

National Human Rights Advisor Report to UNDE Executive Meeting
November 2014

The past three months have been interesting for members of the human rights team as we move forward into the new mandate coming out of convention.

Given that UNDE has no specific training around human rights and that PSAC has done minimal when it comes to offering courses rooted in human rights and that our budget issues mandate we look internal for training I have suggested to our team members that they look at accessing courses where they can that will be of assistance. Of note would be courses on grievance handling and I have suggested that they bring to the fore how we deal with cases where there is a mental health aspect that complicates the issues at hand. This is something we have to get a handle on as it is a factor that cannot be overlooked.

In the coming months – between now and spring – our coordinators will be reaching out to all locals in their regions asking the local presidents to consider seeking out a volunteer within the local who has an interest in human rights and who might be willing to serve as a local human rights contact for the local. It is our belief that every local has human rights issues somewhere within its membership and if and when they come to the forefront the local president needs to have someone they can call on to help gather information and take some of the load off their shoulders. Way too many of our local presidents continue to take on this role when they have enough to do simply trying to manage their local.

When Manitoba and Saskatchewan local presidents came together to talk about what would be good standing items for president's conferences one of the issues that rose to the top was indeed human rights and mental health including the cross over here with health and safety of our members in their work places.

Coming out of convention our team was tasked with creating a human rights program for UNDE. At present we are compiling as much information as we can from our range of contacts inside and outside the house of labour and a first draft should be ready by late winter or early spring. That draft will go to the bylaws team for comment as we are well aware any new program has implications for how we do what we do as an organization. I will say our brothers and sisters at National and Agriculture Components have been most helpful.

In early November I attended the long delayed PSAC National Human Rights Committee and it is very clear PSAC has no idea what to do with the component reps on that committee. While the regional teams appear to have made some good headway in terms of awareness and sharing what PSAC seemed to want from the components was a commitment that we as human rights representatives would become leaders in the PSAC charge to implement its three main priorities leading up to the next federal election. The lack of actual human rights work was disheartening to say the least.

What PSAC did come forward with was the new policy on bullying in the workplace which is a carryover from the last PSAC convention. They are now in a panic to get it done before April 2015 and what they wanted from us was to make sure nothing was missed or missing. To say the least it is very rough draft at the moment.

As you are all aware any local can request at some point during the year a visit from the regional human rights coordinator through their regional vice president. Our coordinator in

Quebec, Cathy Dallaire has developed a presentation that while standardized can be tweaked by region to provide an excellent presentation. I want to bring to this group's attention the work and dedication of Cathy and to let you all know what a great resource people such as she is to our organization.

We are all aware that we have within our midst many former military members and that the government is moving to provide priority hiring for CAF members drummed out on medical releases. A major issue for many has been: how do I transition my military skills to civilian certifications? Early this month Manitoba moved to make that easier by making the process of accessibility to Red Seal certification easier and waiving the cost to access and write civilian accreditation exams. Indeed two of our members from CE took part in the announcement that I was invited to attend by the special envoy for military affairs who is well aware of my work in the area of human rights.

Given the budget for human rights from convention I would expect a team meeting in the late spring of 2015 and a second meeting in 2016 as we roll through the current cycle.

As always I am encouraging the team members to be active in their local communities on human rights based issues because we are all well aware the more allies we have in our corner the better and shared awareness makes us all stronger.

Below are the activities I have taken part in over the past three months:

Activities for September –December 2014

September

- 12-Regional women's committee- Winnipeg organized speaker on topic on voter engagement 19-21. – 19-21 PSAC Prairies Summit – ended up on working group in support of way ahead for coming year
- 25-Winnipeg area council- municipal election campaign program kick-off

October

- 14-Winnipeg Regional Women's Committee on way ahead for PSAC campaign to election 2015
- 15- Winnipeg Regional Human Rights Committee
- 15- national executive conference call

November

- 3-4 - PSAC national human rights committee- Ottawa 5-Winnipeg human rights committee
- 5- Winnipeg Human Rights Committee Meeting – planning for array of community based activities moving forward.
- 7- attended event at Manitoba Legislature on program to allow CAF members to more easily transfer their trades skills into civilian credentials – helps significantly those medically released or retiring early for variety of reasons. Two of our members were part of the announcement.
- 18- organized Winnipeg Regional Women's Committee program on women's shelters and a pajama party to provide new pajamas for kids who end up in shelters with only clothes on their back.
- 24- PSAC working group meeting on way ahead for 2015 campaigns

Gloria Kelly