



HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Newfoundland and Labrador

Human Rights Commission

Activity Plan 2023-26



Message from our Chair

In keeping with the requirements of a Category 3 Entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, I am pleased to present the Human Rights Commission's 2023-26 three-year Activity Plan.

The Activity Plan takes into consideration the strategic directions of the Provincial Government as communicated by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety. These strategic directions have been taken into account.

My signature below indicates that as Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission, I am accountable for the preparation of this plan and the achievement of the objectives.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judy A. White". The signature is written in a cursive style and is set against a light grey rectangular background.

Judy White, KC
Chairperson

Overview

The Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission (the Commission) is an independent Government Agency responsible for promoting and protecting human rights in the province. We do this by:

- Administering the **Human Rights Act, 2010**;
- Investigating and resolving human rights complaints;
- Giving legal information to individuals, groups and organizations who are concerned with human rights;
- Preventing discrimination through education and training; and,
- Working with community partners.

The **Human Rights Act, 2010** is a provincial law that protects people in Newfoundland and Labrador from discrimination and harassment. The Act recognizes the inherent dignity and worth of all people that we all have equal rights and opportunities and that we should live free from discrimination and harassment.

Legislative Mandate

Section 23 of the **Human Rights Act, 2010** states that the Commission shall:

- promote the principle that every person is equal in dignity and rights without regard to a prohibited ground of discrimination;
- promote an understanding of, acceptance of and compliance with this Act;
- distribute information and develop and conduct educational programs and research designed to eliminate discriminatory practices related to a prohibited ground of discrimination;
- advise and assist Government Departments, and Agencies of the government, and co-ordinate their activities where these activities concern human rights;
- advise the Government on suggestions, recommendations and requests made by private organizations, groups and individuals where these suggestions, recommendations and requests concern human rights;



- co-operate with and help a person, an organization or a group concerned with human rights, whether within or outside the province;
- report as required by the Minister on the business and activities of the commission; and
- 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.

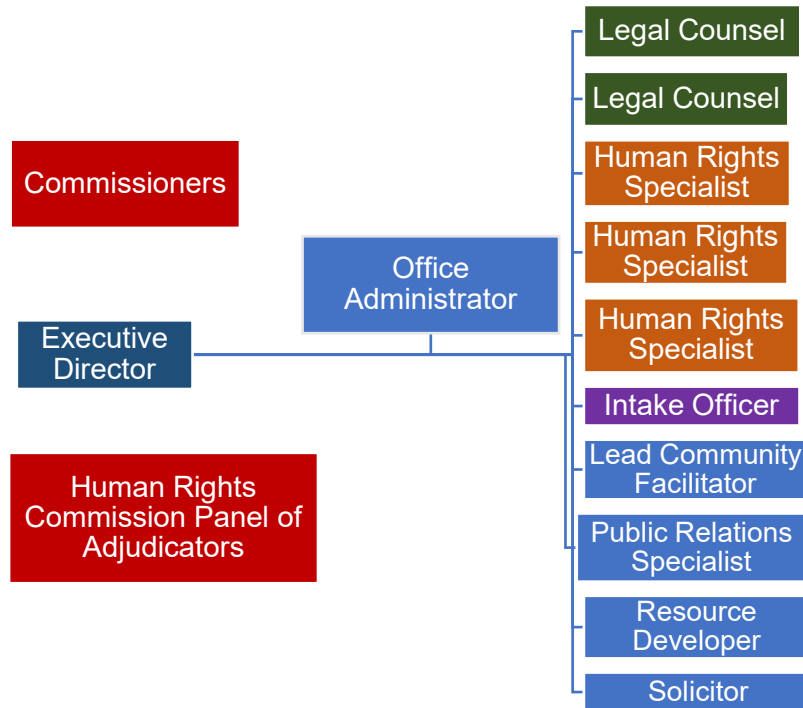
The Human Rights Commission does not present separate Lines of Business as they are reflected in the Mandate.

Vision

For Newfoundland and Labrador to 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.

Who we are

The office staff administer the **Human Rights Act, 2010** and run the day-to-day operations of the Commission. The Commission serves the people of Newfoundland and Labrador from our office in St. John's. The Human Rights Commission is located at 84-86 Regatta Plaza on the second floor. The office is currently staffed by eight permanent positions which are the Executive Director, three Human Rights Specialists, two Lawyers, one Intake Officer, and one Administrative Officer. The Executive Director of the Commission is the Chief Executive Officer and Secretary to the Commission. As of April 1, 2023, the Commission has four contract positions including a Lead Community Facilitator, a Public Relations Specialist, a Community Justice Connect Resource Developer, and a Solicitor.



Human Rights Commissioners, who have experience with human rights issues and who have an interest in and sensitivity to human rights, are appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council for a five-year term. Commissioners meet regularly to make decisions on the disposition of complaints, special programs and discuss the strategic direction of the Human Rights Commission. As of April 1, 2023, the Commission members were:

- Judy White, KC, Chair
- Dr. Smita Joshi, Vice-Chair
- Madelyn Kelly
- Victor Lundrigan
- David Oxford
- Collen Simms
- Lauren Carter
- Soraya Carrim White

The Human Rights Commission Panel of Adjudicators is independent of the statutory office of the Human Rights Commission. They are responsible for making a final determination on whether discrimination or harassment happened or not.



Primary Clients

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.

To learn more about the Human Rights Commission please see the Commission's website at: www.thinkhumanrights.ca.



Strategic Issues (2023-26)

Throughout the next three years, the Commission will focus on enhancing its community presence to prevent discrimination and harassment. They will do this through public education and resource development.

The Commission will also be reviewing policies and resources to identify barriers and eliminate gaps in service. This will include conducting a scan of human rights legislation in other jurisdictions and working with the Department of Justice and Public Safety on potential updates to the **Human Rights Act, 2010**. This will be done with the intent of enhancing the protection of human rights throughout the province.

Issue 1: Enhancing Community Engagement

In the past, the Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission faced challenges fully meeting the prevention aspect of its mandate. This includes community engagement and education. The Human Rights Commission hired a dedicated, contractual Public Relations Specialist in 2022 to achieve this aspect of its mandate. They also received funding to hire a contractual Solicitor and increase capacity at Community Justice Connect by recruiting a Recourse Development Coordinator. During 2023-26, the Human Rights Commission will focus on enhancing community engagement to ensure that everyone is aware of their rights under the **Human Rights Act, 2010** and of the Commission's role in assisting those who are concerned their rights may have been violated. The Human Rights Commission provides invaluable information to individuals, public institutions, employers, and businesses on human rights to highlight their responsibility to uphold and protect them. The Human Rights Commission views the Public Relations Specialist role, and the other contractual positions including the Lead Community Facilitator, the Solicitor, and the Resource Development Coordinator, as essential to these initiatives. The following objectives identify this focus over the next three years.

Objective 1.1: By March 31, 2024, the Commission will have connected with community organizations across the province to inform residents, businesses and organizations on human rights.

Indicators:

- Held discussion panels with community stakeholders and advocates on the topic of human rights.
- Distributed resource materials to organizations and community groups across the province.
- Engaged with organizations and community groups to determine interest in human rights information sessions.
- Facilitated human rights presentations to inform people in Newfoundland and Labrador about services offered by the Human Rights Commission.

Objective 1.2: By March 31, 2025, the Commission will have increased the number of information sessions provided to people within the province.

Objective 1.3: By March 31, 2026, the Commission will have increased its social media presence to promote human rights and the services they have to offer.

Issue 2: Review of Human Rights Policies and Resources

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the **Human Rights Act, 2010** protects people from discrimination and harassment by recognizing the inherent dignity and worth of all people. It is essential that policies and procedures are developed in a way that eliminates barriers to service and enhances protection. The Commission will review policies and procedures across Canada to ensure best practices with anti-discrimination laws. The following objectives focus on this work over the next three years.

Objective 2.1: By March 31, 2024, the Commission will have started a review of anti-discrimination policies and procedures.



Indicators:

- Completed a jurisdictional scan to determine current best practices across Canada in anti-discrimination policies and procedures.
- Consulted with key stakeholders to determine ways to enhance the processes established in the **Human Rights Act, 2010**.
- Reviewed current practices and procedures.

Objective 2.2: By March 31, 2025, the Commission will have continued the review and identified gaps in policies and procedures that are preventing people throughout the province from being protected.

Objective 2.3: By March 31, 2026, the Human Rights Commission will have completed the review of anti-discrimination policies and procedures.