

News Release Communiqué



Ontario
Human Rights
Commission

Commission
ontarienne des
droits de la personne

For immediate release
September XX, 2005

COMMISSION MEDIATES SETTLEMENT WITH SCHOOL BOARD IN SEXUAL ORIENTATION COMPLAINT

Toronto – The Ontario Human Rights Commission (the “Commission”) has settled a Thunder Bay case alleging discrimination based on sexual orientation by mediating an agreement between the parties involved that will result in increased education and understanding around sexual diversity issues for students and staff of the Lakehead District School Board (the “Board”).

The complainant alleged that he was subjected to harassment and discrimination based on perceptions of his sexual orientation from fellow students on numerous occasions. While the Board took action by disciplining the individual students involved, the complainant was also seeking broader, board-wide initiatives to curb future occurrences of harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation. The complaint was filed with the Commission in June 2004.

The terms of the settlement reached by the parties include the joint development of a document entitled *Proactive Steps in Preventing Homophobic Harassment*, an equity statement the Board has agreed to adopt and promote, the effectiveness of which will be measured by the Board’s Diversity Committee. The Board has also developed a draft Diversity Plan, and will be holding a “train the trainers” workshop titled, “We’re Erasing Prejudice for Good,” for one teacher from each of its schools. These teachers will then take this knowledge back to their schools where they will promote understanding of sexual diversity issues to staff and students.

“Discrimination and harassment have no place in our schools,” said Chief Commissioner Keith Norton, commenting on the settlement. “I am pleased to see the Lakehead District School Board is taking progressive measures to ensure all students will be treated equally, regardless of actual or perceived sexual orientation.”

The Ontario *Human Rights Code* provides that every person has the right to be treated equally without discrimination because of sexual orientation. Information on the *Code* and Commission policies and publications is available online at www.ohrc.on.ca.

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