



Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC) Halifax Centre

Dedicated to the Advancement of Astronomy and Allied Sciences

G11: Policies Regarding RASC Halifax Centre Membership and Conflict Resolution

(Adopted June 1, 2021; Revised September 3, 2024)

Background:

Any person can become a member of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC) and request affiliation with the RASC Halifax Centre. To retain their status as a RASC member, they must adhere to the by-laws and written policies as set by the RASC and by the RASC Halifax Centre.

The goal of the RASC Halifax Centre conflict resolution process is to address problems, communicate openly and respectfully with someone of opposing opinion in an attempt to find common ground and a mutually agreeable solution.

This policy is based on the RASC Halifax Centre By-Law No. 1 and Society policies.

Membership Policy Statements:

The RASC is committed to creating and maintaining an organizational environment characterized by constructive, productive, and supportive relationships. A fundamental value of the RASC is fellowship. However, personal interactions are complex, and it can be expected that, from time to time, disputes, conflicts and complaints will arise. When the participants in the conflict are unable to resolve the issue quickly and satisfactorily themselves, the following policy exists to guide the RASC Halifax Centre Board of Directors towards resolution of the conflict where that is possible.

Members are expected at all times to conduct themselves appropriately and with due regard to the best interests of the Centre, the Society and their fellow members. Failure to comply with the Bylaws or Policies of the Halifax Centre may result in a review of their membership resulting in discipline, or eventual expulsion from the Centre in accordance with the RASC Halifax Centre By-Law No. 1 and with this policy. In such cases, the RASC Halifax Centre shall, within fifteen days, notify the Society of the change in the member's status and the circumstances of the expulsion. The RASC Board of Directors will then determine if further action is required in accordance with the Society's disciplinary policies.

Guiding Principles:

1. Conflict Resolution is the process that enables two or more parties to find a solution to which all parties can agree.
2. There is recognition by all parties involved that a problem exists and that there is mutual agreement to address the issue and find a solution. There is an effort to understand the perspective and concerns of the opposing individuals and a willingness to compromise.
3. Conflict is to be resolved with the least amount of involvement of participants external to the conflict. If the conflict cannot be resolved at the Centre level, it will then be forwarded with the appropriate documentation to the RASC.
4. Expeditious resolution of conflict is expected to reduce unnecessary suffering or to prevent further conflict.
5. All parties involved in the conflict resolution will maintain confidentiality about the conflict except as outlined below or as agreed to by the parties involved in the conflict and its resolution.
6. Threats of harm or concerns that harm may develop must be immediately referred to the appropriate professionals or authorities. Complaint/conflict resolution will be suspended until such time as the risk of harm has been safely addressed. At that time, review shall be undertaken by the involved parties to determine if further action is required to resolve the complaint/conflict.

Resolution Process:

Conflicts may arise between RASC Halifax Centre members, between the Centre and a member of the public, or between a Halifax Centre member and a member of the public. The process as outlined below should be followed.

Should a complaint of a serious enough nature arise where one or more members whose continued membership in the Centre may not be in the best interest of the Centre, the RASC Halifax Centre policy regarding membership and expulsion should be followed.

1. RASC Halifax Centre Level Process**A) Between all Involved Parties:**

1. Communication of the complaint or conflict shall first be made orally between the involved parties.
2. All parties involved should identify the source of the conflict and offer a possible solution for change that would benefit all parties involved and, where applicable, perhaps the Centre and/or Society.
3. If this does not lead to a resolution that is satisfactory to the involved parties, the nature of the complaint shall be communicated in writing to the Centre President (or another Board member designated by the RASC Halifax Centre Board of Directors) as the Conciliator. The Conciliator will attempt to facilitate a resolution.

B) Use of a Conciliator:

1. The Conciliator should facilitate presentation of:
 - a) Notice of meeting at which the complaint will be discussed.
 - b) Ground rules for the discussion, building on the guiding principles outlined above and on respectful collaboration.
 - c) Criteria for resolution, including whether agreement will be made by consensus, vote or an agreed-upon authority.
 - d) Definition of the problem, including identifying common ground, if possible.
 - e) Written statements of position by parties to the conflict.
2. The above should be formalized and constitute a facilitated discussion leading to a documented decision.
3. For unresolved conflicts within the Board of Directors, the Conciliator is the Halifax Centre President or another Board member designated by the RASC Halifax centre Board of Directors.
4. Where the Conciliator has attempted to facilitate a resolution of the complaint and has been unsuccessful or any of the parties to the conflict does not accept the conciliator's decision, the complaint will be referred in writing and include a synopsis of the measures thus far taken to resolve the conflict to the Halifax Centre Board, who will appoint a Mediator.

C) Use of a Mediator:

1. If a Mediator is necessary, one will be designated by the President or by the Vice-President in the event that the President is the source of the complaint. The Mediator will not be a member of the current Board of Directors.
2. Such communication should be no more than one page and be descriptive of the events that gave rise to the complaint or conflict. Where the complaint has not gone through the Conciliator, the reason(s) for not involving the Conciliator in the process will be included in the written communication.

D) Referred to the RASC Halifax Centre Board of Directors:

1. If the Board-appointed Mediator still cannot resolve the conflict or any of the parties to the conflict does not accept the Mediator's decision, they may send an appeal to the RASC Halifax Centre Board of Directors (or to a subcommittee thereof), to facilitate the resolution of the conflict.
2. Should the Board President or another Board member designated by the RASC Halifax Centre Board of Directors accept the appeal to the Board, the Board's decision on the appeal will be documented in its meeting summary and is final.
3. Where all previous measures have been attempted and the complaint has not been resolved or any of the parties to the conflict does not accept the Board's final decision, the RASC Halifax Centre President will determine if it is appropriate to seek consultation or assistance from the Secretary of the Society's Board of Directors in the resolution of the complaint.

Policy Statements Regarding Outcome:

A copy of the conflict resolution document will be sent to the parties involved and the RASC Halifax Centre President for inclusion in the Centre's files. All documentation relating to the conflict will be kept in confidence.

The Board of Directors may discipline a member from the Centre in accordance with the Centre's By-Laws. Should a complaint of a serious enough nature arise where one or more members whose continued membership in the Centre may not be in the best interest of the Centre, the RASC Halifax Centre policy regarding membership and expulsion should be followed.

2. RASC Level Process

If the conflict or complaint cannot be resolved to all parties' satisfaction, the complete file, including the conflict resolution request or complaint, documentation of relevant factual information, analysis of the information, the conclusion, and the recommended resolution, will be forwarded to the Society to address the issue under their policy regarding conflict and complaint resolution.

All decisions and recommendations made by the Society regarding any and all conflicts will be final and binding without any further right of appeal.