

**GNWT RESPONSE TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
OPERATIONS REPORT 5-16(4) ON THE REVIEW OF THE
2008-2009 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

The NWT *Human Rights Act*¹ (“the Act”) came into force in 2004. It provides authority to the Director of Human Rights to investigate complaints and refer them on to an Adjudication Panel for determination. The Adjudication Panel may issue orders to address discrimination in a particular complaint. The Human Rights Commission and the Director and Deputy Director of Human Rights, all appointed under the Act, report to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. There is no reporting relationship with any member of the Executive Council.

The Standing Committee on Government Operations (“the Standing Committee”) conducted a review of the *Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission Annual Report 2008-2009*. The Standing Committee recommended that the GNWT Human Resources Manual be amended to make Human Rights Commission members, who are GNWT employees, eligible for civic leave with pay to attend meetings.

The following is the GNWT’s response to the recommendation contained in *Committee Report 5-16(4): Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2008-2009 Annual Report of the Human Rights Commission*.

Standing Committee Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories include the Human Rights Commission in its Human Resources Manual, Section 810 – Civic Leave, thus making Board members who are GNWT employees eligible for civic leave with pay to attend meetings.

GNWT Response

The Civic Leave Policy (“the Policy”) currently provides for up to 15 days of paid leave per year for employees to participate in official functions and meetings of designated community councils, public boards and Aboriginal organizations. Eligible employees may also be granted civic leave to attend treaty day and land claim anniversary celebrations.

Civic leave is not contained in the collective agreements and is therefore a discretionary leave benefit subject to change in accordance with policy direction provided by the Financial Management Board. It is subject to operational requirements and is granted only for attendance at official board meetings or treaty day and land claim anniversary celebrations. Civic leave is not provided to attend official meetings with non-

¹ S.N.W.T. 2002, c. 18

organization personnel on behalf of an eligible organization. An extensive but finite list of eligible organizations and activities is identified in the Policy.

The GNWT recognizes the importance of Commission members being able to attend meetings in order to ensure that the Commission is able to function effectively for the benefit of NWT residents. Making Commission members eligible under the Policy, however, has implications that need to be thoroughly considered. Civic leave is a relatively small but not insignificant cost to the GNWT, both financially and operationally. The GNWT continues to receive many similar requests from employees, departments, and outside organizations to modify the provisions of the Policy to expand the list of eligible organizations and activities. The considerations are such that they require further analysis before the GNWT can offer a final decision on the inclusion of Commission members in the Policy.

The Department of Human Resources is currently conducting the necessary work in order to complete a comprehensive review the Policy. The review will allow for recommendations to be ready for consideration by the 17th Legislative Assembly. These recommendations will include clarification as to whether Human Rights Commission members will be eligible for civic leave.