

## **Bill 168 – workplace violence and harassment**

### Excerpt from executive secretary report – November, 2010

workplace violence and harassment legislation, Bill 168: The Ontario government's Bill 168 came into effect on June 15, 2010. The General Council has adopted a policy that covers General Council and Conference employees. Teresa Burnett-Cole has included a component on this legislation as part of the sexual abuse policy workshops she is conducting. When I met with the personnel ministers in October, we discussed how this legislation will be communicated to our Pastoral Charges, since they are employers too.

During the conversation, we very quickly were able to identify a number of Pastoral Charges that have been in conflict over the years. In some cases Section 333 reviews were initiated. Sometimes congregations split or ended up closing. In other cases Ministry Personnel were subject of Section 363 reviews or in others the conflict in the congregation resulted in the minister going on restorative care or long-term disability.

I will ask the Executive to discuss a long-term strategy that would i) inform Pastoral Charges of their responsibilities relating to Bill 168, ii) provide resources to help Pastoral Charges to handle conflict, and iii) provide support for Ministry Personnel. The initial thinking from the personnel ministers and myself is that a workshop with every Official Board (or equivalent) within the Conference would provide the forum for naming and addressing issues. There would be financial implications if this plan were adopted, but the costs could have long-term benefits if even one congregation did not split or one minister did not end up on restorative care.

### Excerpt from November 11, 2011 Executive minutes

The Executive discussed the benefits of doing training with every Official Board (or its equivalent) regarding Bill 168, the Ontario legislation of workplace violence and harassment. Comments and suggestions included:

- Training should include ministry and personnel committees as well as the Official Board.
- How do you get the word out to people beyond the Official Board?
- Presbytery would have to require the visit.
- How does the information get passed on to future leaders? What would have been helpful in a past conflict, i.e. not just the ones who would be trained the first time?
- It might be helpful to have someone from a congregation that had gone through conflict to talk about the experience and why training would help prevent such problems in the future.
- Funding for the training could come from the Conference Fund if the new criteria permit.

The Executive requested that the executive secretary present a plan for action on this matter at the February meeting of the Executive.

Follow-up

In the two months since the Executive had this discussion, I have had a number of conversations about this project. Everyone seems to agree that this could be a very useful thing to do. The biggest issue focuses on who would do the actual work.

In discussion with a gifted consultant, the enormity of the task became apparent – approximately 250 workshops to be conducted with Official Boards or their equivalents. That is clearly too much for one individual to handle within a reasonable timeline.

Even if the task is broken down to have four individuals doing workshops within each Presbytery, that still means approximately 60 events.

Though it may be possible to hire “off the rack” trainers, I think we need people who know the United Church and can address Bill 168 in light of our biblical and theological perspectives.

This requires more thought. My plan is to discuss this further with the personnel ministers. I would also appreciate further discussion with the Executive, including confirmation about the funding source, before bringing a concrete proposal to the Executive in April.

