

strategies, training strategies, labour relations and education. Employment equity is a key policy instrument in achieving well-being for all and in shaping a new labour market. Lasting solutions to the employment problems of disadvantaged groups will come only from attacking the root causes of employment inequity.

When she first appeared before the Committee, the Minister of State for Employment and Immigration stated that:

I am prepared, as minister responsible for employment equity, to use the full area of employment services, programs and legislation to make employment equity work...

I think it is important to be clear about the nature of the employment equity issue. It is not only a social issue. It is not a woman's issue, or a racial issue. Employment equity is first and foremost an employment issue of concern to all Canadians.

The Committee shares the Minister's view of both the importance of the issue and the range of initiatives required to make employment equity a realizable goal.

A. Partnerships

During its review, the Committee was presented with some impressive examples of how partnerships among various parties had made progress in working toward employment equity. Some Aboriginal groups and employers' organizations spoke of the positive effects of the employers' involvement with the community and the importance of cross-cultural exchanges. Visible minority groups noted successful proactive partnerships that included monitoring and apprenticeship programs. Contacts between employers and persons with disabilities have in some instances led to positive proposals for change.

Generally speaking, representatives of the various interested groups argued that equity in employment would be attained more easily if they were included in the process. Employers commented that they would support a forum where they could share positive ideas with each other and with the designated groups, and meet representatives from the educational system. Visible minority groups stated that they wanted to be part of any discussions about the direction of employment equity. Aboriginal organizations argued that employers could best recruit Aboriginal peoples by working with relevant native service and political organizations. Some groups representing people with disabilities told the Committee that, in their experience, many employers needed to develop associations with them.

The witnesses suggested that the monitoring agency should strive to ensure that partnerships flourish in order to encourage the elimination of systemic barriers and foster the employment of members of the designated groups. The agency responsible for administering the Act should ensure the cooperation of all those with an interest in the issue.

The Committee is aware that the Department of Employment and Immigration (EIC) has done some preliminary work to foster the type of partnerships that are required for successful implementation of employment equity. Many initiatives, however, are pilot programs or address areas that EIC has just begun to explore; nor are these projects centralized in any particular area but are funded from the array of programs and grants that EIC administers. In these circumstances, the Committee wonders whether the systematic fostering of partnerships and coordination has been considered, let alone implemented.