



## ETC

### Canada

Two pilots are suing their former employer for age discrimination. George Vilven and Neil Kelly claim the Air Canada Pilots Association collective agreement which forced them to retire at age 60, contravenes the Canadian Human Rights Act. The association plans to oppose them, arguing its members voted three-to-one last April to maintain mandatory retirement at 60 despite recent legislation ending it. The case has received support from the Fly Past 60 Coalition.

Through its Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Education Fund, the province of Alberta has granted the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association \$25,000 to create an online resource toolkit to help municipalities develop action plans to combat racism and discrimination in their communities. The kit will be available later this winter.

The federal government has signed a \$22-million Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement with the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) to establish new training and employment services to Métis communities in Saskatchewan. GDI's Vice Chair Doyle Vermette said, "This agreement is a necessary measure for Métis people to address the economic and social disparities between ourselves and the mainstream population."

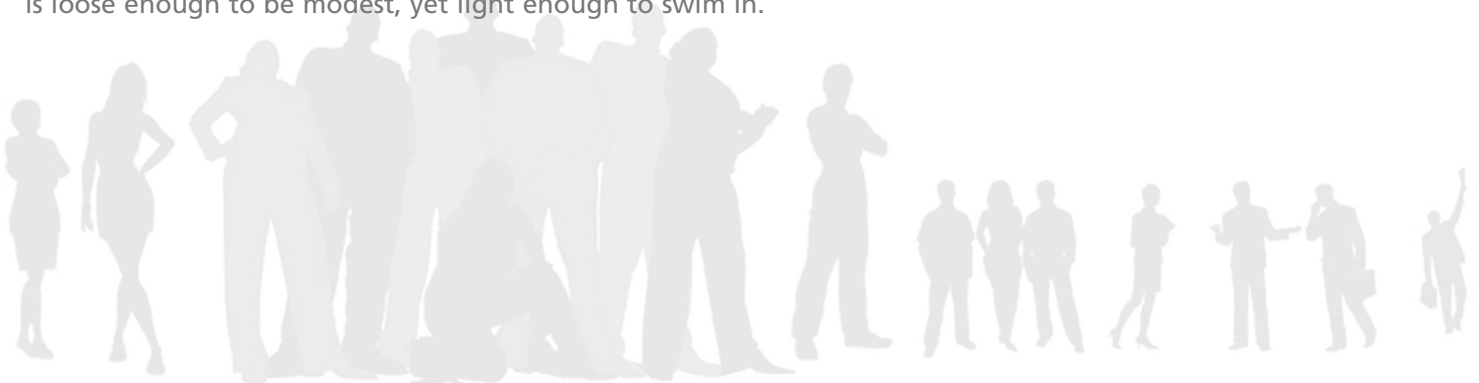
Twenty-four employees from Bell Helicopter in Montreal have been banned from working on a US military contract because of their nationalities. The US International Traffic in Arms Regulations do not permit citizens from 25 countries, including China, Haiti, Lebanon, North Korea, Venezuela and Vietnam, to work on strategic military weapons. Although many of the employees affected hold dual citizenships, the US government refused to waive the policy. The Canadian company is a division of Texas-based Bell Helicopter Textron Inc., the world's largest manufacturer of helicopters.

### Asia

Now that the royal family has produced a son, Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is scrapping a government recommendation that called for constitutional reform that would ensure the survival of the monarchy. Prince Hisahito who was born September 6 is the first male heir in four decades. He has two older sisters. Current law only allows males to ascend the Chrysanthemum Throne. Despite the debate, the Japanese public still backs the idea of a female ascending the throne.

### Australia

The federal government has given Surf Life Saving Australia a \$600,000AU grant to recruit Australians of Middle Eastern heritage and better reflect the country's multicultural mix. The 10-week training course includes first aid, radio communications, rescue drills and fitness tests. A two-piece lycra swimsuit called a burqini has been designed to allow Muslim women to sign up. The burqini covers the body completely, includes a hijab or head covering and is loose enough to be modest, yet light enough to swim in.





## Europe

In an effort to encourage more professionals to have children, Germany's Family Minister Ursula von der Leyen pushed through the Elterngeld or Parent's Money legislation that promises to pay new parents two-thirds of their net salary for up to 14 months or a maximum of €1800 a month. The recipient must agree to give up or reduce work to no more than 30 hours a week to stay home with the baby. Previously new parents were paid around €300 a month for two years, with some restrictions. The new provision is designed to encourage more fathers to take paternity leave.

According a study by the Geneva-based World Economic Forum (WEF), "No country in the world has yet managed to eliminate the gender gap." Out of the 115 countries surveyed, Sweden is the only country where men and women hold equal numbers of positions in parliament and among government ministers. The study also found that the European Union nations scored the lowest. France was positioned at 70—despite a parity law that was introduced in 2000—and Italy at 77 behind China and Brazil. Canada came in at 14, the US at 22. Only the Philippines and Sri Lanka offered women equal treatment both at work and in politics, education and healthcare. The WEF report concluded, "Gender-based inequality is a phenomenon that transcends the majority of the world's cultures, religions, nations and incomes groups."

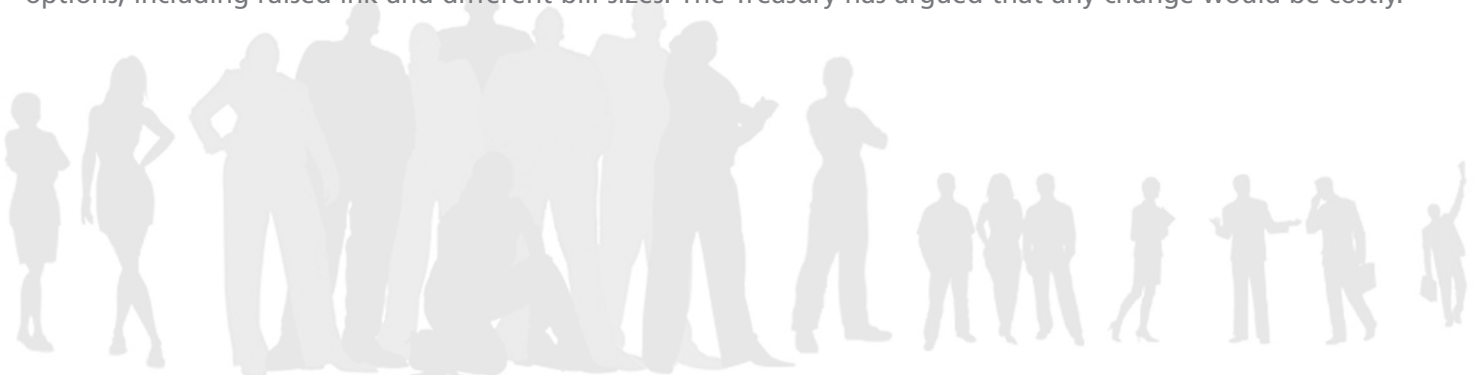
## United Kingdom

The Equal Opportunities Commission's (EOC) final survey shows that the sex discrimination is still alive and well. According to its report, *Sex and Power: Who Runs Scotland? 2007*, women account for less than 12% of the country's senior judges and police officers, and not quite 21% of its secondary head teachers. The Law Society's own figures show that although the number of women entering law is up 10% over the past two years to 65%, they still face pay and gender gaps. Male lawyers earn 42% more than female lawyers, and one in two make partner, compared to one in five women. More than half the women surveyed believed motherhood was a barrier to becoming a partner in a law firm. The EOC will be absorbed into the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights later this year.

## United States

The state of Alaska swore in its first female governor last month. Sarah Palin is not only the first woman to hold that office but at 42 she is also the youngest. The former mayor of Wasilla, Palin is a strong supporter of rehabilitation services that would help Alaskans with disabilities get employment.

A federal judge in Washington, DC has ordered the Treasury Department to find a way to print paper money so that blind people can recognize a bill's denomination. U.S. District Judge James Robertson said keeping all US currency the same size and texture violates the Rehabilitation Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. In his ruling, Robertson wrote that out of the 180 countries that use paper currency, only the US prints bills that are "identical in size and color in all their denominations." The American Council of the Blind has suggested several options, including raised ink and different bill sizes. The Treasury has argued that any change would be costly.





Country music legend Stonewall Jackson has filed a \$10-million age discrimination suit against the Grand Ole Opry. Jackson, 74, claims that the Opry's general manager, Pete Fisher, allegedly told him, "I don't want any grey hairs on that stage or in the audience and before I'm done, there won't be any." Jackson has been a member of the show since 1956.

Nine former and current employees of MV Transportation in Minneapolis have filed a discrimination suit based on national origin and religion. The plaintiffs claim they were subject to harassment because they are East Africans and Muslims. Despite numerous attempts to stop their supervisor's behaviour, the employees say they were forced to listen to Bible passages, denied time off for religious holidays, and told to return to their homeland. With 9,000 employees nationwide, the company claims to be the largest minority and privately owned passenger transportation firm in the country. Its motto is "We Provide Freedom."

### **Winners circle...**

The Disability Rights Advocates (DRA) presented its ninth annual Eagle Award to Microtel Inns & Suites, for providing accessible lodging for travelers with disabilities and for making a significant contribution to the advancement of people with disabilities. The DRA also cited Microtel's Opening Doors® program, which provides all staff with training in disability awareness and customer service.

The City of Toronto has recognized six residents and three organizations with its Access, Equity & Human Rights Awards 2006 for the difference they made in the community. The William P. Hubbard Award for Race Relations went to Douglas Stewart, a founding member of a numerous black GLBT organizations. Winners can be viewed online at <http://www.toronto.ca/civicawards/2006winners.htm>. 