



Union of Health and Environment Workers

POLICIES

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**POLICIES
OF THE
UNION OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT WORKERS**

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POLICY STATEMENT:

The Union of Health and Environment Workers (UHEW) policies are documents produced to assist in the interpretation of our By-laws and Regulations. Policies are decided by the National Council and will be added, amended or deleted as the National Council deems appropriate.

All reference to Union of Health and Environment Workers hereafter, will be referred to as the Component.

POLICY 1

ON ABSENCE OF THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT FROM THE OFFICE

In times where the National President is to be absent from the office in Ottawa due to any leave, or combination of leave, and this timeframe exceeds five consecutive working days, the National Vice-President will assume the role Ottawa during the above-mentioned time period (By-law Section 8 Sub-section 2) and shall be paid acting pay calculated from the date on which he/she commenced to act.

In the event that the National Vice-President is unavailable, the National President, prior to his/her absence, is to call in a member of the (Advisory Committee/ National Council/). Acting pay would be compensated at the base level of the current remuneration of the National President as per UHEW Regulation 6.

POLICY 2

FAMILY CARE

This Component has opted to follow the PSAC Family Care Policy in effect at the date of adoption of this Policy.

The National Council as with all of this Component's policies reserves the right to adopt at any time a Family Care Policy that is different from that of the PSAC.

POLICY 3

NATIONAL OFFICE - BILINGUALISM

This Component is a national union responsible for offering effective, quality representation to our members. Our services reflect the fact we have members located right across Canada. That is why we are pleased to offer members services and information in English and French in respect of the needs of the two official language communities. The objective of the Component is to serve members in the official language of their choice.

Therefore, all of the following measures are in place at this Component:

- All bulletins and other printed information to any part of the membership from the National Office shall be published in both official languages and distributed to individuals, where possible, in the official language of their choice.
- All web postings will be in both official languages.
- All emails will be in the official language of choice of the recipient.
- All correspondence relating to the Component's Triennial Convention shall be produced in both official languages.
- The main sessions of our Triennial Convention will have simultaneous translation available.
- All National Council meetings of this Component will, when necessary, have simultaneous interpretation.
- All training offered by the UHEW Component (simultaneous translation or training in both languages).

POLICY 4

NATIONAL LOCAL PRESIDENTS' CONFERENCE

In the spirit of co-operation, the Component wants to build stronger Locals that are connected to their membership, their Component, and to the PSAC. A means to achieve this objective is a National Local Presidents' Conference which would bring together Local Presidents and the National Council. The Local Presidents' Conference is not a decision-making body, Resolutions adopted at the Conference will be referred to the National Council for consideration and action.

There is to be a high education content to the Presidents' Conference with the majority of time being given to workshops, seminars. An opportunity will also be provided to discuss issues brought forward by Locals, as well issues of general interest and importance to the membership.

The following will apply:

Frequency

Once every three years to be held the year prior to the Component's Triennial Convention.

Duration

Two and a half days, dates to be determined by National Council

Location

To be decided by the National Council

Attendance

- Each local shall be granted one participant seat for the Local President or his/her alternate.
- The National President shall chair the Conference as a participant. The National Council will attend this Conference as participants.
- Each local may be offered the opportunity to bring Observers at no cost to the Component.
- The limiting factors will be ability of the selected conference facility to accommodate the number of observers requested and equitable selection process that will allow each Local who wants an Observer to have (one each) before any Local is allowed multiple Observers.

Mandate

The mandate of the Local Presidents' Conference will be one of education. The Conference shall also serve to bring forward Local issues of importance as well as Convention Preparation. The Local Presidents' Conference can become a platform for Component Convention business as the Component Triennial is the PSAC National Convention.

Agenda

Two months prior to the conference, a call out letter will be sent to Local Presidents seeking agenda items. The proposed agenda shall be supplied to the Local Presidents at least three weeks prior to the National Local Presidents' Conference so that the participants can be prepared to discuss the agenda items. The proposed agenda shall be the first order of business at the National Local Presidents' Conference and Local Presidents in attendance shall prioritize the agenda items to reflect their wishes.

Chairperson

The Local Presidents' Conference shall be chaired by the National President.

Funding

All costs for participants to the Local Presidents' Conference shall be covered by the Component, including loss of wages which will be compensated as per Regulation 2 of this Component.

POLICY 5

COMPONENT REGIONAL CONFERENCES

As directed by the Triennial Conventions of this Component, the National Council herein outlines the rules and procedures that will govern Regional Conferences.

1. The Component Regional Conference is to be a meeting of the Regional Vice-President, the alternate, and three participants (Local President, Local Vice-President and another member of the Local decided upon) from the Locals of the Region:
 - discuss and become familiar with the organization of the PSAC and the Component Union;
 - to allow national and local officers to share their experience, problems and ideas;
 - improve the communications link with the National Office of the Component;
 - become familiar with the Acts and Regulations which govern labour relations in the Public Service
2. The Regional Conference is not a policy-making or advisory body.
3. The cost of Regional Conferences shall be borne by the Component. The Component will be responsible for the cost of meeting rooms, accommodations, travel, loss of salary and allowances in accordance with the Component's Regulation 2. All expenses are subject to the approval of the National President. At least one month prior to a Regional Conference, the RVP(S) will prepare a budget for the Regional Conference and submit it to the National office on the approved spread sheet supplied
4. Conference arrangements, including locality of the Conference, shall be the responsibility of the Regional Vice-President. Selection of the site for the Regional Conference should be based on the following criteria:
 - The locality within their Region which is most accessible to the majority of delegates both in terms of geographical and financial considerations, preference should be given to locations where the Component has a Local presence;
 - Where Conference facilities are available at an acceptable price and quality.
5. Regional Conferences may be held twice between Conventions; No Regional Conference to be held in a Convention year. Regional Conferences may be combined with adjacent regions subject to the approval of the National President.

6. The duration of Regional Conferences shall be at least one day but not more than two, exclusive of travel time. The National President and the Regional Vice-President(s) concerned shall determine the length of the Conference based on the number of participants and the number of items on the agenda.
7. Regional Conferences may be held in conjunction with other regions, with the approval of the National President.
8. Regional Conferences may be held in combination with a regional training Initiative
9. Regional Conferences shall be planned 6 months in advance. Regional Vice-Presidents and the National President shall consult on the most appropriate time.
10. Regional Conferences shall be chaired by the Regional Vice-President of the area concerned. Where regions combine conferences, Regional Vice-Presidents will co-chair the Conference.
11. If a Local delegate is unable to attend, the Executive of that Local shall nominate an alternate from among the members of the Local.
12. The topics of discussion at the Regional Conferences will be established keeping in mind the educational and informational needs of the Local officers.
13. In establishing the agenda for the Regional Conference, delegates are encouraged to submit items for discussion.
14. At least two months prior to the Conference, the Regional Vice-President of the area concerned, shall give notice of the Conference to all Locals, indicating time and place, soliciting agenda items and confirmation of the names of the delegates attending.
15. The National President and upon his/her delegation another Staff Officer, shall attend all Conferences.
16. Locals may send observers at the expense of the Local. It is understood that the Component will not be liable for any expenses incurred by such observers.

17. The Regional Vice-President is authorized to rent a suite with an attached bedroom that will be occupied by one of the participants. In addition, a sum of \$ 20 per participant may be included in the budget for suite supplies. No additional monies will be allocated for promotional items.

POLICY 6

UHEW WATER POLICY

This Component Workers recognizes water as Canada's most valuable natural resource and essential to our lives as Canadians.

The Federal Government has considerable jurisdiction over water and its uses in Canada including Navigable Waters, Environmental Assessment, Fisheries Act, International waters and federal lands. It used to be that we could look to the federal government to protect fresh water for all Canadians with the establishment of institutions such as: The Inland Waters Directorate, Canada Centre for Inland Waters, Canada Water Act, Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and in 1987 the Federal Water Policy.

Unfortunately, this commitment towards ensuring a sustainable water resource for all Canadians has declined markedly in the past two decades. The Inland Water Directorate was disbanded in the 1990's and almost nothing from the Federal Water Policy was ever implanted.

In addition, the current federal government has to all intents and purposes done away with the Navigable Waters Act, Environmental Assessment Act, Section 35 of the Fisheries Act and with the implementations of Bill C-45 we have gone from 2.5 million protected lakes and rivers in Canada to 159 lakes and rivers protected. Compounding this abrogation of responsibility by the federal government has been the hundreds of millions of dollar cuts to both Environment Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

"From groundwater protection on federal lands to enforcement of the Fisheries Act, these cuts will tie the hands of Environment Canada to protect the nation's water heritage for future generations," declared Randy Christensen, lawyer with Ecojustice. "Going forward, our environment, our health and our prosperity will require that Canada manage water better and these cuts will cripple Canada's ability to do that."

A reinvigorated federal role in water sustainability begins with rebuilding and enhancing our country's capacity to deal with our freshwater challenges. Federal inaction does not arise from a lack of mandate; it comes from a lack of political will.

The Component will support and promote:

- The UN Human Rights Council's resolution that places certain responsibilities upon governments to ensure that people can enjoy "Sufficient, safe, accessible and affordable water, without discrimination"
- That water is a public good, not a commodity and as such will oppose any bulk water exports of Canadian water. The need for a ban is pressing due to the pressure to send water to serve drought prone areas of the United States.
- The exclusion of water from NAFTA and all future trade agreements. Under NAFTA water is defined as a service and an investment. If a corporation is granted permission to export water anywhere in Canada, it becomes a tradable good under NAFTA, and other provinces will have to grant similar access to corporations seeking water export rights. Only a clear exclusion of water from NAFTA and other trade agreements will avert this threat.
- Including bottled water in the banning of bulk water exports from Canada. Water in 20 liter containers is not at the moment considered bulk water. The continuation of bottled water exports could set a precedent allowing for water to be treated as a commodity under NAFTA. The energy required to extract water from natural sources, manufacture water containers, bottle the water in a factory, and transport the water by truck to ships before being loaded into more trucks producing enormous carbon emissions.
- The Component will continue to promote the use of public tap water at all Component and PSAC events and in our members' daily lives.
- The development of water conservation strategies that benefit the Canadian economy, communities and the environment.
- The establishment of national enforceable drinking water standards.

- The declaration and legislation of surface and ground water as a **public trust**. Under a public trust doctrine private water use would be subservient to the public interest. The public trust concept means water is a public resource owned by the people of Canada, with the government acting as a trustee responsible for taking care of the resource. The public trust doctrine is becoming increasingly common and established in modern water legislation and has been incorporated in the environmental legislation in the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Quebec.
- The creation of a national public water infrastructure fund. Decades of cuts in infrastructure funding, coupled with the downloading of programs and services to municipal governments, have resulted in a “municipal infrastructure deficit” conservatively estimated at \$123 billion by the Federation of Canadian communities.

A strategy to address water pollution concerns including:

(Although regulation water pollution falls mostly under provincial jurisdiction, the federal government is responsible for protecting fish-bearing waters through the fisheries act and controlling toxic substances under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.)

- Standards for industry and agribusiness which would include the enforcing of strict laws against industrial dumping, use of pesticides and discharge of toxins into waterways.
- A slowdown of tar sands production and increased monitoring by federal agencies on water usage and water pollution. Toxins connected to the tar sands have been found as far downstream as the Athabasca delta, one of the largest fresh water deltas in the world.
- Removal of Schedule 2 from the Fisheries Act. Lakes that would normally be protected as fish habitat by the Fisheries act are now being redefined as “tailing impoundment areas” in a 2002 schedule added to the Metal Mining Effluent Regulations of the Act under this schedule, healthy freshwater lakes lose all protection and become dump-sites for mining waste. Canada is the only industrialized country to allow this practice.

- National enforceable standards for sewage treatment. Canada has no national standards for municipal sewage treatment and wastewater effluent quality. As a result, 200 billion liters of raw sewage are flushed into our waterways every year.
- The restoration of historical funding levels to both Environment Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada investing in the country's freshwater heritage-surely our greatest heritage – in a world running out of clean, accessible water.

POLICY 7

SINGLE USE PLASTICS

The Component represent members working on the front lines of environmental enforcement and research across Canada. Everyday our members see first-hand the impact single use and limited use plastics are having on our environment. Both in the oceans and on land, we are reminded every day of the effects of our choices to use plastic instead of more environmentally friendly products.

Your plastic footprint is larger than you realize. Annually the average Canadian uses:

720 single use cups
1025 plastic bottles
730 plastic straws

Multiply that by the number of people in your home and the scope of the problem is significant, but so is the impact of any change you implement.

It is the responsibility of every individual and organization to take steps to reduce our impact on the health of the planet.

As such, the Component will take steps to reduce or eliminate, the use or purchase of single use or limited use plastics at all Component events and within its National office. This Component will actively promote the policy to its membership and to all Components of the PSAC.