

**GNWT RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE REPORT 2-17(3)
ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2010-2011 NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT**

The Standing Committee on Government Operations (“the Standing Committee”) conducted a review of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission Annual Report 2010-2011. The Standing Committee recommended that the Government of the Northwest Territories report on its efforts to recruit and accommodate workers with disabilities.

The following is the Government of the Northwest Territories’ response to the recommendation contained in *Committee Report 2-17(3): Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2010-2011 Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission Annual Report*.

Standing Committee Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories continue its efforts to recruit and accommodate workers with disabilities in the public service and report on these efforts to this House within 120 days.

GNWT Response

According to the 2006 Statistics Canada Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, approximately 8.2 percent of the Northwest Territories’ population ages 15-64 self-identify as persons with disabilities. The number of GNWT employees who self-identified as being a resident person with a disability is less than 1 percent. In order to get a more accurate measure of the number of GNWT employees with disabilities the GNWT issued an Inclusive Public Service Survey in the spring of 2012.

Increasing the representation of designated priority groups in the public service, including persons with disabilities, is an objective of the *20/20: A Brilliant North, Public Service Strategic Plan*. The GNWT understands that a workplace rich in diversity improves its ability to serve the public and is committed to increasing the number of employees with disabilities in the public service.

A number of initiatives are currently underway that are aimed at both increasing the representation of employees with disabilities and supporting employees with disabilities in the public service. Efforts to date include:

- The GNWT Advisory Committee on Employability (GACE) was created in 2010 to strengthen relationships with government, non-government organizations and the unions and to provide recommendations aimed at increasing the representation of persons with disabilities within the public service. GACE developed a new definition of “disability” that is applied to human resources initiatives which do not pertain

specifically to the provision of priority hiring consideration where the definition in the Affirmative Action Policy must be used. The definition includes up-to-date, more sensitive terminology and aims to encourage individuals to self-declare that they are employees with disabilities.

- GACE has assisted with the development of a draft Framework to Increase the Representation of Persons with Disabilities in the public service.
- Creation of the Diversity Officer and Duty to Accommodate Advisor positions. In 2010 these positions were created to work with managers and employees across the public service to ensure that the needs of employees with disabilities are accommodated. They are also responsible for promoting awareness about disabilities and inclusion in the work place.
- An Inclusive Public Service Survey was issued by the Bureau of Statistics to provide the GNWT with more accurate base-line data with respect to the number of employees with disabilities and provide valuable information on the inclusiveness of the GNWT as a workplace and employer. The new definition of “disability” developed by GACE was used in the survey. Survey results are currently being compiled and will be shared with Members of the Legislative Assembly during the fall session of the Legislature.
- A disability awareness campaign was launched across GNWT workplaces intended to create awareness about unseen disabilities among fellow workers and provide information about the GNWT Advisory Committee on Employability.
- A disability awareness training program was developed and delivered in every Regional Centre in the first quarter of the 2012. Future training sessions will be made available annually and training materials will also be available via online access.
- The Department of Human Resources reviewed a recommendation from GACE to address discrepancies between GNWT websites and web accessibility guidelines, in accordance with the World Wide Web Consortium’s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0. The department will take accessibility guidelines into consideration as its websites are updated.
- The *Duty to Accommodate Policy and Guidelines* were approved by FMB on August 5, 2011.
- The Department of Human Resources provides training to managers and supervisors regarding the GNWT’s *Duty to Accommodate Policy* and the steps and processes involved in order to accommodate employees with disabilities. To date, 204 supervisors/managers have participated in the training.
- The Department of Human Resources includes diversity and the Duty to Accommodate as a component of orientation training.

- Advice is provided daily by the Department of Human Resources to managers and supervisors on their obligations and best practices in regards to accommodating employees with disabilities in the workplace.
- In 2011-12, the baseline year, 20 permanent/long term accommodations were finalized. Since mid-2010, the Department of Human Resources has provided advice and assistance regarding permanent, long term, and temporary accommodations for approximately 400 employees.
- Accommodation measures are individualized and treated on a case by case basis depending upon the employee's limitations and restrictions as well as job demands. Management of accommodation cases is usually ongoing with updated medical information needed and modifications to accommodation plans required. There are approximately 100 active accommodation files at any one time that require return to work plans and accommodations to enable employees to remain in the workplace or successfully return to work.