

ACCOMMODATING DIVERSITY – STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

Speaking Notes for Avvy Go, Clinic Director, Metro Toronto Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic

About the Clinic

- Metro Toronto Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic (MTCSALC) is one of 80 community legal clinics funded by Legal Aid Ontario.
- MTCSALC is a specialty clinic. Its mandate is to provide free legal services to low income, non-English speaking members of Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian communities in Toronto.
- Many legal clinics including MTCSALC represent clients before administrative tribunals.

Diversity vs. Equity

- Ontario is home to about 20% visible minorities (or members of racialized communities)
- More than half all immigrants to Canada settle in Ontario
- By 2011, every new entrance to the labour force is an immigrant
- By 2017, one-third of population in Ontario will be visible minorities (or members of racialized communities)
- Members of racialized communities in Toronto are 2 to 3 times more likely to live in poverty than the rest of the population
- Between 1981 and 2000, poverty rate in Toronto dropped by 28% for non-racialized families. During that same period, poverty rate for racialized families increased by 361%
- Members of racialized communities as well as immigrants are more likely to work in low-waged, non-unionized jobs
- The employment income of immigrant men dropped from 85 cents for each dollar received by Canadian-born men in 1980 to 63 cents in 2005 and the corresponding numbers for recent immigrant women were 85 cents and 56 cents
- Recent immigrant men holding a degree earned only 48 cents to the dollar relative to their Canadian-born counterparts while the earning gap for non-university

- Students of colour and students with disability are more likely to be suspended or expelled under the Safe Schools Act
- African Canadians are over-represented in the criminal justice system
- The 2008 World Health Organization report confirms “social injustice is killing people on a grand scale”. Political, economic and social inequities are largely responsible for people not enjoying good health.
- Is “accommodating diversity” really the right question to ask?
- Or should the question be how to promote equity and respect for human rights?

Questions for the Tribunal

- How do inequities and discrimination of all forms manifest in the cases that come before the Tribunal?
- What measures has the Tribunal put in place to ensure that it does not perpetuate inequities and discrimination in the matters that come before it?
- Does the Tribunal provide anti-racism and anti-oppression training to its members?
- Does the Tribunal provide social context training to its members?
- Does the Tribunal provide free interpretation services to the non-English speaking parties who appear before the Tribunal and who cannot afford to pay for interpretation?
- What kind of support does the Tribunal require to promote equity?
- How can other stakeholders, including legal clinics, support the Tribunal in order to promote equity?