



PSAC ONTARIO

## Elections Are an Opportunity



The upcoming federal election is scheduled to take place on October 21, 2019. For the majority of PSAC members who work in the federal public service, this is an opportunity for us to influence the political direction of our country, while also helping to choose our next employer. Not many workers have this same opportunity and it can make all the difference when it comes to bargaining and moving forward on our priorities.

But that opportunity can only be fully realized if we are mobilized and willing to take part in political action leading up to the election. A healthy democracy relies on more than citizens voting, we need to be a part of the political process. That means running for office, supporting progressive candidates, communicating issues with our networks and participating in important rallies and pickets.

Sharon DeSousa, PSAC Ontario Regional Executive Vice-President



Inside this issue:	
New Year's Resolutions for LGBTQ2+ (and our allies) for 2019	2
2018 PSAC Ontario DCL Conference	3
Ontario Council Members Bio	4
Union Activism and Child-care	5
International Day of Persons with Disabilities World AIDS Day 2018	6
Stopping the Cuts to OSAP	7





## ONTARIO COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

### New Year's Resolutions for LGBTQ2+ (and our allies) for 2019



New Year's resolutions have become both a time-honoured tradition and a long-running joke. For many of us, we make them, only to end up breaking them later on. Yet a New Year's resolution is a promise to yourself to be better than you were last year – whether it is improving your health, relationships, finances, education, or your career. I would like to propose that our resolutions not be about what needs fixing, but about empowering who we already are.

For the LGBTQ2+ community, we need resolutions that empower us to practice self-love and self-care, particularly because we still live in a heteronormative society, where oppression continues to be used as a political platform. So here are a few of my suggested New Year's resolutions for 2019, that can help us live in a way that speaks to who we are:

- Practice self-care
- Expand the space in your life for the LGBTQ2+ community
- Take action against oppression in your community
- Learn more about LGBTQ2+ history and rights, at home and worldwide
- Find ways in your life where you can safely be loud and proud

Take pride, find joy and love being part of the LGBTQ2+ community. Contact us at [psacpride@gmail.com](mailto:psacpride@gmail.com) to find out how we can help.

Ann Marie KuarSingh,  
Ontario Council LGBTQ2+ Members Representative



## 2018 PSAC Ontario DCL Conference

The 2018 PSAC Ontario DCL Conference took place in November 2018, and was a positive experience that provided many excellent opportunities for personal and political growth for everyone who participated. As a conference organizing team, we decided that this conference would have the goals of “Empowerment, Strength and Education.”



We had our REVP, Sharon DeSousa, provide guidance, support and solidarity to the participants and spoke on the need to be politically active. Our guest speakers were amazing, speaking on issues ranging from human rights to fighting Premier Ford’s political agenda of austerity and privatization.

Another highlight was our participation in the “Anti-Ford Rally” that took place on the Friday night at the Toronto Convention Centre. Our members protested to stop Bill 47 and changes to the employment legislation, cuts to low income programs such as Ontario Social Assistance and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), and further cuts to Health Care, etc. Members were also supporting the Fight for \$15 minimum wage campaign.

Conferences such as this one are an amazing experience to build our knowledge and our working relationships.

Peggy Jones, PSAC Ontario  
Council DCL Representative

Craig Berggold, PSAC Ontario  
Council Academic Sector Representative



## Ontario Council Members Bio



Boozhoo/Hello,

My name is Sheila Karasiewicz and I am the Indigenous People's Representative on PSAC Ontario Council. I come from the Thunderbird nest of Anemki Wajew (Fort William First Nation), which is an Ojibwe community adjacent to Thunder Bay and located in the Robinson Superior Treaty Territory of 1850 and I am part of the Turtle Clan. My Component is the Union of National Employees and I am the 2nd VP within my Local 00296 at Indigenous Services Canada.

My goal this term is to continue my work as your representative and voice on Ontario Council and to continue my activism on issues affecting our Indigenous Peoples, such as safe drinking water, National Inquiry for the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and

Girls, Anti-Racism, and food pricing in northern communities, among many others.

I also wish to continue promoting and delivering the Kairos Blanket Exercise, which is an interactive exercise that synthesizes 500 years of colonization into 1.5 hrs. I am also looking to re-establish the previous Indigenous People's Circles in Thunder Bay and Sault Ste Marie, as well as establish new Indigenous People's Circles in the Kingston, Toronto and Sudbury areas. In addition, I wish to help Indigenous members become more active in their Locals, committees, and union education courses. Please help me to bring your voices to Council so they can be heard by sharing your concerns with me.

Miigwech/Thank-you!

Sheila Karasiewicz, PSAC Ontario Council Indigenous Members Representative

### Drinking Water Advisories

The number of active drinking water advisories in First Nations communities across Canada



## Union Activism and Childcare



In the last newsletter I wrote about the reality of childcare as a working parent. Even if you did not have a chance to read it, if you have children and work in Ontario you know all the struggles in obtaining quality childcare.

When I became pregnant with my first child a few years ago, I was my Local Union President at the time. When I left for maternity leave, my union activism continued with my participation on our bargaining team. How, you ask, is this possible? It is because our union provides members with the ability to do so, as members on maternity/paternity leave are still considered members in good standing within our union.

Being a parent should not be a barrier to union participation. Over the past few years our union has provided me access to attend events by providing childcare on site, or paying for childcare at home. Within my own Local, we provide childcare for annual general membership meetings, so everyone can participate.

If anyone is interested in becoming more involved within our union but think because you have children, you cannot, I can tell you this is not the case. My daughter's first union event was when she was 3 months old and my son's was when he was 3 weeks old.

If you want more information on childcare provided by our union to attend events, please contact your PSAC regional office.

Shalane Rooney, PSAC Ontario Council  
Northeastern Members Representative



## Member's Corner

PSAC members across Ontario are doing amazing things! Rallies, parades, training, lobbying MPs, picnics — and we want to hear about it! Share your thoughts or tell a story that's important to you. We've set aside space in every issue for 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](mailto:vieiral@psac-afpc.com).

**Submissions are welcome anytime!**

## International Day of Persons with Disabilities



International Day of Persons with Disabilities is annually observed on December 3rd, around the world. The theme for this year is “Empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”. This day not only commemorates the achievements of people with disabilities, but also highlights the continued challenges faced by people living with disabilities in their everyday lives.

Obstacles include a lack of proper resources and weak legislative protections. As a result, people with disabilities often have to overcome challenges to their participation with transportation, employment and education. We must keep working to remove these obstacles to support the dignity, rights and well-being of people with disabilities.



Souad Soubra Boone (Sue), PSAC Ontario Council

## World AIDS Day



December 1, 2018, marked the 30th anniversary of World AIDS Day. Every year we commemorate this day by remembering those who have died because of HIV/AIDS, and reflecting on the achievements made, and the fight still ahead of us. It is an important date to raise awareness about AIDS and to stop the global spread of the HIV infection. While significant scientific advances have been made over the last three decades, sufferers continue to face stigma and discrimination as a result of ignorance about the nature of the condition.

The first World AIDS Day was held in 1988, as a way of highlighting the enormity of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and nations' responsibility to ensure universal treatment, care and support for people living with HIV and AIDS. The 2018 theme was “Know Your Status”, which was an encouragement for people to undergo medical testing to determine their status, and to ensure anyone with a positive diagnosis can access the quality care and prevention services they need.

As activists, and as Ontarians, let us not forget that it was ignorance and prejudice that facilitated the spread of what was then called the ‘gay plague’. Let us work together to educate ourselves, and future generations; to ensure equal access to healthcare and prevention services; and to bring an end to the stigma and discrimination associated with AIDS.

Ann Marie KuarSingh, Ontario Council LGBTQ2+ Members Representative

## Stopping the Cuts to OSAP



The beginning of 2019 has been marked by Doug Ford's Conservative government's reckless attack on Ontario's post-secondary students and workers, with cuts to OSAP funding grants and student unions' ability to service members. Premier Ford announced the elimination of free tuition for low-income students, preventing the most precarious and vulnerable from improving their future training. The headline-grabbing "10% cut to tuition fees" is in the same vein as buck-a-bear – an eye-catching gimmick to distract from the real news: the quality of education is about to get worse!

In Ontario, university and college students pay some of the highest tuitions, while receiving some of the lowest per-student funding. Tuition increases regularly outpace wage increases and students graduate with crippling debt-loads. On average, students graduate with an average debt of \$30,000. Cancelling OSAP grant programs forces students to take out even bigger loans, compounding a debt crisis.

Many PSAC members who are graduate student employees (Teaching Assistants/Teaching Fellows/Research Assistants) already have trouble affording basic living expenses after covering tuition costs. Adding insult to injury, Ford's Tories also cut the interest-free six-month grace period for those who graduate.

Post-secondary education should be accessible to all qualifying students regardless of their financial background. Ford is clearly not interested in equity and fairness – the proposed cuts will disproportionately target those who are already struggling. Forcing students and workers into higher debt, and making a post-secondary education unattainable.

Craig Berggold, PSAC Ontario Council Academic Sector Representative

