

Definition of Human Rights – Noun

The rights you have simply because you are human.

If you were to ask people in the street, “What are human rights?” you would get many different answers. They would tell you the rights they know about, but very few people know all their rights.

As covered in the definition above, a right is a freedom of some kind. It is something to which you are entitled by virtue of being human.

Human Rights are based on the principle of respect and equality for any individual.

Their fundamental assumption is that each person is a moral and rational being who deserves to be treated with dignity. They are called human rights because they are universal. Whereas nations or specialized groups enjoy specific rights that apply only to them, human rights are the rights to which everyone is entitled, no matter who they are or where they live but simply because they are Human.

When asked to name their rights most people will list things like freedom of speech and belief and perhaps one or two others. There is no question these are important rights but the full scope of human rights is indeed very broad. They mean choice and equal opportunity. They mean the freedom to obtain a job, adopt a career, select a partner of one’s choice and raise children in the manner they choose. They include the right to travel widely and the right to work gainfully without harassment, abuse or threat of arbitrary dismissal. They even embrace the right to leisure.

In ages past, there were no Human Rights per se. Then the idea emerged that people should have certain rights & fundamental freedoms. And that idea, in the wake of World War II, resulted finally in the document called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the thirty rights to which all people are entitled.

For the purposes of this document, the Union of National Defence Employees (UNDE) Human Rights Program will focus on the rights of all UNDE members especially those members who self-identify as a member of one of the five designated equity seeking groups as defined by the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) whose constitution we must be in line with.

The five designated groups as defined in the PSAC Constitution are members who self-identify as: a Woman, a member who is Racially Visible, an Aboriginal, a Member with a Disability or as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer or 2 Spirited + (LGBTQ2+).

The UNDE has a long history of fighting for, defending, safeguarding, maintaining and promoting the human rights of all its members. We believe in equality for all. As a union, we are extremely proud of the participation of all of our members and especially those self-identified equity seeking members who are part of a wide range of union activities and broader community events, as well as programs and activities that promote human rights and social justice for all. We believe in diversity and the richness it brings to our country, our communities, workplaces, homes and especially to our union.

Social justice is also a hallmark of the beliefs of our members in the field of human rights. It is our belief that social justice at home and abroad makes us stronger and more aware of the lack of human rights faced by some that we, as Canadians and proud union members, often take for granted.



This Human Rights Policy for the Union of National Defence Employees is a roadmap and reflects the guidance of our membership. It is a living document that grows and is strengthened by time and the changes that come with it.

Policy Statement

The UNDE is obligated by law to adhere to the Canadian Human Rights Act which promotes human rights and employment equity for all members regardless of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex*, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, genetic characteristics**, disability and conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered.

*Where the ground of discrimination is pregnancy or childbirth, the discrimination shall be deemed to be on the ground of sex.

**Where the ground of discrimination is refusal of a request to undergo a genetic test or to disclose, or authorize the disclosure of, the results of a genetic test, the discrimination shall be deemed to be on the ground of genetic characteristics.

The UNDE shall have a standing Human Rights Committee to be known as the Human Rights Committee of the Union of National Defence Employees (UNDEHRC).

Aim and Objectives

There are three overarching aims and objectives of the Human Rights Committee of the Union of National Employees (UNDEHRC):

1. Provide support/guidance/advice in identifying and removing barriers by promoting a greater understanding of the Employment Equity Act and Human Rights issues that affect all UNDE members;
2. Assist locals, the UNDE National Executive and the PSAC in their efforts to achieve and promote equity for all members; and
3. To promote a greater understanding of issues related to Human Rights and Employment Equity as they continue to emerge.

Committee Membership

The UNDEHRC shall be composed of the following:

- a) A National Human Rights Advisor (NHRA) to the National Executive; and a Human Rights Coordinator from each UNDE designated region;
- b) The NHRA shall have a first and second alternate achieved via the same voting process as the NHRA. Each Human Rights Coordinator shall have an alternate representative.

The Human Rights Committee members will be selected as follows:

- a) The NHRA shall be nominated and elected at the UNDE Triennial Convention by the full membership in attendance. However, the NHRA must be a member of a designated equity group as defined in the Constitution of the Public Service Alliance of Canada.
- b) The Regional Human Rights Coordinators shall be elected by the Local Presidents in each region following the UNDE Triennial Convention and before the start of the fall National Executive meeting. The coordinators must be members of a designated equity group as defined in the Constitution of the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

Terms of office for UNDEHRC members shall be three years in conjunction with the UNDE three-year business cycle.

- a) In the event that the NHRA is unable to perform the duties of their position they are responsible for informing the National President. The 1st Alternate Human Rights Advisor shall be appointed to complete the remainder of the term in office.
- b) Should the 1st Alternate be unable to perform the duties of their position they are responsible for informing the National President, the 2nd Alternate shall then be appointed to complete the remainder of the term in office.
- c) In the event that the 2nd Alternate is unable to perform the duties of their position they are responsible for informing the National President. The National President shall begin an election process utilizing delegates in attendance at the last triennial conference immediately. Such an election would be done by mail as per standard PSAC processes in place to fill vacancies.
- d) In the event that a Regional Human Rights Coordinator is unable to perform the duties of their position they are responsible for informing their regional Vice President. The Alternate Regional Human Rights Coordinator shall be appointed to complete the remainder of the term in office.
- e) Should the alternate be unable to perform the duties of their position the regional Vice President shall conduct an election from members of their Locals.

Duties of the National Human Rights Advisor (NHRA)

The NHRA will be elected by all delegates to the UNDE Triennial National Convention and shall be a full member of the National Executive with voice but no vote. They shall:

- a) Serve as the UNDE representative on the Public Service Alliance of Canada's National Human Rights Committee (PSACNHRC) and submit a report to the National President and when approved by the National President to all National Executive members and the Regional Human Rights Coordinators after all PSACNHRC meetings and initiatives;
- b) Liaise with the employer at various levels on Human Rights/Employment Equity (HR/EE) matters;
- c) Be responsible for providing presentations on HR/EE issues at Regional Conferences when requested by the Vice-President of a Region;
- d) Coordinate all activities of the Regional Human Rights Coordinators in collaboration with the 1st Alternate & 2nd Alternate Human Rights Advisor;
- e) Attend all Public Service Alliance of Canada's Equity Conferences and any other event or training deemed appropriate by the National President;
Attend all National Executive meetings;
- f) Submit a written report and any recommendations, if necessary, within thirty (30) days of any such activity to the National Executive, the 1st Alternate and 2nd Alternate Human Rights Advisor and Regional Human Rights Coordinators;
- g) Submit a written report to the National President four (4) months prior to the Triennial National Convention; and
- h) Remain proactively aware of current and emerging Human Rights issues through dialogue and cooperation across the Union and Human Rights Communities.

Duties of the Regional Human Rights Coordinators

The Regional Human Rights Coordinators are the initial point of contact for Local representatives seeking advice and guidance on Human Rights and Employment Equity issues. They are responsible to:

- a) Self-identify with the UNDE and the PSAC as is required;
- b) Establish a network whereby each local has, as part of their team, a Human Rights/Employment Equity representative. They will work with those representatives to:
- c) Promote a greater understanding HR/EE issues;
- d) Act as a resource person for union representation on HR/EE issues;
- e) Disseminate information about HR/EE issues that are current and emerging;
- f) Provide information to Locals to assist in coordinating and organizing HR/EE related events;
- g) Encourage maximum UNDE representation at PSAC Equity Conferences as delegates;
- h) Provide an annual regional briefing as required to each UNDE Local in coordination with the regional Vice President;
- i) Request semi-annual reports concerning HR/EE from the Locals in the Region;
- j) Encourage the participation of Local membership in regional Human Rights committees and initiatives of the PSAC & UNDE.
- l) Provide biannual reports (dates to be promulgated) to the UNDE NHRA;
- m) Attend relevant workshops, seminars & conferences to keep current on issues and provide a report to the National Human Rights Advisor and respective Vice Presidents after attending such event;
- n) Participate in conference calls as required by the NHRA;
- o) Attend all annual meetings of the Regional Human Rights Coordinators;
- p) Forward all HR/EE concerns, problems and issues to the UNDE NHRA;
- q) Take a proactive role in promoting HR/EE commemorative events in their region; and
- r) Ensure any, and all communications undertaken include both the NHRA and the appropriate regional Vice President.

Meetings

The UNDE Human Rights Committee shall meet annually for 2.5 days and when possible in conjunction with the Public Service Alliance of Canada's National Triennial Equity Conference. The agenda for each meeting shall be set by the NHRA in consultation with the Alternate & 2nd Alternate Human Rights Advisors and as approved by the UNDE National President. A comprehensive report from the meeting shall be sent to the National President and, upon his/her approval, to all members of the National Executive. The report from the meeting, once approved by the National President, shall be posted on the UNDE website.

Regional Coordinators are encouraged to make Local representatives aware of the meeting and the resulting report when it is posted.

National Human Rights Award

The Union of National Defence Employees have established a National Human Rights Award. The award is to be presented to one deserving recipient, once per mandate, who has made a significant contribution to furthering the rights of members in their workplaces and the broader community. Nominations for the award will be reviewed by the UNDE Honours and Awards committee that will make a recommendation to the National Executive for ratification.

Affiliation with Outside Agencies

The Human Rights Committee of the Union of National Employees shall, where possible, build lines of open communication and collaboration with internal and external agencies as deemed appropriate by the NHRA in consultation with the National President.