



News Release February 25, 2014

## **Leadership changes at the Manitoba Human Rights Commission**

There are changes at the Manitoba Human Rights Commission. The Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Executive Director are taking on their new roles. Former Vice-Chairperson Yvonne Peters is now Chairperson and Elliot Leven is Vice-Chairperson of the Manitoba Human Rights Board of Commissioners. Within weeks of becoming Chairperson, Yvonne Peters announced that Azim Jiwa would be its next executive director.

Mr. Jiwa's interest in law follows his desire for justice. Armed with a Law Degree and a Master of Laws, for which he researched constitutional law with a particular emphasis on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Immigration Law, it naturally followed that human rights would be in his future. He believes that the Commission has two important functions.

"The Human Rights Commission has a dual role," Mr Jiwa says. "First, it is the place to turn to when faced with discrimination and second, its education mandate is significant."

Mr. Jiwa sees many challenges facing the Commission, especially the growing number of systemic complaints. "The commission has had numerous successes dealing with systemic discrimination" he says. "Although these cases can be very complex and require many resources, it is important to understand that *The Human Rights Code* can be used as a tool to achieve this type of change."

He also sees the Commission as a driving force in human rights awareness and education, especially at the school level.

"It may be simplistic," he says, "but really the message of human rights is that we need to learn to get along."

In the future Mr. Jiwa is hoping to expand the Commission's presence in schools and look to the future by continuing to forge a relationship with the Canadian Museum of Human Rights.

Mr. Jiwa practiced law for several years as well as pursuing other interests such as teaching before working for the Department of Housing with the Manitoba Government. He also taught criminal law and criminal procedure at the University of Winnipeg.

The new Chairperson Yvonne Peters has years of experience on both the Board of Commissioners and as an equity rights lawyer in Winnipeg. Her community work includes serving as a council member of the Manitoba Bar Association and as a member of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities' Human Rights Committee.

Elliot Leven is also a long-serving commissioner on the Board. Mr. Leven is a lawyer and his preferred areas of practice are labour and employment law and Aboriginal law.

And there is a new appointment to the Board of Commissioners. Loretta Ross is a member of the Hollow Water First Nation in Manitoba and a Winnipeg lawyer.

For more information please contact  
Patricia Knipe  
Manitoba Human Rights Commission  
204-945-5112  
[Patricia.knipe@gov.mb.ca](mailto:Patricia.knipe@gov.mb.ca)