

Conversation starter

How can we tackle systemic racism and build equity in the workplace?



Systemic discrimination and institutional racism is a reality in Canada's government, and it is preventing the public service from reaching its full potential.

Unconscious bias and racist attitudes negatively impact the careers and mental health of racialized public service workers, and they also impact the quality and accessibility racialized Canadians have to public services.

The [Black Class Action lawsuit](#) against the federal government shows that Black employees have been discriminated against for decades and that discrimination continues to this day. Black employees are one of the largest groups of racialized workers in the federal government [but only represent 1.6% of workers](#) at the executive level.

Indigenous employees are also pursuing [a class action lawsuit](#) against the federal government for systemic racism. Plaintiffs describe experiencing discrimination and harassment because of their Indigenous identity.

Anti-racism as part of bargaining

With over 165,000 public service members in the process of negotiating new collective agreements, now is the time to remove barriers and exclusions experienced by Indigenous, Black and other racialized workers.

PSAC members have clearly shown in PSAC's bargaining survey that improving equity in the workplace and fighting against racism need to be priorities at the negotiations table.

Everyone in the federal government can benefit from training on systemic racism. It creates healthier work environments for racialized workers, and it ensures unbiased delivery of

public services and programs to all Canadians, including Indigenous peoples, Black people, and other racialized Canadians.

That's why we are proposing the government offers training on equity, diversity and inclusion, and the history of Indigenous peoples and residential schools to all federal public service workers. It's a small but meaningful step towards fighting racism – and it can help public sector workers to better serve all Canadians.

We also know that a diverse workforce with strong Indigenous representation means a better public service for all. At the table, we are proposing a bilingual allowance, as well as a separate Indigenous languages allowance, and leave for Indigenous cultural practices to attract and retain more Indigenous workers and recognize their lived experiences.

Now more than ever, our union is taking action to address barriers and discrimination faced by racialized members in the workplace. This means making sure members have all the information they need to report discrimination without fear of retaliation.

Our proposals would strengthen the language in your collective agreement on violence and harassment to offer more protection from all forms of harassment in the workplace and the support you need when filing a grievance and seeking a resolution.

Fighting racism and building a diverse public service is supposed to be a top priority for this government. Only by working with PSAC and other unions can we dismantle systemic racism in the federal public service.

