

Anti-Harassment: the union - PSAC Policy 23B

September 21, 1998

The Public Service Alliance of Canada believes that every individual has the right to dignity and respect both within the union and in the workplace. This policy, which compliments Section 5, Membership Rights, of the PSAC Constitution, outlines the Alliance's responsibilities and responses as a membership-based organization in cases involving harassment within our union. This policy should be seen as a companion policy to "Policy 23A - PSAC Anti-Harassment Policy: The Workplace", which addresses harassment in the workplace for which we could provide representation to our members.

Harassment is an expression of power and superiority by one person or group over another person or group, often for reasons of sex, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability, family or marital status, social or economic class, political or religious affiliation or language. Harassment can also be personal in nature and unrelated to the grounds listed above. Harassment can include, but is not limited to, the following type of behaviour:

- unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendoes, taunts or other discriminatory communication in any media;
- insulting gestures or practical jokes which cause someone embarrassment or discomfort;
- display of offensive or pornographic pictures, graffiti or other materials;
- placing unreasonable limitations on someone because of a perceived need (e.g., disability, pregnancy, etc.);
- leering (sexually suggestive staring);
- demands for sexual favours;
- unnecessary physical contact such as touching, patting or pinching; or
- physical assault.

Harassment may occur between members of our union at union-related events such as education courses, conferences, local meetings and so on. It can also occur in interactions between individuals in a union-related context.

Harassment can also occur between members and staff of our union. As an employer, the Alliance is legally obligated to provide a workplace free from harassment for our staff.

Unions are political organizations that represent the interests of the membership. In order to do this, our union must be able to take positions on various issues and situations. Determining what our members' interests are and deciding how to balance competing interests is an intense process and one that can involve energetic debate. For our union to be strong and vibrant, it is essential that these debates take place and that we grow individually and collectively by working through sometimes difficult issues. A union where members are afraid to express their opinion is neither democratic nor healthy.

That being said, it is equally important that these necessary debates take place in a respectful way. Harassment not only poisons our union for the individual(s) being harassed but for all of those who witness the harassment. The Alliance will not tolerate it.

It is not the intention that this policy chill or prevent debate and discussion, or that it be used to chill debate and discussion. Rather, this policy should be used as a tool to assist us in working together in ways that strengthen our union and help us reach our goals.

Where allegations of harassment have risen, the Alliance is committed to ensuring that all members of our union have:

- the right to fair and due process and to confidentiality, subject to appropriate disclosure to those involved, and
- assistance in settling the matter at the earliest stage possible.

As an ongoing campaign to support this policy, the Alliance will ensure that a statement is read at each Alliance event providing members with information about harassment and how to address it. All levels of our union are encouraged to undertake this initiative.

Guidelines to assist in the implementation of this policy have been developed and will be revised as necessary and based on input from the membership.

Any member of the Public Service Alliance of Canada who is found guilty of harassment may be disciplined in accordance with PSAC Regulation 19 and Section 25 of the PSAC Constitution.

N.B. Guidelines for implementation are available from the PSAC.

Anti-Harassment Resource Person is Francois Picard,

867-336-2025, picardf@psac-afpc.com