



CLEO Connect
Training and tools for community workers

Supporting clients with Canadian Human Rights Act complaints

Tuesday, September 15, 2026 from 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. EST

Speakers:

Amanda Montague-Reinholdt, Legal and Programs Director, Workers' Education and Rights Collective



Brought to you by:

CLEO



Land Acknowledgement

CLEO acknowledges that our office is located on the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat. This land is now also home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. This area of Tkaronto, also known as Toronto, is covered by Treaty 13 signed by the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Williams Treaties signed by multiple Mississauga and Chippewa First Nations.

We acknowledge the ongoing impacts of colonization, anti-Indigenous racism, and white supremacy on which this city and our legal system are built. We are all Treaty people and we commit to working in solidarity towards truth and reconciliation.



CLEO Resources

Steps to Justice – free legal information

- stepstojustice.ca

Guided Pathways – help completing legal forms

- stepstojustice.ca/guided-pathways-home/

CLEO publications – free print resources

- cleo.on.ca

CLEO Connect – training for community workers

- cleoconnect.ca



What can you expect today?

- 90 minutes (1 presenter and 2 Q and A periods).
- The webinar may contain legal information. As a reminder, this is not legal advice. The information is current as of today's date, September 15, 2026.
- Links to the recording, slides, and handout will be sent by email to all registrants within a few days.
- ASL interpretation is available today. Subtitles (closed captioning) have also been enabled.



Department of Justice
Canada

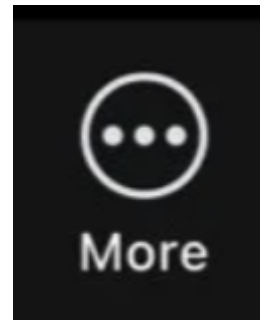
Enabling Closed Captioning



To use the Closed Captioning feature, click on the icon with two C's in your Zoom controls:



If you don't see this icon, try clicking on the More icon with three dots:



Speaker Introduction



Amanda Montague-Reinholdt, Legal and Programs
Director, Workers' Education and Rights Collective



Supporting clients with *Canadian Human Rights Act* complaints

Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses
werc-cedt.ca

About WERC



Mission - To empower workers to exercise their rights through legal education, information, and support

Who we serve - Ottawa residents, and federally regulated workers and complainants across Canada

Key Activities – plain-language resources, workshops and webinars, one-on-one legal information sessions, law and policy reform

Focus areas – Labour, employment, human rights, environment

Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses

What we will cover today:

- **What the *Canadian Human Rights Act* is and when it applies**
- **The four ingredients of a human rights complaint**
- **Important questions to ask and facts to gather**
- **How to file a complaint and the complaint process**
- **Where to get more help**

This session is legal information only. Questions are welcome, but do not share names or identifying information of clients.



Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses

What is the *Canadian Human Rights Act*?

- Canada's federal anti-discrimination law
- Protects people from discrimination by federally regulated organizations
- Complaint-based process
- Can be complex and difficult to navigate



Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses

What is discrimination?



Discrimination =

unfair treatment + link to ground(s) of discrimination + negative impact on you

- Sometimes being treated **differently** than others
- Sometimes being treated **the same** as others, without considering your unique needs

Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses

Some important terms



Complainant - Person making a complaint that their rights were violated.

Respondent - Person or organization that the complaint is against.

Protected ground - A personal characteristic protected by the *Canadian Human Rights Act*.

Commission: Canadian Human Rights Commission. Receives and screens complaints.

Tribunal: Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. Holds hearings into complaints referred to it by the Commission.

Canadian Human Rights Act vs Ontario Human Rights Code

Similarities

- Anti-discrimination laws
- Similar (not identical) list of protected grounds
- Complaints are heard by a tribunal
- Tribunal can award a range of different remedies
- No costs awards
- Long delays



Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses

Canadian Human Rights Act vs Ontario Human Rights Code

Ontario Human Rights Code

- Applies to provincial government, public sector, most private business
- File complaints directly with Tribunal
- No limit on damages
- Human Rights Legal Support Centre

Canadian Human Rights Act

- Applies to federal government and federally regulated industries
- File complaints with Commission, which screens complaints
- \$20,000 limit on damages
- No dedicated legal clinic



Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses

A complaint must have four ingredients:

1. Unfair treatment linked to one or more protected **grounds** (personal characteristics)
2. in one of the **social areas** covered by the *Canadian Human Rights Act*
3. by a **federal organization**
4. that had a **negative impact** on the Complainant.



Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses

Protected Grounds



- **Disability**
(includes a previous or existing physical or mental disability, disfigurement, and previous or existing dependence on alcohol or drugs)
- **Genetic characteristics**
- **Race**
- **National or ethnic origin**
- **Colour**
- **Religion**
- **Age**
- **Sex** (includes pregnancy or childbirth)
- **Sexual orientation**
- **Gender identity or expression**
- **Marital status**
- **Family status** (includes childcare and eldercare obligations)
- **A conviction**
(for which a pardon has been granted or a record suspended)

**Discrimination may occur on multiple grounds.*

Discrimination may occur because someone **thinks you have one of the protected grounds.*

Discriminatory practices (social areas)

- **Goods, services, facilities, accommodation available to the general public**
 - Can be private or government services (banks, government departments)
- **Commercial premises or residential accommodation**
 - Applying to rent or renting housing or office space
 - Rarely a federal organization, except in First Nations contexts
- **Employment**
 - All stages of employment: applying, working, losing your job, belonging to a union



Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses

Federal Organizations

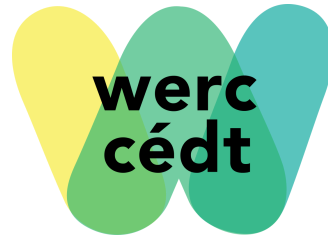
****Can be tricky!****

- Federal government
- Crown corporations
- Chartered banks
- Air transportation (airlines, airports, aircraft industries)
- First Nations bands and Indigenous self-governments
- International/interprovincial transportation
- Postal and courier services (that cross borders)
- Television and radio broadcasting
- Telecommunications
- Uranium mining and processing and atomic energy
- Grain elevators, feed and seed mills, feed warehouses and grain-seed cleaning plants



Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses

Negative Impact



- More than being offended
- Can be:
 - **Financial** – lost a job, lost income, had to pay expenses
 - **Social** – excluded by co-workers, affected relationships
 - **Physical** – new or worsened physical injury or illness
 - **Mental** – new or worsened mental illness
 - **Emotional** – felt hurt, angry, humiliated

Negative Impact → Remedies



- Some specific action (for example, rehire the client, install a ramp)
- End the discriminatory action
- Provide the client an opportunity they were denied
- Steps or programs to address the discrimination
- Payment for lost wages, other expenses related to the discrimination
- Payment for pain and suffering
- Payment for willful or reckless behaviour

Q & A



Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses



Scenario

Maya works as a courier.

Her disability has made her usual work schedule difficult. She asks her employer for a temporary change to her hours.

Her manager replies that every employee works the same schedule and refuses her request.

Does Maya have a *Canadian Human Rights Act* complaint?

What questions would you ask her?

**Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses**



Scenario

Maya works as a courier.

Her disability has made her usual work schedule difficult. She asks her employer for a temporary change to her hours.

Her manager replies that every employee works the same schedule and refuses her request.

Four ingredients:

- **Ground**
- **Social area**
- **Federal organization**
- **Negative impact**

Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses



Scenario

Maya works as a courier.

Her disability has made her usual work schedule difficult. She asks her employer for a temporary change to her hours.

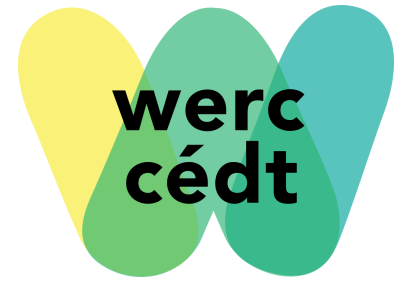
Her manager replies that every employee works the same schedule and refuses her request.

Four ingredients:

- **Ground** - disability ✓
- **Social area** - employment ✓
- **Federal organization** - need more info ?
- **Negative impact** - probably, need details ?

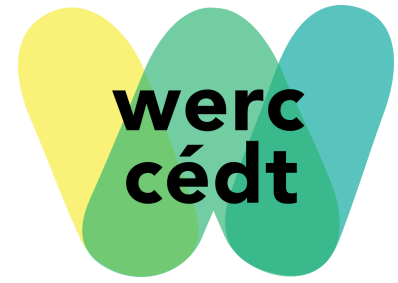
Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses

Questions to ask Maya:



- **Who is her employer?**
 - Courier companies may be federal (cross-border) or provincial (local)
- **How is the schedule impacting her disability?**
 - Confirm a need for accommodation vs. preference
- **Can the employer accommodate her needs?**
 - Employer has duty to accommodate to the point of undue hardship
- **Does she belong to a union?**
 - If she has access to a grievance procedure, she must access it
 - Grievance deadlines are often very short
- **When did the events happen?**
 - *Deadline for complaint: within one year of last act of discrimination*

Questions to ask Maya:



- ***What does she want?***

- Important to think about when deciding to file a complaint, and when considering possible settlements to a complaint along the way
- Complaints take a lot of resources (money, time, mental and emotional energy)
- Weigh the costs of pursuing the complaint against the potential remedies:
 - Lost wages
 - Change to working conditions
 - Systemic remedies (accommodation policy, training for employer)
 - Damages for pain and suffering (\$20,000 limit)

Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses

Information to gather:



- Contact information for Maya and her employer
- The facts of her complaint:
 - **What** happened (in chronological order)
 - **Who** was involved (names, job titles)
 - **When** (day it started and ended)
 - **Where** the events happened
 - **Why** Maya believes the unfair treatment is linked to her disability
 - **How** the events impacted her
- Save all important documents (emails, meeting notes, schedules) for later in the process

Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses

Filing a complaint



Online Complaint Form: <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/make-a-complaint> or

Complete and submit paper Complaint Form by:

Email complaint.plainte@chrc-ccdp.gc.ca

Fax 613-996-9661

Mail Canadian Human Rights Commission
Complaints Services
344 Slater Street, 8th Floor
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1E1

- ✓ *Take time to organize information*
- ✓ *Include as much detail as space permits*
- ✓ *Include what/when/where /why/how*

Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses



What happens next – Commission process

Important things to know about the Commission process:

- Commission reviews complaints and decides if they should go to Tribunal. They do **not** decide if client experienced discrimination or award remedies.
- Commission can help client try and resolve their complaint.
- Commission process can be ***confusing*** (a complaint may follow different paths) and ***long*** (client should be prepared for process to take years).

Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses

Commission process:



1. Commission decides whether to accept complaint

2. Commission gathers Response and Reply

- Client identifies remedies (what they want the Tribunal to order)

3. Commission assesses preliminary issues

- Not in every complaint
- May occur at different times in the process

4. Commission tries to resolve complaint through mediation or conciliation

- Mediation voluntary, can happen anytime
- Conciliation mandatory

5. Commission investigates and assesses complaint

6. Commission makes a decision

- May dismiss complaint, approve settlement, or refer to Tribunal

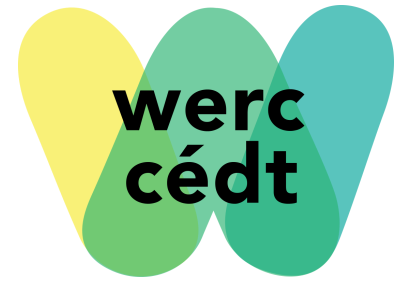


Canadian Human Rights Tribunal process

- Tribunal Guide: <https://www.chrt-tcdp.gc.ca/en/human-rights/process>
- Case management to help client get ready for hearing
- Commission will participate in some complaints
- Mediation still available
- Formal hearing with Rules of Procedure - <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2021-137/index.html>

Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses

Getting more help



WERC Canadian Human Rights Act Project

- **Canadian Human Rights Act Guide**- will be available at www.werc-cedt.ca in late September/early October 2026
- **Free 30-minute CHRA legal information sessions**
 - Open to anyone without someone to represent them
 - General guidance on law, procedure, forms
 - To request a session: www.werc-cedt.ca/programs/help-with-canadian-human-rights-act-complaints

Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses

Getting more help



Contact Canadian Human Rights Commission - <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/>

Online legal information:

- “Your Guide to Understanding the Canadian Human Rights Act” - <https://canlii.ca/t/sjd7>
- “Discrimination complaint process” - <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/find-help/file-discrimination-complaint/discrimination-complaint-process>

Workers’ Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d’éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses

Getting more help



- **ABLE2 REACH Legal Referral Services**
<https://www.able2.org/programs/reach-legal-services/>
 - For people with disabilities in the Ottawa-Champlain region
- **Aboriginal Legal Services Toronto** - <https://www.aboriginallegal.ca/>
- **Arch Disability Law Centre** - <https://archdisabilitylaw.ca/services/legal-services/> (mostly education, developmental, attendant services)
- **Black Legal Action Centre** - <https://www.blacklegalactioncentre.ca/>
- **Indigenous Human Rights Clinic at the Odawa Native Friendship Centre** - <https://odawa.ca/programs/ihrp/>
 - For people who self-identify as Indigenous in Ottawa

Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses



Key takeaways

- When the *Canadian Human Rights Act* applies: Only to cases of **discrimination** by **federal organizations**
- Don't forget about remedy! Best way to support clients with potential complaints is to help them clarify what they want out of it
- Get more help! The complaint process is complex, we are here to help

Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses

Q & A



Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses



Workers' Education and Rights Collective
Collectif d'éducation et droits des travailleurs et travailleuses

amanda@werc-cedt.ca

werc-cedt.ca



Community and legal resources

[Find your community legal clinic](#) or call 1-800-668-8258

Legal Aid Ontario: [How do I apply for Legal Aid?](#)

[Visit Pro Bono Ontario](#) or call 1-855-255-7256

[Ontario Legal Information Centre](#) offers appointments with a lawyer, in English or French.



Thank you for joining us!

Subscribe to [CLEO Connect](#) for updates on new legal information and upcoming webinars.

QUESTIONS or COMMENTS?

Contact info@cleoconnect.ca