



Federation of
Post-Secondary Educators
of BC

FPSE International Solidarity Fund

Terms of Reference

OVERVIEW AND MOTIVATION

In recent years, the attention of informed union members has been drawn increasingly to human problems that are international in scope and nature. Problems like the scourge of global poverty and hunger, a global education deficit that sees more than 120 million children without basic schooling, global warming and resource depletion, and a rise in energy and resource-related warfare. At the same time, unions have become increasingly active in opposing coercive global trade agreements, in protesting the economic and political injustices of pro-corporate institutions like the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO, and in supporting the global peace movement. Capital flight to third world sweatshops and a shifting global division of labour have shown us that our interests are bound up with those of workers in the economically disadvantaged world. The maxim 'what we desire for ourselves, we wish for all' has come to have a new meaning. This new awareness calls on us to develop a new, global understanding of human rights and a new solidarity paradigm.

In May 2001, the FPSE (then CIEA) AGM adopted new terms of reference for the Federation's Human Rights Committee. The committee was re-named the Human Rights and International Solidarity Committee (HRISC) and was mandated to advise the Federation on international solidarity issues and to assist it in implementing related policies and actions. Subsequently, the committee has recognized a need for a more deliberate, policy-based approach to solidarity work.

FPSE is not alone. Other unions in BC are seeking to engage global solidarity issues more effectively. In recent years, the British Columbia Government and Service Employees Union, the BC division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation have undertaken to put their international solidarity work on a more systematic footing. To that end, these unions have established international solidarity funds. These funds give recognition to the need to plan for stable, long-term solidarity relationships.

At the May 2006 AGM, the HRISC proposed and got approval in principle for the development of an FPSE international solidarity fund. At its November 2006 meeting, following an educational session on solidarity funds, the HRISC struck a sub-committee to prepare a solidarity fund proposal. That proposal, amended and endorsed by the HRISC, is set out below.

FPSE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY FUND

Fund source

The fund will be 0.5 per cent of membership fees ($0.005 \times \$2.75 \text{ million} = \text{approx. } \$15,000$). (This is equivalent to approximately 1 cent per working day per member.)

Fundraising activities at the local or provincial level may supplement the fund.

Fund governance

An International Solidarity Fund Committee (ISFC), comprising the Secretary-Treasurer, two members elected by HRISC, and two Presidents' Council members, will make decisions on fund disbursements. Knowledge of human rights and international solidarity issues would be an asset for appointees to the ISFC.

International Solidarity Fund Committee members will be annually appointed by HRISC and Presidents' Council. Appointing bodies will consider continuity when making appointments.

Funding proposals may be initiated by any member local or Presidents' Council, Executive Committee or ISFC member. There will be a 45 day period between the call for proposals and the deadline for their receipt.

Disbursements of greater than \$3000 will be subject to approval by Presidents' Council. All disbursements will be itemized and reported to Presidents' Council and HRISC at each meeting.

BASIC OUTLOOK, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY THE FUND

Basic outlook

The fund rests on the belief that we share experiences, needs and values with all members of the global community. We affirm that what we desire for ourselves, we wish for all others around the world.

International solidarity partnerships should be a two-way street. This means that while we can assist others in their local struggles for a decent life, respect and dignity, they can help us to understand better both our own situation and the consequences elsewhere of institutions and policies rooted in our own society.

International solidarity partnerships, as distinct from traditional charity efforts, stress linking to and supporting popular organizations working to advance human rights.

Understanding the human rights initiatives of others can place our own experiences and struggles in a broader perspective, one that allows us to see what our struggles have in common with others.

The right to an education is a gateway right, a right fundamental to the promotion of other human rights and to the promotion of well-being and dignity.

Objectives

The fund:

- promotes international solidarity projects and actions that support disadvantaged people organizing to realize their basic human rights, projects informed by the values of equality, respect, human dignity and social justice;
- supports the development of solidarity relationships that are appropriately enduring and stable;
- promotes building relationships with others seeking to advance the basic human right to education;
- promotes awareness of policies or institutions in economically advantaged countries like Canada and the US that foster human rights violations in other countries;
- seeks to inform and enliven the work of our locals and our Federation by encouraging our members to work in the disadvantaged world and by supporting our partners there to represent their work at FPSE meetings and functions.

Activities

The fund will support projects and actions in economically disadvantaged countries that:

- advance human rights, educators' initiatives, workers' rights, labour organizations and community development;
- advance the right to a publicly-funded education;
- oppose neo-liberal privatization and cuts in education;
- allow individual FPSE members to work directly in support of human rights;
- allow our partners in local communities to represent their work at FPSE meetings and functions;
- collaborate with other labour organization in BC and Canada for agreed solidarity objectives;
- promote member education about social and economic conditions and popular efforts toward social justice;
- promote and strengthen our members' abilities to teach about global justice issues;
- advocate to ensure a role for Canada in meeting the objectives of the ISF.

The fund will also support projects and actions that:

- increase awareness of policies or institutions that violate the human rights of people in economically disadvantaged countries.