



PART ONE. INTRODUCTION

OUR POLICY ON CONFLICT AND HARASSMENT

Everyone at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade has a right to be treated with respect and a responsibility to treat others the same way, in an environment free of all forms of harassment. The Department's harassment policy builds on existing Treasury Board policy in this area. The policy is designed to foster mutual trust, support and respect by preventing conflict and harassment when possible and by providing mechanisms for resolving conflicts early. The goal of the policy is a zero-tolerance harassment-free workplace.

The policy recognizes the increasing diversity of the workforce as well as the fundamental changes in what is considered acceptable workplace behaviour—certain attitudes and actions that were once taken for granted and commonplace can no longer be tolerated. Consequently, the policy outlines appropriate workplace behaviour for employees and managers. It aims to help all employees work without impediments and to assist managers to manage both humanely and efficiently. It is built on the recognition that people work best in an open atmosphere that promotes frank communication and discourages harassing behaviour.

As public servants, we have a responsibility to uphold high standards of integrity and fairness. This responsibility applies within the workplace in Canada and abroad and during work-related activities, such as conferences, retreats, social functions, training courses and travel.

This policy applies to all departmental employees (indeterminate and term), employees on secondment from other departments, locally engaged staff, persons hired through temporary help agencies, and managers.

Conflict and harassment in the workplace

Whenever people interact, there is a potential for conflict. Problems can crop up whether we are dealing with people we have just met or with our closest friends.

Harassment is one extreme in a continuum of conflict between people. This policy is designed to help us deal with many types of interpersonal problems in order to prevent harassment. Problems that are addressed early will usually not escalate into harassment.

Problems can result from personality conflict, lack of communication, misunderstandings or basic differences in viewpoint. They can result from a lack of empathy—one person's inability or unwillingness to see another's point of view—or from momentary or prolonged thoughtlessness. Problems can also result from inappropriate workplace behaviour. Such behaviour, ranging from rudeness to abuse and harassment, harms the working environment.

Most difficulties between employees can be, and routinely are, resolved by the people involved. A few cases call for a third person to help settle things informally, either by providing advice or by intervening directly. On the rare occasions when a third person is unable to help, settling the matter might require taking a more formal route.

The impact of conflict and harassment

Conflict, particularly if it is prolonged and carried to the extreme of harassment, hurts everyone. A victim of harassment may experience emotional stress and may have difficulty performing tasks. Prolonged emotional stress may also lead to