

OSSTF Anti-Harassment Statement

Let us not take thought for our separate interests but let us help one another.

A member of OSSTF/FEESO has the right to a workplace and union environment free from harassment and bullying.

Harassment and discrimination are not joking matters. They have a destructive effect on the workplace environment, individual wellbeing, and union solidarity. Such actions are not only destructive, but they can also be illegal.

Inadvertent, hidden and systemic harassment and discrimination must be identified and addressed. The roots of systemic harassment and discrimination include but are not limited to racism, sexism, and homophobia and transphobia. OSSTF/FEESO does not condone harassment or discrimination on the basis of age, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, socio-economic status or mental or physical disability.

Harassment and discrimination can take many forms and may be verbal, physical or psychological. They can involve a wide range of actions including comments, gestures or looks, pictures, messages, touching, or more aggressive actions. These acts may be indirect or overt; they may be isolated or repeated.

Acts of harassment and discrimination are always degrading, unwelcome and coercive. They are always unacceptable.

As members of OSSTF/FEESO, our goal must be to protect human rights, to promote mutual respect and trust, and to foster inclusion.

We cannot condone or tolerate intimidating, demeaning, hostile and aggressive behaviour against another member. We cannot condone these behaviours when we witness them.

As OSSTF/FEESO members, we must speak out against this conduct and stand together to protect human rights. We must take action.

OSSTF/FEESO is committed to strengthening member solidarity, and in addition to representing members' interests in the workplace, takes seriously its own responsibility to ensure that members are treated with respect and dignity at all provincially sponsored OSSTF/FEESO events and meetings.

Any member who feels targeted by harassment or discrimination must be able to speak up and know their concerns will be responded to immediately in accordance with OSSTF/FEESO Bylaws and the OSSTF Toronto Resolution and Complaint Process.

The Anti-Harassment & Equity Declaration, as found in the Provincial Policies and Procedures (1.8), shall be read at the beginning of every District Committee meeting.

Resolution and Complaints Process

An anti-harassment officer will be appointed for the General Meeting and the Annual General Meeting.

Members who believe they have been the target of harassment or discrimination at these events are encouraged to take immediate action to ensure this behaviour is stopped.

As a first step, members should make it clear to the perpetrator that the behaviour is offensive and ask that it be stopped. This can be done personally, either in writing or verbally, or with the assistance of a third party.

If the behaviour recurs or persists, or if members do not feel safe in approaching the perpetrator directly, they should speak with the designated officer(s) and ask for that person to act. The designated anti-harassment officers shall be appointed by the President and will also form the complaints and resolutions committee.

The designated anti-harassment officer(s) will investigate the complaint promptly, including separately interviewing the parties involved and any witnesses, with a view to resolving the problem informally. During this process, the designated anti-harassment officer(s) may remove the respondent temporarily from the meeting if circumstances warrant.

The investigation shall be handled confidentially; however, all complaints will be reported by the designated anti-harassment officer(s) to the President and/ or the Vice Presidents.

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, the complainant will be asked to put the complaint and all relevant information in writing.

If the complainant chooses to provide such a written complaint, it will be submitted to the designated staff person in the District office who will forward it to the complaints and resolutions committee for action. It shall be the responsibility of the complaints and resolutions committee to determine if the behaviour falls under the definition of harassment and decide on appropriate remedial action. While conducting the investigation, the committee will be informed by an understanding of the systemic roots of discrimination and harassment as expressed in the OSSTF/FEESO Equity Statement.

The parties involved will receive a written report stating the findings and any action taken.

Resolutions may include but are not limited to apologies, mediation, warnings, temporarily limiting access, or removal/ exclusion from the meeting or event. If a decision is made to remove or exclude that member, and where this member is representing the bargaining unit, a confidential letter outlining the reasons for this decision will be sent to the president of the appropriate body. The District Office shall keep a confidential file of all records and reports related to the investigation of written complaints for a period of five years.

None of the above restricts a member's right to file a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission or make a complaint to police.