

Routine Proceedings

Administration Act as a result of amendments that were passed in December 1992 as part of the Public Service Reform Act.

I would like to remind hon. members of the important role—those who were of course in the last House will recognize this—that my parliamentary secretary, the hon. member for Ottawa West, played in ensuring that this report would be tabled in the House.

Indeed, when the act was in committee she introduced an amendment that the government of the day accepted and that became the section on employment equity in the Financial Administration Act.

In speaking in the committee the hon. member for Ottawa West said that the amendment represented a renewed commitment to some very positive action to ensure that people in the four designated groups are no longer denied opportunities to be whatever they are capable of being in the public service of this country.

[Translation]

To return to the annual report that I have tabled, I should note that the Treasury Board has been publishing employment equity data since 1988.

[English]

These information packages which were made available to the public, although not tabled in this Parliament, have provided useful information on the state of employment equity in the public service.

However, they did not show the range of positive initiatives and activities that the Treasury Board and the Public Service Commission together with departments had been taking to advance the goals of employment equity programs.

The annual report that I have just tabled tries to fill that gap. As the act states, the purpose of employment equity programs and policies in the public service is to improve employment and career opportunities for four designated groups. They are women, particularly women in non-traditional and executive positions, aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and, finally, persons who because of their race or colour are in a visible minority.

How are we to achieve this result: By eliminating employment barriers against persons in designated groups; by introducing and supporting, as the legislation requires, positive policies and practices; and by trying to ensure that persons in designated groups are represented in the public service in proportion to their representation in the workforce of this country and of the particular communities they serve in. However, focusing on the number of designated group members in the public service is not enough. Public service managers and employees must value diversity and must show it consistently through their actions.

At this time I want to reiterate the government's commitment to employment equity and specifically its commitment to employment equity in the public service. It was in the red book, we made that point and we stick by it.

The numerical goal of employment equity may be more difficult to achieve in times when the public service has stopped growing. However, let me assure hon. members that the employment equity program is a high priority of this government and that we will do everything possible to ensure that its goals are met.

[Translation]

For example, just three months ago, we made a lot of changes to the Special Measures Program that was put in place by a Liberal government in 1983.

[English]

The report does not provide details of these revisions because it covers the period April 1, 1992 to March 31, 1993 which is before we came into office. However, I would like to inform the House that the Treasury Board has approved funding for a restructured special measures initiative program which will provide for pilot projects co-funded with departments that help increase our employment equity opportunities.

One of these initiatives aims to improve, for example, employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in the public service.

• (1205)

As of April 1, 1994, I am pleased to announce that a special fund of \$500,000 will be created to assist employees with disabilities. This is replacing a program that was a mere \$40,000 I might add. This assistance includes attendant care, modifications to computer equipment, materials and alternative formats and special telephone equipment.

Second, retention of aboriginal employees is of concern to the government. The Treasury Board is developing a guide for managers to help them create a work environment that will encourage aboriginal employees to join and to remain in the public service.

Furthermore, an executive development program for persons in a visible minority is being extended. Of course the recruitment program for visible minorities is also being continued.

The progress of women in the public service has been steady and we shall be putting more emphasis on the development of opportunities for women in the public service.

Courses on cultural awareness and diversity in the workforce are widely available to both public service managers and employees who are encouraged to take such training. It is important to set the right atmosphere in our public service and that kind of program helps a great deal.