

Frequently Asked Questions About Employment Equity

What is the purpose of the Employment Equity Act (EEA)?

The purpose of EEA is to ensure that no person is denied employment opportunities and benefits for reasons unrelated to ability. It requires employers to correct disadvantages in the workplace experienced by members of the four designated groups: women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and visible minorities.

What does the EEA require of employers?

The EA requires that employers identify and eliminate employment barriers for designated group members that result from the employer's employment systems, policies, and practices. The goal is to institute positive policies and practices and make reasonable accommodations so that the representation of persons in designated groups in the employer's workforce reflects their representation in the Canadian workforce.

In Summary,

**Employment Equity is an on-going
process used by an employer to:**

- Identify and eliminate barriers in an organization's employment procedures and policies;
- Put into place positive policies and practice to ensure the effects of systemic barriers are eliminated; and
- Ensure appropriate representation of designated group members throughout their workforce.

The goal of Employment Equity is to:

- Eliminate employment barriers for the four designated groups identified in the EEA;
- Remedy past discrimination through employment opportunities;
- Improve access and distribution throughout all occupations and at all levels for members of the four designated groups;
- Foster a climate of equity in the organization.



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For more information, please visit:
cnc.bc.ca/human-rights-special-program

Human Rights Special Program

CNC is committed to embracing the principles of employment equity and developing a workforce that supports and reflects the diverse population of our region.

Defining CNC Special Program Positions

At CNC, the long-term goal is to have employment equity that will include all employee groups who have been disadvantaged. Following mediation and with the support of CUPE and the Faculty Association, CNC applied to the Human Rights Tribunal for a Special Program to recognize Aboriginal ancestry as a bona fide employment qualification.

Aboriginal ancestry and heritage have common definitions; however, for the purposes of this Committee it is defined as follows:

- Aboriginal ancestry is something you are born with, whereas heritage is something that can be acquired. For example, a Caucasian person can be raised by an Aboriginal family; therefore, they have Aboriginal heritage, but not Aboriginal ancestry.
- CNC Special Program allows positions to specify Aboriginal ancestry as a qualification.

Position Designation Categories

A position could be identified as a designated Special Program position if it falls into one of these categories;

- ▶ **Category A**—Position provides direct service to primarily Aboriginal students.
- ▶ **Category B**—Position instructs courses whose content is primarily Aboriginal.
- ▶ **Category C**—Service and/or program is funded through Aboriginal-specific funding initiatives.

Restricted Positions:

CNC may state the position requires a person of Aboriginal ancestry, who also meets all other necessary requirements and would under no circumstances hire a non-Aboriginal person.

Preferred Positions:

CNC may choose to consider non-Aboriginal applicants with the other necessary qualifications if there are no qualified applicants with Aboriginal ancestry.

If you have any questions about CNC's Special Program, please do not hesitate to contact any of the individuals on the Communications Committee.



Myths About Employment Equity It is Reverse Discrimination

Discrimination is the denial of equal treatment and opportunities to individuals or groups. It can occur based on race, nationality, gender, age, religion, political affiliation, marital or family status, physical or psychiatric disability, or sexual orientation. The term 'reverse discrimination' has been created and used by people who have privilege to deny their privilege and is often used by men and Caucasians to refer to affirmative action/employment equity policies.

Let's look at the idea of discrimination in reverse using the example of men and women. If men and women were equally distributed in all job levels and salary levels of an organization, it would be discriminatory to selectively advertise for women or to offer special training programs for them. But they are not. 'Reverse discrimination' implies that women, non-Caucasian workers and people with disabilities are being preferred over Caucasian, able-bodied male workers. The facts show that it is minority workers and women who face discrimination in not having access to educational programs and training and being denied jobs and promotions even when they do have the qualifications and experience.

Until all groups catch up, special, positive measures are needed to make sure they are represented in the workplace at the same levels as in the community.

Employment Equity Means Hiring Unqualified Workers

Employment equity plans call for the hiring of qualified candidates from designated groups and others. This ensures that qualified workers who were previously kept out of jobs will have the opportunity to fill them. A qualified worker is someone who comes to the job with all the skills required. Someone who can do the job from the first day or with a reasonable amount of training. Getting access to that training is an important key to employment equity. Providing support and mentoring is another critical factor. It would defeat and undermine the purpose of employment equity to hire unqualified workers just to reach the numerical targets set for each designated group.

There Will Be Overnight Change in the Make-up of the Workplace

The workforce will not change overnight. The law allows for slow changes in the workforce make-up, especially when the economy is down. Employment equity is a negotiated process of change. Once plans are negotiated and posted, changes in hiring and promotion can only happen as opportunities for change become available.