Rights Code was repealed and replaced in its entirety with the *Human Rights Act, 2010*. Building upon submissions from extensive public consultation conducted by the Department of Justice – including submissions from municipalities, labour groups, various community associations, individuals and the provincial legal community – the *Human Rights Act, 2010* establishes that it is public policy in the province to recognize the inherent dignity and worth of all people, and to provide equal rights and opportunities without discrimination.

The Human Rights Commission receives and investigates complaints of alleged discrimination or harassment under the jurisdiction of the *Human Rights Act, 2010*. Where appropriate, attempts are made to facilitate and effect a settlement between both parties involved in a complaint. Where no settlement is reached, a report is made to the Commissioners who can then decide to further refer the complaint to a Panel of Adjudicators (Board of Inquiry).

Overview

Since its formation in 1971, the Human Rights Commission has served the people of Newfoundland and Labrador from its office in St. John's. The Human Rights Commission is staffed by an Executive Director, three Human Rights Specialists, one Lawyer and one Administrative Officer.

Human Rights Commission employees document, investigate and report on alleged contraventions of the *Human Rights Act, 2010*, provide information for inquiries from the general public, and distribute, develop and conduct educational information and programs designed to eliminate discriminatory practices.

As described in the *Estimates of the Program Expenditure and Revenue of the Consolidated Revenue Fund 2014-15*, the Human Rights Commission operates with a budget of \$859,600 for 2014-15.

Mandate and Lines of Business

The mandate of the Human Rights Commission is outlined in Section 23 of the *Human Rights Act, 2010* as follows:

23. The Commission shall

- (a) promote the principle that every person is equal in dignity and rights without regard to a prohibited ground of discrimination;
- (b) promote an understanding of, acceptance of and compliance with this Act;
- (c) distribute information and develop and conduct educational programs and research designed to eliminate discriminatory practices related to a prohibited ground of discrimination;
- (d) advise and assist government departments and agencies of the government, and co-ordinate their activities where these activities concern human rights;
- (e) advise the government on suggestions, recommendations and requests made by private organizations, groups and individuals where these suggestions, recommendations and requests concern human rights;
- (f) co-operate with and help a person, an organization or a group concerned with human rights, whether within or outside the province;
- (g) report as required by the minister on the business and activities of the commission; and
- (h) consider, investigate or administer a matter or activity relating to human rights referred to the commission by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council or the minister.

Given this, the Commission's lines of business are:

- Receiving, recording, and investigating written complaints that allege violation of the *Human Rights Act, 2010*.
- Promotion of the *Human Rights Act, 2010*.
- Education and research designed to eliminate discriminatory conduct.
- Advising and helping individuals, groups, organizations, and governments on matters related to human rights.

Vision

Newfoundland and Labrador will be a province in which all people have respect for human dignity and rights, and where everyone will work to protect human dignity and rights.

Values

The Human Rights Commission core values include:

- Accessibility;
- Accountability;
- Fairness and impartiality;
- Responsiveness;
- Empathy; and
- Integrity.

These values, and related action statements below, provide a guiding framework for those who are required to perform duties in accordance with the *Human Rights Act, 2010*.

Accessibility:	The Human Rights Commission and all employees are available to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in a timely manner, through regular channels of communication, and are committed to identifying and removing barriers to accessibility.
Accountability:	The Human Rights Commission and all employees are committed to being transparent and responsible in fulfilling our duties and commitments.
Fairness and Impartiality:	The Human Rights Commission and all employees perform duties in an unbiased, thorough and complete manner.
Responsiveness:	The Human Rights Commission and all employees are flexible in the performance of our duties, based on changing needs and demands.
Empathy:	The Human Rights Commission and all employees respect and understand the diversity of cultures, backgrounds, and needs of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.
Integrity:	The Human Rights Commission and all employees strive to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards.

Who We Serve

As mandated in the *Human Rights Act, 2010*, the Human Rights Commission serves the interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Human Rights Commission also assists individuals, groups and organizations who are concerned with human rights, and provides advice to government concerning human rights.

Mission

The Human Rights Commission, as a category 3 government entity, has the option of developing its own mission, or adopting and contributing to the Department of Justice mission. Given that the Human Rights Commission acts as an arms-length entity, it is not appropriate to adopt the Mission Statement of the Department of Justice. The departmental mission is focused upon the work of the Department of Justice, and the Human Rights Commission does not have a direct role at this time.

This activity plan is intended to focus on key priorities over the next three years. Development of a mission with measures and indicators would be repetitive of the goals and objectives already developed in the current activity plan.

Issues

The strategic directions of the Provincial Government have been considered and none are applicable at this time. The Human Rights Commission will focus on two key priorities over the next three year planning cycle:

- Increasing public education and awareness; and
- Enhancing our intake and case resolution process.

Issue 1: Public Education and Awareness

The Human Rights Commission will enhance activities to promote the *Human Rights Act, 2010*.

The Commission recognizes that proactive education and awareness are key components to preventing and reducing discriminatory attitudes and behaviours. Presently, the Commission publishes, and makes available on its website, guideline documents and fact sheets outlining educational research and established legal precedents for several grounds of discrimination protected under the *Human Rights Act, 2010*. These documents outline basic information about the protected grounds, what constitutes discrimination, and where

the burden of accommodation rests. The Human Rights Commission will endeavor to identify, develop, and make public additional educational materials.

Additionally, as part of its efforts to promote awareness, the Human Rights Commission will establish a Human Rights Award to acknowledge and recognize the efforts of individuals or groups promoting, protecting, or otherwise furthering human rights efforts in the province.

Goal # 1:	By March 31, 2017 the Human Rights Commission will have enhanced its public education and awareness activities.
Measure:	Public education and awareness activities enhanced
Indicators:	Education materials enhanced
	New education materials developed
	Human Rights Award implemented
	Additional presentations delivered
	Regional presence enhanced
	Community outreach enhanced

Objective 1.1:	By March 31, 2015 the Human Rights Commission will have assessed current public education and awareness activities.
Measure:	Current public education and awareness initiatives assessed
Indicators:	Current education materials reviewed and updated
	Gaps in information identified
	New informational materials developed
	Cross jurisdictional scan of Human Rights Awards completed
	Options for Human Rights Award in NL assessed based on information from the cross jurisdictional scan

Objective 1.2:	By March 31, 2016 the Human Rights Commission will have implemented additional public education and awareness activities.
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Objective 1.3:	By March 31, 2017 the Human Rights Commission will have re-assessed public education and awareness activities.
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Issue 2: Enhance Intake and Case Resolution Process

Over the next three years, the Human Rights Commission will build on past efforts to improve the intake and case resolution process.

During the last planning cycle, the Commission started work on enhancing information management practices. During that process, some limitations of the current database technology were identified. During this planning cycle, the Commission will continue to review the current database technology for functionality and seek solutions to meet the data needs of the Commission.

As well, the Commission researched mediation practices in other jurisdictions and developed a draft mediation policy. This policy will be implemented during this planning cycle.

Over the next three years, the Commission will also research additional methods to achieve internal efficiencies in the case resolution process. An initial step will include hiring a Human Rights Intake Officer in year one of the current planning cycle. This position will enhance the current intake process, with specific duties to include: preliminary review of complaints to ensure they fall within the legislative mandate of the Commission; draft complaint forms; service of complaint forms; and management of complaint files until they are ready to be assigned to a Human Rights Specialist. This will lift some of the administrative burden on Human Rights Specialists and enable them to spend more of their time investigating complaints, drafting reports, resolving complaints and conducting public education and awareness activities.

Goal # 2:	By March 31, 2017 the Human Rights Commission will have enhanced the intake and case resolution process.
Measure:	Intake and case resolution process enhanced.
Indicators:	Current intake and case resolution processes reviewed
	Inefficiencies identified and addressed
	Progress towards addressing identified inefficiencies assessed
	Future enhancement priorities identified

Objective 2.1:	By March 31, 2015 the Human Rights Commission will have reviewed current practices to identify inefficiencies.
Measure:	Current practices reviewed to identify inefficiencies
Indicators:	Intake worker hired
	Current database functionality reviewed
	Cross jurisdictional scan of intake and case resolution processes completed

Objective 2.2:	By March 31, 2016 the Human Rights Commission will have addressed identified inefficiencies.
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Objective 2.3:	By March 31, 2017 the Human Rights Commission will have assessed progress to identify future priorities.
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Further information or assistance may be obtained by contacting:

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