

ONTARIO COUNCIL NEWSLETTER



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PSAC ONTARIO

Our Province is Under Threat!



The Progressive Conservative government, under Premier Doug Ford, took a 5-month break before the federal election, but communities across the province continue to feel the impacts of this government's cuts.

Within just a few months after the June 2018 election, this government wasted no time in attacking unions, environmental protections, teachers, municipalities and the list goes on and on. To really get a full picture of how devastating this government has been to our province, I urge you to visit the Ontario Federation of Labour's "Cuts Tracker" here: <http://ofl.ca/power-of-many-ford-tracker-pc-cuts-and-privatization-to-date/>.

The list of cuts is pages long and includes startling facts such as by 2023-24 there will be 10,054 fewer teachers. Also, the government has cut an additional \$2.4 billion from public services and this year we have hit a record high for hospital overcrowding - so much for ending hallway medicine!

We have almost three more years under this government, which means we need to mobilize and take action to fight back against these cuts and any future legislation introduced. This is what the Labour Movement is all about, fighting to make our communities better and challenging those in power who are self-serving and only care about the wealthy. We need to show them that WE are Ontario and that we will defend our province and our values against their greed.

Sharon DeSousa, PSAC Ontario Regional Executive Vice-President



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PSAC Ontario Regional Women’s Conference



The Ontario Region Women’s Conference was held in Mississauga on September 27-29, 2019, and I am proud to say it was a great success. We were fortunate enough to kick off the conference by attending the “Climate Change Strike” at Queens Park on the Friday, joining thousands of activists.

We made signs and banners to undertake direct action, which was empowering. As we walked towards the legislature, we had the music going and chanted together in unity.

Once we were back at the conference, participants learned about the important work our union is doing through our Gender Equity Taskforce (G.E.T). The G.E.T. is a taskforce stemming from a recommendation to the PSAC National Board of Directors proposed by the National Human Rights Committee. The idea behind this was to look inward, to find out why there are so few women in formal leadership roles within our union. This gave us the opportunity for meaningful discussions as to what inclusion means to each of us, as well as identifying obstacles and barriers to full participation.

This was an amazing conference! Thank you to the organizing committee, the staff, the REVP Sharon DeSousa, National Vice President, Magali Picard, the speakers and most importantly the participants for making this conference a wonderful experience.

Missy Taylor, Regional Women’s Committees Representative



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Barrie Take Back the Night

Unions and community groups in Barrie came together in support of women's rights in the annual "Take Back the Night" event on September 21, 2019. The event was hosted at Barrie City Hall by the Athena Sexual Assault Counselling Advocacy Centre and Huronia Transition Homes and sponsored by the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

"We know that violence against women is an epidemic in Simcoe County, says Cassie Roberts, Program Supervisor of the Advocacy Centre. "Take Back the Night has collective voices coming together to demand an end to it and create a society that values respect and equality."

The rally began at 6 pm in the City Hall rotunda where the public could talk to various groups that hosted tables, including the Barrie Regional Women's Committee (RWC) and the Barrie and District Labour Council. Bev Bekooy-MacDonald, Chair of the Barrie RWC, has been a long-time supporter of the annual event.

"I support this rally, not only because of its mandate to end violence against women and children," says Bekooy-MacDonald. "In this community we are limited with emergency housing available for abused women and this is a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness for people who are marginalized and who are left out or left behind with nowhere else to turn."

Following the rally at City Hall, those attending took to the streets to march throughout downtown Barrie. "We want women to feel safe and spread the word that violence against women is unacceptable," says Bekooy-MacDonald.

Ryan Ward, Region 5
(GTA) Representative



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Council Member Profile

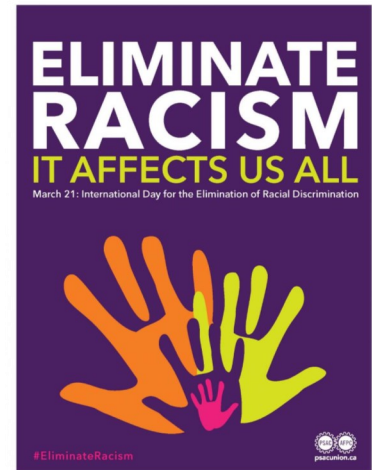


As the Racially Visible Member Representative on PSAC Ontario Regional Council my objective is to promote and protect the interests of racially visible members of the PSAC. To do this I also work to encourage more racially visible member participation in our union and fight to end harassment, discrimination and racism in our union and in our workplaces.

In addition to my seat on Ontario Council, I am also a member of the Council Equity and Human Rights Committee, as well as a member of the PSAC National Human Rights Committee. In these roles I was honoured to be the Chair of the first Racially Visible Regional Conference in March of

2016. I believe the more opportunities we have to come together, receive education and training and build our union's commitment to human rights, the stronger our union will become.

Lloyd Brown, Racially Visible Members Representative



Council Member Profile



Hey there, my name is Sara Beth Johnson. I am one of two Region 4/Southwest Representatives on PSAC Ontario Regional Council. I was an alternate until Judi Goodfellow retired and I stepped into this role in June 2019.

I am also currently Chief Steward for my Local (Canada Employment and Immigration Union [CEIU] Local 000581), and an Alternate for my Component's regional council. Prior to taking my second maternity leave, I was Local President for about 6 years. I also served a term on my Component's Regional Women's Committee and I am an active member on the PSAC London Area Council.

I am committed to union and social activism and have been lucky to represent PSAC and CEIU at many different events. I am especially interested in women's and environmental issues and even went to the "March on Washington", back in January 2017, the largest single-day protest in U.S. history!

I strive to constantly learn and gain experience and put in my best efforts to help our members. I can be reached at saraj.pvac@gmail.com

Sara B. Johnson, Region 4 (Southwestern) Representative

Retirement Security



On October 7, 2019, the PSAC Toronto Members with Disabilities Access Committee (MDAC) sponsored a retirement planning session in the Toronto regional office. The session included information on pensions and benefits, as well as a discussion of how the Pension Plan Contributions are calculated and payouts are determined. Other topics discussed included: The Supplementary Death Benefit; Leave Without Pay and how it may affect your pension; retirement benefits; indexing; and bridge benefits (CPP/QPP Coordination).

The presenter also explained how Service Buybacks; Survivor Benefits; and Group Insurance Benefits are affected for federal public sector workers. It was noted that PSAC members have one of the best, if not the best, pension plans in Canada!

Souad Soubra Boone, Members with Disabilities Representative



Members' Corner

PSAC members and retirees across Ontario are doing amazing things! Rallies, parades, training, lobbying MPs, picnics and many more and we want to hear about it! Share your thoughts, tell a story, speak on an issue that's important to you.

We've set aside space in every issue for a member's submission. Articles should be approximately 200 words and pictures are welcome!

Send your submissions to Lino Vieira, PSAC Ontario Political Communications Officer, at vieiral@psac-afpc.com.

Submissions are welcome anytime!

Queers in the House of Commons



The 2019 federal election campaign was an interesting one for LGBTQ2+ Canadians. With more than 70 openly LGBTQ2+ candidates fighting for a seat in the House of Commons, including at least five trans or non-binary folks, and at least two Two-Spirit candidates, it seemed like an exciting opportunity for queer Canadians. There were only 20 candidates who ran in 2015, so a field of 70 candidates was record breaking and historic.

A closer look however showed that hardly any of those candidates were in a position to win their seats. Representing NDP or the Greens, most queer candidates were up against popular incumbents in ridings that were established Conservative or Liberal strongholds. So, while the increase in number of LGBTQ2+ candidates felt like progress, the reality was that most of them had no chance of representing us in Ottawa. Sure enough, when the final ballot was counted, only four queer candidates were elected to Parliament, three of whom were incumbents, and all of whom are gay white men.

In the run-up to elections, LGBTQ2+ issues surfaced as talking points (and perhaps political points) frequently. The resurfacing of a video of Conservative leader Andrew Scheer where he equates gay marriage to a dog's tail, allowed party leaders and journalists to zero in on marriage equality, while ignoring other pressing issues faced by LGBTQ2+ Canadians. There was little to no mention of improving access to gender-affirming healthcare and no mention of updating the Employment Equality Act to include LGBTQ2+ Canadians.

As a majority government, the Liberals were not strong allies despite setting up the framework to be so. As a minority government, perhaps now is the time to press for firmer commitments to our communities. But with even less representation in Ottawa, the onus is on us to move the marker ahead. Contact your PSAC Regional Area Council, your PSAC Regional Office, or me, the PSAC Ontario LGBTQ2+ representative, to find out how you can support our community.

Ann Marie Kuarsingh,

Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Trans, Queer
and 2-Spirit Members Representative



Labour Day Should be Political



On September 1st, the Toronto Airport Workers Council organized an event at Pearson Airport, Terminal 1, to kick off the Labour Day festivities.

They did this by inviting federal election candidates to attend and answer our members questions around some key concerns such as contract flipping and setting a federal minimum wage. All of the candidates accepted except for the Conservative Party candidate. Everyone enjoyed the free churros, ice cream and the music provided by a steel pan band.

Leslie Searl, Region 5 (GTA) Representative



Truth and Reconciliation in Day-to-Day Life



As a non-Indigenous person, I don't want to step on any toes, but I am interested in learning more about Indigenous peoples and the path to reconciliation. I really believe that Canada must do more to heal the relationship between Indigenous peoples and settlers.

I have been privileged to hear Senator Murray Sinclair speak about the Truth and Reconciliation Committee hearings and see a very moving dance performance honouring Missing and Murdered Indigenous women at the most recent PSAC National Convention. I have also participated in the powerful Kairos Blanket Exercise and have since done some reading about the recommendations coming from the final Truth and Reconciliation report.

From these experiences, I have decided to try to incorporate little acts of truth and reconciliation in my own life, as much as possible. Recently, we held a baby blessing/naming ceremony for our baby daughter, Riley. I decided to incorporate honouring the traditional land we were holding the ceremony on.

In our union roles, we can also incorporate truth and reconciliation. If you are helping to plan an event, or even hosting a Local members meeting, you can ensure that you acknowledge the traditional land the event is being held on as one form of solidarity.

Sara B. Johnson, Region 4 (Southwestern) Representative

2019 Federal Election



Canadians went to the polls on October 21st and elected a Liberal minority government with both the Bloc Québécois and New Democrats in a position to hold the balance of power in the legislature.

The Liberal Party received 157 seats, the Conservatives were second with 121 seats, the Bloc Québécois was third with 32 seats, the NDP fourth receiving 24 seats, the Green Party was fifth with 3 seats, and one Independent MP, Jody Wilson-Raybould, who was elected in the riding of Vancouver Granville.

As part of PSAC's strategy to help elect a progressive government that will help benefit our 180,000 members across Canada, we looked at getting out the vote in select ridings based on the results of the previous federal election. We held multiple candidate town-hall meetings, phone banks, telephone town-halls, webinars, sent emails and mail-outs in certain ridings; to provide as much information to our members as possible on the Party's platforms.

As union members and with many of us working in the federal government, we know how important politics is on our lives and workplaces. The election may be over but our work continues to make sure this government is held accountable to our members.

Ryan Ward, Region 5 (GTA) Representative