



ONA Equity Bulletin

News Bites from the Human Rights and Equity Team

ONTARIO NURSES' ASSOCIATION

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DID YOU KNOW?

DIVERSITY FACTS

Here's a sobering number: one in eight Canadians has a disability. That's a total of 3.6-million people. And here's even more sobering news. For Canada's Aboriginal population, the rate of disability is particularly high: more than one-and-a-half times the rate for the non-Aboriginal population. Women are more likely than men to have a disability, regardless of age. As well, women on average also live longer, which makes them more likely to develop an age-related chronic condition that leads to disability.

Source: *Advancing the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities 2004*, Human Resources and Social Development Canada

Upcoming Human Rights Events/ Resources

- The April 2008 edition of *Front Lines* will include a fact sheet on "Frequently Asked Questions: Homophobia and Heterosexism."

- Human Rights and Equity Caucus: November 17, 2008

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A Message from ONA's Vice-President Human Rights and Equity Team



Every November, ONA holds its Human Rights and Equity Caucus, an event I always look forward to.

On November 13 of this year, 180 ONA members gathered at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel in Toronto for an exciting day of networking and education. It gave the Provincial President and me the opportunity to bring members up to date on the union's activities in the area of human rights and equity and to connect with members from across the province. Meeting members committed to advancing human rights in their workplaces inspires me in my work as the Vice-President holding the human rights portfolio.

In the designated group breakout sessions, members met up with old acquaintances and made new ones within their equity group. Members identified and discussed common issues facing equity group members in their workplaces or bargaining units.

Two education sessions were also presented to members on the timely and important issues of

workplace bullying and the accommodation of family status. Chris Hinkle, from Firm Foundations, spoke passionately to members about the experience of workplace bullying and the importance of reporting bullying to the union and employer. Kim Bernhardt, labour and human rights lawyer, broadened our awareness about the legal concept of family status and showed us how the legal landscape is in flux regarding the employer's obligations to provide accommodation of needs related to family status.

Indications are that these education sessions hit the mark. Members described them as "superb," "very helpful," "most interesting" and "a great learning experience." The challenge now is to apply our learnings in our workplaces and bargaining units. After all, we all have a role to play in creating healthy workplaces. As victims or witnesses, we must stand up to bullying! As parents with childcare obligations and/or as children with eldercare responsibilities, we need to identify where we need more flexibility in our workplaces and explore ways to gain this flexibility through our workplace committees, in collective bargaining and through existing provisions in our collective agreements.

All the best for a happy and healthy 2008.

ONA Establishing Alliance of Human Rights and Equity

As part of our ongoing commitment to the important area of human rights and equity, ONA is creating an alliance of Human Rights and Equity Representatives.

The group will develop ONA best practices on key human rights

issues, which will be shared with the bargaining unit HR&E Representatives through the communications framework. A working group of five HR&E Representatives will be provided with dedicated support from ONA's HR&E Specialist with the aim of enhancing their knowledge base on the

issues and supporting their participation on their workplace human rights/diversity committees.

The Human Rights and Equity Representatives participating in the working group are:

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- Region 1 Charlene McNevin Local 2
- Region 2 Celine Peladeau Local 83
- Region 3 Shameer Majeed Local 54
- Region 3 Gary Chaulk Local 97
- Region 5 Barb Porter Local 8

The pilot working group will connect monthly by teleconference for a period of one year. There will be a formal evaluation of the process before the alliance is rolled out to the broader audience of the bargaining unit HR&E Representatives. To be included in this alliance, the HR&E Representative must be listed in

ONA's database.

If you are interested in becoming a Human Rights and Equity Representative in your workplace or are concerned you may not be currently listed as the Human Rights Representative in ONA's database, please contact your Bargaining Unit President.

No Maternity Leave for Adoptive Mothers...Yet

The Federal Court of Appeal has dismissed a B.C. mother's claims for maternity benefits when she adopted her children in 1999 and 2003.

Patti Tomasson was granted parental benefits, but denied the 15 weeks of maternity benefits to which birth mothers are entitled. Tomasson argued that the *Employment Insurance Act* gave differential treatment to biological mothers allowing them more time for bonding and child care than adoptive mothers.

The court found that the purpose of maternity benefits is to support biological mothers during the period surrounding childbirth when it is impossible for them to work because of their physical condition. The court found that compensating biological mothers for not being able to work was not discrimination against anyone else.

The court rejected Tomasson's argument that maternity

benefits have the dual purpose of supporting a mother's bonding with her child as well as recovery from childbirth. Adoptive mothers often need as much or more time than birth mothers for bonding as they have no attachment to an adopted child at the beginning and the adoption process can be stressful.

In October 2007, Tomasson filed a Leave to Appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. A leave may be granted when the Supreme Court finds that the case raises an issue of public importance that goes beyond the immediate interest of the parties to the case. The outcome of this legal challenge will have an impact for anyone pursuing adoption, whether heterosexual couples, gay or lesbian couples or individuals, and ONA is hopeful that the Supreme Court will decide to hear the appeal.

Stay tuned.

PROTEST POEM

I really don't understand racial profiling,
How could someone be so mean and stay smiling?
I couldn't think of examples so I thought I would ask you
But decided to make examples out of kids from my classroom.
Just because I'm black doesn't mean I carry a gun
Or write raps and rob people for fun
Just because Mario's Mexican doesn't mean he's out of order,
He's not from the ghetto and didn't jump over the border
Just because Casey's white doesn't mean he wears his pants tight
Or is ready for the future and has all of his plans right
Just because Brian's Jewish doesn't mean he's a Rabbi
And just because Craig wears a Du-Wrag doesn't make him a bad guy
We don't see the world for what it is because we have bad eyes
And mine cry for the kids because I see their sad eyes
Forced into this world and grouped into a clique,
Do they get to choose their own...that decision is split,
Between what they want to be and what we want them to be,
It sounds like people are doing too much wanting to me

I want judgment to stop but how do you stop it,
No pun intended but I want to pop, lock and drop it
Not with a gun, my mouth, my righteous weapon
And with that said I have only one question
How could you hate someone because of the colour of their skin
I thought that era was over now...how long has it been
I'm tired of all the ignorance, I'm tired of all the hate,
What has the world come to...you know what, you debate!

Author: Dexter Fundire – 2007 Youth Exchange Student from Zimbabwe—Rotary International, Southwestern Ontario

Submitted by Barb Porter, Local 8, ONA Human Rights and Equity Team member

Send us your feedback!

The Human Rights and Equity Team would like to hear what's going on at your bargaining unit or local and how we can provide support or assistance. Contact us at:

HumanRightsAndEquityTeam@ona.org