



Claire Roussel-Sullivan
Chairperson: 2020-2023

Looking back on your time as Chairperson, what do you think was the Commission's greatest accomplishment in the past 3 years?

In the last three years, I think the greatest accomplishment for the Commission is, firstly, the additional resources and budget that the Commission was able to get. That allowed us to have more efficiency in our operations, and better timelines for dealing with complaints.

Secondly, our presence on social media. We have done a lot of work in that area thanks to some of the great employees at the Commission. We have a presence now on social media and that is important to educate and advocate for some of the human rights issues we have in the province.

And thirdly, the composition of the Commission members. We are now more diverse, and we show the diversity that we have in New Brunswick and that is also very important.

You took on the role of Chairperson in 2020. How do you think the pandemic impacted different protected groups, and how did you see the Commission respond to these challenges?

So, during the pandemic, it [the pandemic] had significant impact on a number of groups. We saw the impact of that through the number of complaints we received. And the other point I will make is that, during the pandemic, we didn't have an opportunity to have face-to-face meetings as much as we would have liked to.

You know, starting three years ago, we were right in the middle of the pandemic. That's one of my regrets as Chair of the Commission not being able to meet some of these groups. We have done some of it in the last few months and maybe in the last year, but we could have done more. So we have some catching up to do in that respect. So yes, it's [the pandemic] had an impact; a lot of complaints related to pandemic issues, not necessarily the pandemic itself, but issues related to the pandemic.

What do you see as New Brunswick's greatest human rights challenge and how can the province and the Commission meet this challenge?

We have a lot of challenges in New Brunswick for a human rights perspective. We are a welcoming province, but we need to do better, and we need to do more and be even more

welcoming to all groups. In particular newcomers to New Brunswick coming from different parts of the world or different parts of Canada for that matter.

We also have some issues from a housing perspective, from a disabilities perspective. As you may know, more than half of our complaints are disability related, not only from a physical disability perspective, but also mental disability. Those are situations we need to do more work to make sure that we fully understand the issues related to disability in New Brunswick and to educate people on their responsibilities and roles from that perspective.

What is your greatest hope for the new Chairperson and for the future of human rights in the province?

My hope for the next Chair, Phylomène, is that she'll continue the work that we started, and because she's been on the Commission, as a member, for the last few months, she is already aware of some of the matters that we deal with.

She will be, I'm sure, working with some of the communities that we've worked with; LGBTQ+ communities, as well as I know that she will continue the work that we started on the governance of the Commission. For instance, the Commission needs to have more independence and be seen as more impartial and objective than we currently are, and I trust Phylomène will continue that work.