

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL  
TEACHERS' FEDERATION

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROJECT  
UPDATE

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## **THE PHILOSOPHY OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**

The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation represents a large body of professional women in Ontario. We believe that with our history of continuing internal commitment to progressive change, coupled with ever increasing Provincial Affirmative Action legislative thrusts helping shape our environment, we have an opportunity and responsibility to become a model Affirmative Action employer in terms of internal policy and practice.

*Affirmative Action is a commitment to develop strategies to remove systemic barriers to the development and advancement of women, thus ensuring the full utilization of the skills and talents of all the organization's human resources; and rewarding them fairly and equitably.*

Possible barriers to competing on an equal basis may be based in the organization's policies and practices, such as hiring practices, compensation, access to training and development, etc. Other barriers may originate in the way the organization is structured, and jobs and career ladders designed. All organizational choices are value based. As part of our Affirmative Action program these structures, policies and practices are being examined, in light of the organization's changing values about people and work. Where necessary and appropriate, they will be redesigned, to make it possible for all individuals to have equal access to employment opportunities, and to remuneration on the basis of equal pay for work of equal value.

*We strongly believe that the goals of Affirmative Action are compatible with the principles of human rights, good management practices, and fundamental to the ongoing achievement of our organizational excellence.*

To be truly successful, it is essential that Affirmative Action become woven into the ongoing operational functioning of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

## **THE PROJECT PROCESS**

The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation Affirmative Action Project is designed to equalize women's access to opportunities within our organization. Strategies will be designed :

- to remove barriers to the full development and utilization of the skills and talents of women, thus promoting satisfaction, challenge and effectiveness;
- to remove barriers to the advancement and mobility of women so as to encourage and facilitate their equal participation at all levels of the organization and in all spheres of work;
- to examine the impact of information technology on work in the organization in order to develop ways of utilizing it in such a way as to complement these strategies;
- to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all employees with regard to their working lives ie. personnel practices, working conditions;

*Change of this kind is a learning process, for the organization and for the organization's employees. As a learning process, all of the project phases should reflect and embody the values underlying the goals and assumptions of the project.*

One of the most significant aspects of our process originates in our belief that *it (the change process) must be shaped by the active participation of all the constituent groups of the organization who will be affected by the outcome of the project*



The Provincial Executive organized an Affirmative Action Committee in 1985 consisting of the following representatives of all key constituent groups at 60 Mobile Drive:

- Burt Cottenden - Chair of the Committee,  
Treasurer of the Provincial Executive;
- Jim Forster - Associate General Secretary;
- Ken McLaren - Office and Personnel Manager;
- Wendy Dias /  
Rose Burgess - Designated Secretary;
- Valerie Hunnius - Chief Steward, O.P.E.I.U.
- Harry Archer - Secretariat Member, Liason to Status of  
Women Committee.

Recognizing the diversity of values and perspectives with respect to Affirmative Action within the organization, as well as the complexity of successfully managing this kind of organizational transformation, the Affirmative Action Committee employed **Preiss Shulman and Associates**, (a consulting firm experienced in the field of Affirmative Action, as well as organization change and development), to work with the Affirmative Action Committee in designing and facilitating an appropriate change process.

## **THE DIAGNOSTIC PROCESS**

O.S.S.T.F.'s Head Office, although relatively small in number, is multifaceted and heterogeneous, consisting of the Executive, the Secretariat, and various Technical Professional and Support Staff groups. In order to make sure that the diagnostic data upon which recommendations would be based was reliable and representative, it was necessary to gather data from a variety of sources, by a variety of methods. This data gathering process started in October 1985 and involved the following:

- All constituent groups at 60 Mobile Drive were interviewed either individually or in small groups by the Consultants for 1 1/2 - 2 1/2 hours to establish the parameters of the project, and elicit their various perspectives and concerns. Due to both the diverse composition of these groups, as well as the generally high level of interest, these interviews not only fulfilled the criteria of being representative, but were very nearly exhaustive, including ultimately all but a handful of individual employees. The Consultants reported a very satisfactory level of full, frank, thoughtful and thorough discussion during these interviews.
- All members of the Status of Women Committee participated in discussions with the Consultants, due to the obvious significance of their role within the context of an Affirmative Action project.
- The interviews were supplemented and augmented by a standardized written questionnaire called the **Job Diagnostic Survey**, which measured the employee's perception of many aspects of their jobs and working lives of relevance to an Affirmative Action project. The survey provided quantitative norms for analysis against comparable job categories from a North American data bank.

- A vast array of other pertinent organizational data and information was collected and analysed, which included employment contracts, grievances, job descriptions, work practices and procedures, policy manuals, personnel data and reports on various aspects of Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation functioning.



## **THE PROJECT REPORT**

All this information forms the basis for a report to be issued in the Spring of 1986, which will consist of two parts:

- 1) Part One will reflect, synthesize, analyze and provide a commentary on all information gathered, including employee perspectives with regard to the following:
  - What are OSSTF's Affirmative Action values and goals?
  - What is its vision of a desirable future, i.e., what should the outcomes of the project be, based on current organizational strengths and issues with respect to Affirmative Action?
  - What initiatives and strategies are most likely to achieve the desired results?
  - What are appropriate criteria for success, i.e., how will we know if we have accomplished our goals?
- 2) Based on this analysis, Part Two of the report will propose a series of recommendations consisting of:
  - Recommended outcomes;
  - Implementation processes and strategies;
  - Implementation accountabilities;
  - Required resources;
  - Timing.

The report, in terms of both analysis and recommendations, will undoubtedly require discussion, debate and problem solving within the organization. Once the recommendations are approved, and the implications fully understood, the foundations will be laid for a planned implementation process which will clarify, document and set in motion the mechanisms for change. Detailed project plans will be developed and implementation structures and processes initiated.