

Make cyber bullying a crime teachers say

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TORONTO — Cyber bullying is so serious that it should be made a criminal offence, a national teachers' organization says.

The Canadian Teachers' Federation will consider a far-reaching draft policy on cyber bullying Saturday that calls for amendments to the Criminal Code of Canada. The document says "using information and communication technology to convey a message which threatens death or bodily harm or perpetuates fear and intimidation in another constitutes a punishable offence under the Code."

The draft policy, which has already been approved by the group's board of directors, will be discussed at the CTF's annual general meeting in Moncton, N.B., on Saturday.

In recent years, teachers' organizations have been lobbying for stricter punishments for cyber bullying, saying both students and teachers are being targeted. The harassment, they say, negatively affects learning environments and should be viewed as a serious occupational health and safety issue.

The CTF's draft policy also calls for provisions in collective agreements that recognize teachers' rights to work in safe environments that are free from cyber misconduct and cyber bullying. They also want provincial education ministries to provide "explicit protection" for teachers and students against such behaviour.

As well, the policy calls for amendments to workers' compensation legislation to include protection from cyber bullying.

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