

ONTARIO COUNCIL NEWSLETTER



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PSAC ONTARIO

We cannot take our rights for granted



After two years of tireless activism by the labour movement and community groups working together, Ontario's labour laws were updated to make them fairer for workers. However, with the provincial election of the new Progressive Conservative government in June of this year, those gains are now in jeopardy.

On October 23rd, Premier Ford introduced Bill 47 (Making Ontario Open for Business Act). The Bill will freeze minimum wage at \$14, eliminate two paid sick days for all workers, cancel fair scheduling rules, end equal pay for equal work and make it harder for workers to join a union.

This is why politics matter. Our rights can be taken away by right-wing governments who promise to stand up for workers during the campaign trail, only to attack our rights after coming into power.

But we are union and community activists and we will not give up. There is still time to protect these laws and make this government accountable for the actions they have taken.

Canadian law recognizes our union's right to be involved in politics and our political power comes from our members standing together. I urge all our members to call Premier Ford (416-325-1941) and your Local MPP and stop Bill 47.

Sharon DeSousa, PSAC Ontario Regional Executive Vice-President



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Email PC MPPs

**Message to Doug Ford:
Hands off workers' rights!**



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Alliance Facilitators Network



As an Alliance Facilitator (AF), Workers Health and Safety Centre Instructor, Chair of the Education Committee and Alliance Facilitator Network Liaison, I have a passion for education. So I was thrilled to have been able to participate in two great training events this fall.

In September and October I had the privilege to co-facilitate the Alliance Facilitators Training Program (AFTP) and watch fourteen eager members embark on their journey to bring education to the members.

The Alliance Facilitators Network (AFN) is composed of members who have received training as facilitators in at least one of several ways: AFTP, the Joint Learning Program, Workers Health and Safety Centre Instructors Training, Prevention Link Instructors Training or Canadian Labour Congress Instructors Training. In addition to their training, they must successfully co-facilitate a workshop or course with a Regional Rep in order to be added to the Alliance Facilitators Network.

Seasoned AFs meet for a seminar every three years to further enhance their skills, particularly in the area of workshop design. This was the second event I attended, but this time as a participant. We left the seminar recharged and with a number of newly-created workshops to provide to members in our Regions.

For information on how you can have an AF present a workshop to your Local/ Branch, Area Council or Regional Committee or on how you can become an AF, contact your closest PSAC Regional Office.



Alliance Facilitators participating in an icebreaker exercise

Melanee Jessup,
Southwestern Ontario Representative,
Chair, Ontario Region Education Committee

The History of Labour Day in Canada

The 19th century found unions illegal in Canada and employees were working in terrible conditions, often for long hours, with little pay or health and safety protections. After being ignored by their employer for over 3 years, the workers employed by the Toronto Printers took action and on March 25, 1872, went on strike. Soon after, over 2,000 workers marched through the streets in a show of solidarity. By the time they reached Queen's Park, they had 10,000 participants – one tenth of the city's population at the time.

Conservative Prime Minister, John A. Macdonald, quickly saw the political benefit of siding with the workers. Macdonald passed the Trade Union Act, which decriminalized unions. The strike leaders, no longer criminals, were released from jail. Labour Day was created shortly after by Prime Minister Sir John Thompson, who declared Labour Day a national holiday in 1894.

No matter where you find yourself on Labour Day, take a minute to think about Canada's labour pioneers. Their brave actions laid the foundations for future labour movements and helped workers secure the rights and benefits we enjoy today.



Judi Goodfellow, Southwestern Ontario Representative



Why we need universal childcare!



When I became a mom I was scared and excited. However, one aspect that I was not prepared for was returning to work and the challenges I faced acquiring childcare. Prior to having kids, I never once thought of childcare and all the issues surrounding it. It was the most frustrating and difficult experience finding not only a spot, but good quality child care.

The inaccessibility, both financially due to how expensive it costs, and physically acquiring a spot was mind boggling. I love being a parent and I would not change it for the world. However, I wished it was easier in Ontario to make the choice to be a working parent.

The demand for childcare greatly surpasses availability. In many places, wait lists also require parents to pay a fee to have their child placed on the wait list. These fees can be up to \$200 and since most childcare facilities have their own lists, parents have to pay multiple wait list fees, while waiting for a spot to become available. This is what I went through with my daughter; I was placed on list after list in hopes that when I returned to work she would get a spot.

At \$1,400—\$1,700 a month, depending on where you live in Ontario, a year of child care can end up costing families almost as much as four years of university tuition. Toronto is the most expensive city for child care, with the median cost of infant care in the city being \$1,758 a month (\$21,096 annually), with Montreal having the lowest median cost of \$168 per month.

Some of us are lucky and have family or friends who can help out, but if you are not in the lucky group what do you do? Especially for parents like myself, who work non-traditional hours and/or days of work. You are left with few choices.

In today's economy, a dual income family or a single income with a good paying job is necessary to pay for childcare. I know I struggled with the decision, like so many, to be a stay at home parent due to the financial savings. However, staying at home would have created other career issues. What will happen if I am out of the workplace for an extended period of time? What will my job look like when/if I return? How will I adapt back into the workplace after being away for so long?

That's why elections are so important! Each time there is an election looming I think to myself, "who should I vote for?" I vote for what affects me every day, especially child care. We need to ensure as parents our voices are heard loud and clear on this message. We need affordable, quality child care for our children, so we as parents can go to work, have balance in our lives and be able to provide for our families. I hope more members get involved in PSAC's child care campaign, participate in rallies, and write to their political representatives on this critical issue.

Shalane Rooney, Northeastern Representative



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Council Member Profile—Souad Soubra Boone



Hello, I'm Souad Soubra Boone, the Member with Disabilities representative on Ontario Council. This is my third term on Ontario Council as your representative. My role is to help and support our members to know their rights, regarding both visible and invisible disabilities. I am also a member of the PSAC National Human Rights Committee. I strongly encourage members with disabilities to take our education courses, such as Duty to Accommodate and to become more involved with PSAC and our committees.



There are currently three Member with Disabilities Access Committees (MDAC) within the Ontario Region, located within Toronto, Hamilton and Kingston. If you are interested in becoming part of a committee within your area, or in starting a committee in an unrepresented area, please contact me at suesoubra@gmail.com.

Souad Soubra Boone, Member with Disabilities Representative

Council Member Profile—Leslie Searl



I am happy to have been elected to represent over 15,000 members within the Greater Toronto area. I sit on the Education Committee of Ontario Council and have a passion for union education. I am also the VP of Communications for the Customs and Immigration Union (Branch 24), here in Toronto. If you have a rally, meeting or event that you would like me to attend, please send me an email lasearl@rogers.com and let's talk!



Leslie Searl,
Greater Toronto Area Representative

Have you taken advantage of our union's training?



Many years ago, I was asked to attend the Talking Union Basics (TUB) course. My Local President thought I would enjoy the experience. I wasn't quite as sure but I completed the required application (only took a few minutes) and packed an overnight bag. When I got to the PSAC office, I looked around to see who I knew, which was no one. I could see some other participants in the room looking around nervously, just like I was, while others were chatting with people they seemed to know.

By the end of the two days, I knew much more about the importance of unions, but also had made some new friends. They had come to the training session from across the region and, like me, many were new to the union movement. Some had been involved for a while, but some were just starting on their union journey.

PSAC offers a wide variety of training opportunities all easily found on the PSAC Ontario website (www.pfac.com/ontario) under the Education section. Don't be afraid to check them out, you could meet a lot of great people. Even if you never hold a union position, you will come out of your training experience with a better understanding of your rights.

Judi Goodfellow, Southwestern Representative

Member's Corner

PSAC members across Ontario are doing amazing things! Rallies, parades, training, lobbying MPs, picnics and much more. We want to hear about it! Share your thoughts and tell a story about an issue that's important to you. We've set aside space in every issue for a member's submissions.

Articles should be approximately 250 words and pictures are welcome!

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

**Submissions are welcome
anytime!**



PSAC
Ontario



**READY TO BARGAIN
PRÊT À NÉGOCIER**

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National Indigenous Peoples Day

National Indigenous Peoples Day is celebrated annually on June 21st. It commemorates the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding achievements of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in Canada. In Thunder Bay, this year's celebration included a sunrise ceremony, followed by a powwow on Anemki Wajiw (Mount McKay) on Fort William First Nation.



Sheila Karasiewicz,
Indigenous Members Representative



The Grandmother Earth Dress

The Grandmother Earth Dress is a red jingle dress created by the Ontario Native Women's Association and was inspired by Jaime Black's REDDress Project. This sacred dress honours and acknowledges the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.



Judith Monteith-Farrell, past PSAC staff representative and the newly elected NDP MPP for Thunder Bay-Atikokan, attended the Thunder Bay National Aboriginal Day activities.

Thunder Bay Labour Day 2018

The PSAC National Ontario Indigenous representatives, Sheila Karasiewicz and Peter Cloidt, promoted the PSAC National Indigenous Peoples Circle's Red Dress Campaign at this year's Labour Day event in Thunder Bay. The campaign supports the National Inquiry into the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls. This particular day provided us an opportunity to share information on the campaign with the public and collect 125 signed postcards in support of the campaign.



Orange Shirt Day

Orange Shirt Day is commemorated annually on September 30th. The campaign raises awareness of the atrocities committed to Indigenous children through the residential school program. The campaign began with Phyllis Webstad's story of her first day at a residential school in 1973, when she was forced to remove her new orange shirt, given to her by her grandmother.

Watch Phyllis' story [here](#)

Approximately 200 people joined in the walk this day, that included a speaker who survived the residential school system, Allan Towegishig. Allan shared his story of how he was taken from his home in long Lake 58 First Nation when he was 7 years old and sent to St. Joseph's Residential School. He says that he still remembers the sadness, loneliness and the anger he felt being taken away from his family. He shares his truth to help in his healing and to bring awareness to the Residential School history.



Sheila Karasiewicz, Indigenous Members Representative