

XXIV. CONCLUSION: MOVING FORWARD

The new human rights enforcement system proposed by the Task Force has a number of components which must function interdependently in order for the overall system to be effective.

First, a community based Equality Services Board will provide support and assistance for human rights claimants around the province. Second, the Equality Rights Board will allow claims to be heard in a timely and accessible manner. And third, the Human Rights Ontario will play a strategic and proactive role to advance equality rights.

The system will benefit from the energy and expertise of equality seeking groups, who for the first time will be able to initiate significant cases.

Those groups who have responsibility under the *Code* to implement equality rights will be encouraged to take a proactive and positive approach so as to prevent the need for claims to be filed.

The government has a particularly crucial role to play by setting an example in promoting equality, both in its employment practices and in the delivery of services.

The system put forward by the Task Force can only work as an integrated whole. If one part is omitted, the ability of the overall system to function effectively will be jeopardized. For example, without advocacy services the rights in the *Code* will mean little. In addition, the Tribunal will be unable to function efficiently if numbers of unprepared claims come forward for a hearing.

Similarly, if the Human Rights Ontario is not able to play a strategic, proactive role to overcome broad patterns of discrimination, then endless individual claims will continue to come forward.

The Task Force emphasizes, therefore, that the system it recommends must be implemented and funded as a coherent whole.

In the view of the Task Force, the open process it has recommended, with access to hearings and community based assistance for claimants, will mean claims are handled and resolved in a more timely and efficient manner.

More claims will, without question, have a hearing. And, in the view of the Task Force, so they should. The present 96% rate of cases not being heard is simply no longer acceptable.

If a large number of serious, valid human rights cases come to the Human Rights Tribunal and the Tribunal cannot handle them, this will be a message that either more effective

proactive measures must be taken to overcome discrimination, or else the resources of the Human Rights Tribunal must be increased.

If serious cases of discrimination come forward, they must be dealt with. Cutting off access to rights is not the solution.

No-one would suggest denying people access to the regular court system because the volume of property rights cases was too high.

Access to the proposed human rights enforcement system must be assured, as must access to advocacy services for claimants.

The Task Force calls for the support and commitment of all parties in the Legislature to implement the new system so that the rights of all Ontarians are respected.