

Union pays unemployed people to picket Halifax developer

Last Updated: Friday, March 9, 2007 | 2:30 PM AT

[CBC News](#)

A Halifax union is paying about 20 welfare recipients to picket sites owned by a Halifax developer to protest against its hiring policies.

The Carpenters Union said its members are too busy to picket themselves and it is giving a handful of people on social assistance about \$10 an hour in compensation after they conduct information pickets.

The union said it wants to let Dixel Developments know that it is opposed to Dixel's practice of employing non-union labour. The practice makes it more difficult for union members to earn decent wages, it said.

Peter Greer, spokesperson for the Carpenters Union, said the union is not on strike but it is trying to make a point.

"Dixel is employing non-union labour. It's driving down wages and benefits of working people in Nova Scotia and we're fighting back," he said.

Susan LeFort, spokesperson for the Halifax Coalition Against Poverty, said the people on the picket line are expressing their solidarity with the union by conducting the pickets.

"They haven't been paying people on welfare to picket. They have provided very nicely an honorarium to cover the costs of transportation and lunch," she said.

Dennis Cameron, a Halifax resident, said he spends four to eight hours a week picketing for the union. "I just come down and they give me money for helping out," he said.

But staff at Dixel Developments offices say the pickets, even though they are informational only, are disturbing them because they make a lot of noise and employees consider them harassment.

Joanne David, an employee of Dixel, said the pickets are intimidating. "I personally feel threatened coming to work," she said.

Last week, the company staff distributed flyers to the picketers that warn that they could lose their welfare if they continue their activities.

In the flyer, the company threatens to take photos of the picketers and submit them to Nova Scotia Community Services. The provincial department said the matter has been referred to its legal department.

LeFort said she thinks the flyers are an attempt to prevent the people on social assistance from taking part in political action. "It's disgusting," she said.