

# PSAC National Action Plan

May 1997

Since 1989, the Alliance has undertaken a number of initiatives to address the issues that have been raised by our members with disabilities. These initiatives are outlined in the publication [\*Disability Action in the PSAC\*](#), which is available through the PSAC Human Rights Office.

Having taken stock of what we have done to date, it is timely to present a plan of action for our work on disability issues for the future. This plan was developed through a review of PSAC policies pertaining to disability and related documents, input from members with disabilities and input from staff working in areas that deal with these issues. The plan is intended to provide a concrete set of objectives that the union will seek to meet over the next three year period. The proposed area(s) of responsibility is shown in square brackets in italics following each initiative.

Our policies remind us of our position on and beliefs about disability and equality. This action plan is designed to give us direction in terms of what we will be doing to make these visions reality.

## Collective Bargaining

- Ensure that members with disabilities are involved in the identification and prioritization of issues for collective bargaining through their assured representation on bargaining conferences/committees/teams.
- Negotiate contract guarantees and, where applicable, continue to pressure the employer to adopt employment policies which require:
  - physical access to all aspects of the workplace
  - job accommodation as required
  - work-related print materials in alternate formats
  - a comprehensive action plan to remove all attitudinal and systemic barriers from the workplace, and
  - benefit plan provisions that address the reality of having a disability.
- Request bi-lateral negotiations concerning employment equity with Treasury Board and other employers interested in negotiating employment equity or affected by employment equity legislation that will take place outside of the normal negotiations process.
- Through the National Joint Council Employment Equity Committee and the Joint Adjustment Committees ensure that the legislative mandate for consultation with bargaining agents in the development and implementation of employment equity plans is fully respected, including the establishment of joint departmental employment equity committees and the development and delivery of training on employment equity issues.

- Through the National Joint Council Disability Insurance Plan Board of Management review and monitor the disability insurance plan to ensure that disability benefits are not being used by the Employer to renege on its obligation to provide reasonable accommodation to workers who are newly disabled.
- Through the National Joint Council Disability Insurance Plan Board of Management ensure that the application of the provisions of the disability insurance policy takes into account the reality of persons with disabilities (e.g., increasing the potential for part-time work for those with disabilities, equal treatment of individuals suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome, multiple chemical sensitivities, fibromyalgia and so on). The Members with Disabilities Ad Hoc Committees (MDAC) and other members with disabilities will be consulted on a regular basis, at least annually, by the PSAC representative on this committee to ensure that the insurance provided is meeting the real needs.
- Through the National Joint Council Occupational Safety and Health Committee, participate in the cyclical review of OSH Directives to ensure that they meet the concerns, including the accommodation requirements, of our members with disabilities. Ensure that they comply with the latest legislative amendments (e.g., Canada Labour Code, Part II and the Canada Occupational Safety and Health Regulations.)

### **Educational Initiatives**

- Develop educational materials on the rights of persons with disabilities tailored to meet the information needs of the general membership and all levels and bodies of the union. Such material may address the following issues:
- The rights and issues of persons with disabilities. In particular how persons with disabilities have been traditionally employment disadvantaged and marginalized in the labour force.
- An analysis of the economic reality of persons with disabilities.
- An analysis of disability-based discrimination including attitudinal and systemic discrimination.
- A discussion of equality which underlines the value of and challenges posed by representative diversity (i.e., why persons with disabilities should be fully represented throughout our organization and the issues we will have to address to bring this about).
- A discussion of the principles of independent living and self determination and how they advance the equality rights of persons with disabilities.
- An explanation of the union's legal and moral responsibility to advocate on behalf of all workers including potential and current workers with disabilities.
- The impact of downsizing on employees with disabilities.

- The principles and concepts of employment equity and the duty to accommodate and how they can be used to redress employment barriers and improve the workplace for all workers.
- A description of the process of barrier identification and barrier removal.
- A discussion of the Alliance Policy on Disability Issues and how all levels of the Alliance, including Components and Locals, can promote it.
- An analysis from a human rights perspective of the particular occupational health and safety risks of persons with disabilities including the impact of pre-existing disability on future Workers' Compensation claims should they become ill or injured from a workplace illness or accident (i.e., impact of human rights law, privacy of medical information not pertinent to a Workers' Compensation claim, rehabilitation services, access to information in alternate media and so on).
- Fact sheets and other tools for members with disabilities that provide specific information, such as the Tax Tips booklet being developed by the NCR MDAC.
- In all materials developed, members with disabilities should be invited to self-identify and provide information on any special needs they have or accommodations they require.
- Develop a kit on employment equity, addressing all equity group issues including disability. This kit would be for local and regional use.
- Develop an information kit on reasonable accommodation for use by local stewards and officers.
- Develop a training module on disability issues for delivery to union leadership and rank and file.
- Develop a training module on employer's re-employment obligations included in federal/provincial/territorial jurisdictions, considering human rights, occupational health and safety, labour relations and so on.
- Develop a training module for the Joint Adjustment Committees that addresses the issue of downsizing and its impact on employees/persons with disabilities. This module will include the potential for involvement of employees with disabilities directly in the training process.
- Continue the integration of members with disabilities into the Alliance Facilitator Network.
- Ensure that educational materials concerning disability (kits, training modules and so on) are copied to the PSAC Library and the Equity section and that appropriate materials are posted on the Alliance website.

## **Internal Union Initiatives**

- Develop a mechanism to ensure the identification of the special needs of members with disabilities so that this information will be readily available to all areas of the union requiring it.
- Ensure that all areas of the Alliance are aware of the alternate media policy and provided with information on how to meet its objectives, through various forums including the Alliance website.
- Develop a mechanism to ensure regular contact among MDAC activists, those representing members with disabilities on the Equal Opportunities Committee and rank and file members with disabilities. For example, this may take the form of a conference call of representatives twice each year.
- Ensure that all PSAC policy papers, action plans and other publications relating to disability issues (Tax Benefit Booklet, Local Accessibility Guidelines and so on) are available through the PSAC Website.
- Review, revise and publicize the Local Accessibility Fund Guidelines in consultation with MDAC members and Locals.
- Renew our commitment to the direct involvement of members with disabilities in all union work, through proactive outreach and consultation with members with disabilities.
- Encourage all local, regional and central Alliance bodies to directly include representation of members with disabilities and to work with MDACs.
- Continue to take proactive measures to ensure that members with disabilities are effectively represented in all decision-making forums, including the provision of training and the continued use of affirmative action initiatives.
- Review and evaluate the implementation of PSAC policies related to disability.
- Continue to ensure accessibility for members with disabilities at all union-related events and functions.
- Review and evaluate the implementation of this Action Plan in the spring of 1999.

## **Legal Representation**

- Develop aggressive litigation model aimed at pressuring employers to implement effective employment equity action plans and to expand the rights of persons with disabilities.

- Ensure the enforcement of the re-employment provisions already included in the Canada Labour Code, Part III.

### **Other Organizations**

- Work with other labour bodies and centrals to share Alliance experience regarding disability issues and to encourage their work in this regard, through representation on the CLC Working Group on Disability Issues, the CLC Human Rights Committee, the CLC Occupational Safety and Health Committee, the CLC Workers' Compensation Subcommittee, injured workers' organizations and federation of labour committees addressing disability issues.
- Continue to strengthen our ties with national disability organizations through the exchange of material and consultation as to how we might work together in promoting the right of persons with disabilities to independent living and self determination.
- Actively participate in community activities which promote and advance the equality rights of persons with disabilities, such as National Access Awareness Week event.

### **Political Action**

- Continue to pressure for amendments to the *Canadian Human Rights Act* to define the employer's responsibility to accommodate persons with disabilities through the submission of briefs and letters.
- Continue to lobby for strong, effective, inclusive and mandatory employment equity legislation in all jurisdictions.
- Support the recommendations of the Task Force on Disability Issues, through lobbying, the submission of briefs and letters, and through coalition work.
- Approach the appropriate central bodies to initiate a discussion on the lack of accessibility to federally-owned and leased buildings, as raised in the 1995 Canadian Human Rights Commission Annual Report. This will be raised through the National Joint Council Employment Equity Committee, the National Joint Council Occupational Safety and Health Committee and the Joint Adjustment Committee.
- Continue to press the Canadian Human Rights Commission to address the erosion of rights for persons with severe disabilities.
- Continue to lobby for coherent and strategic legislation for persons with disabilities.
- Continue to monitor the legislative process involved in proclaiming the proposed amendments to the Canada Labour Code, Part II which includes new provisions to ensure that information required under the Canada Labour Code, Part II is provided in alternate media where needed.