

OUR UNION VOICE



Public Service Alliance of Canada
Alliance de la Fonction publique du Canada

National President's Report

2022-2024



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IN THIS ISSUE

PSAC strikes 2

Tackling the big bargaining battles 5

Dismantling racism in our union, workplaces and communities 11

Continuing the fight for pay equity 13

Pursuing justice in the courts 13

Taking our members' issues to Parliament 14

Meeting in person again 15

We're part of a bigger movement 16

Social Justice Fund 17



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President's message

Building a strong movement takes resilient and dedicated members, ready to confront challenges and remain steadfast in defending workers' rights and advocating for a just future for all. And I am honoured PSAC members have entrusted me to lead the fights ahead as your next National President.

I'd like to start by thanking Chris Aylward, our former National President. This edition of *Our Union Voice* is an overview of the National President's report presented at PSAC's National Triennial Convention in May, and all of the hard work and accomplishments highlighted are a reflection of the milestones we achieved as a union under his leadership. I'm proud of our work together, and Chris leaves us with a lasting legacy that I know we as a union will all continue to build on.

We showed that solidarity goes a long way during our historic national strike of 2023. We took on tough employers who tried to undermine our rights — and we emerged victorious, empowering workers across the country to fight for better. This was a pivotal moment in Canadian labour history, setting a new standard for all workers. Soon after, members at the Iqaluit Housing Authority and civilian military workers at Non-Public Funds took up the mantle with their own strike actions, sending a powerful message that fair wages and improved working conditions are non-negotiable.

We also remain committed to continue our fight against systemic racism and discrimination within our union, workplaces, and communities. Through our Anti-Racism Action Plan, informed by extensive consultations with thousands of members, we are taking concrete steps to build a truly anti-racist union.

At the same time, we continue to challenge the federal government to create more inclusive workplaces and to address longstanding environmental racism, by pushing



for changes to the *Employment Equity Act*, demanding the settlement of the Black Class Action, and seeking justice for Indigenous communities still without clean water.

We hold governments and decision-makers accountable — not just for our members, but for workers and their families across Canada. From the broken Phoenix Pay system to the Canada Life debacle, to advocating for strong anti-scab legislation, universal childcare, and pharmacare, PSAC has always been at the forefront of the fight for workers' rights.

Our membership is diversifying and growing. The new generation of PSAC activists, eager to carry the torch forward, is a source of inspiration. I've witnessed your boldness and solidarity on picket lines, in MPs' offices, and at community rallies.

Let's not forget that our resilience was tested many times before, and will be again. With the looming threat of a Conservative government, our collective strength is now more critical than ever. Together we must prepare ourselves to fight potential cuts to public services that would impact our members and the essential services people rely on daily.

But I know that together, we can continue to make a difference — not just for ourselves, but for future generations of public service workers who deserve nothing less than our very best.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharon DeSousa". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sharon DeSousa,
National President

Editor's note

To better highlight the work of our members and our union, we are building on the content we share with you through *Our Union Voice*. Alongside our traditional OUV editions, PSAC will also publish a year-in-review edition annually and a National President's Report every three years following our National Triennial Convention. This new approach allows us to reflect on the victories and achievements we've accomplished together. We hope you enjoy it!



We're building a fighting union: PSAC strikes

For the third time in PSAC's history, our union took to the streets in a nationwide strike.

On April 19, 2023, 165,000 federal public service workers from various bargaining units put everything on the line and showed up to more than 250 picket lines across the country, to fight for a fair contract.



With the strike action, PSAC secured the strongest collective agreement in the federal public service, which raised the bar for our members — and all workers in Canada. It includes wage increases to counter inflation, a \$2,500 pensionable lump sum payment, and remote work language that protects workers from a one-size-fits all approach.

The national general strike unleashed a wave of activism and energy within our union. Our victory would not have been possible without the work of thousands of members who rose to the challenge and took on leadership roles.

The impact of the strike influenced subsequent agreements with other agencies, like Parks Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

Ultimately, the strike not only secured favorable terms for PSAC members but also energized the union, laying the groundwork for future negotiations and serving as a blueprint for collective action.





Striking Iqaluit workers — small but mighty

For 137 days, thirteen PSAC-NEU Inuit members braved Nunavut’s unforgiving weather and battled an unrelenting employer, during the longest job action in the territory’s history. The Iqaluit Housing Authority locked out its workers and hired replacement workers from the south, showing the need for strong anti-scab legislation in Canada. After a long struggle, our members secured an agreement that protects them against Nunavut’s high cost of living.



Non-Public Funds members striking for survival

500 workers employed by Non-Public Funds who provide critical support services on military bases across Ontario and Quebec went on strike on January 15, 2024. Many of these members barely make more than minimum wage, and the majority are women. After almost 100 days on the picket lines, NPF members in Ontario returned to work after voting in favour of a settlement that provided wage increases totaling 13.75% and a commitment to consult the union on a single national job classification. After 175 days on strike, the NPF staff in Quebec, voted in favour of a settlement and returned to work on July 8, 2024.

PSAC strikes

Yukon Arts Centre
1 day

Treasury Board (PA, SV, TC, EB)
8 days

Canada Revenue Agency
11 days

Western University
17 days

Woodbine Racetrack
19 days

City of Yellowknife
38 days

Non-Public Funds
(Petawawa, Ottawa, Kingston)
95 days

Iqaluit Housing Authority
137 days

Non-Public Funds
(Bagotville, Montreal–St-Jean,
and Valcartier)
175 days

Best Theratronics
180+ days



We are tackling the big bargaining battles

Border Services Group get an agreement at the eleventh hour



After nearly two years without a contract, we have finally achieved a new collective agreement for over 9,000 members in the Border Services (FB) group after avoiding a strike at the eleventh hour.

FB group members ramped up the pressure on Canada Border Services Agency by holding strike votes in April and May and were successful in getting a fair contract with compounded wage increases of 15.7%, more protections related to technological change and improvements to shift scheduling and leave. This was a well-deserved victory for our members at CBSA who safeguard our nation's borders and ensure the safety and security of all Canadians.



Victory: Pension reform for frontline workers

The federal government finally announced pension reform that will give equitable retirement benefits to thousands of frontline public safety and law enforcement workers. This victory comes after decades of hard work and advocacy for fair pensions from PSAC members. This reform will allow more public safety workers, including frontline border service staff, Coast Guard search and rescue technicians, firefighters and correctional officers, to retire with dignity after 25 years of service.





Directly Chartered Locals celebrate 30 years of fighting for workers

This year, PSAC celebrates the 30-year anniversary of Directly Chartered Locals (DCLs), which were recognized in PSAC's constitution at the 1994 National Triennial Convention.

PSAC represents 34,000 DCL workers from 84 locals, ranging from post-secondary education workers, private employers, municipal governments, and not-for-profit organizations. It is our union's fastest growing sector.

Many of those members are precarious workers with little job security, irregular hours and have few benefits. Hard-fought victories at the bargaining table and on the picket lines continue to make gains for these workers.

Looking forward

PSAC continues to improve the way we provide services to our DCL members and the first national DCL roundtable will be held later this year. DCL members will come together to discuss and strategize around their key issues, including building stronger locals and supporting leadership development.

Northern health care workers fight against underfunding

PSAC represents approximately 4,000 health care workers in Canada, most of them in the three northern territories. These workers have faced decades of chronic underfunding and understaffing. Rather than staffing appropriately, territorial governments are hiring contract workers from private agencies, who typically come in for short periods of time, often without proper training, and yet they earn double or triple the pay of our members.

Looking forward

For decades, PSAC has fought alongside the Canadian Health Coalition and others to protect universal public health care and advocate for good, secure health care jobs.

PSAC participated in the 2024 Canadian Health Coalition Lobby Day in Ottawa with health care workers from the Nunavut Employees Union (NEU), Union of Northern Workers (UNW) and Yukon Employees Union (YEU). They met with Members of Parliament to demand the federal government protect against the privatization and chronic underfunding of our health care system and for the creation of universal pharmacare in Canada.

SSO members gain bargaining power

Over 1,300 members in the Statistics Survey Operations (SSO) group transitioned to the Program and Administrative Services (PA) Treasury Board group in November 2023 and are now covered by the PA agreement. This decision fully recognizes SSO members as federal public service workers who deserve better terms and conditions of employment.



REMOTE WORKS

Remote Works: National telework campaign

In May 2024, with blatant disregard for the wellbeing of workers, the federal government announced that workers will be required to be in-office a minimum of three days per week.

This decision has not only broken the trust between PSAC members and their employer, but violates the collective bargaining rights of thousands of workers.

In response, PSAC filed a series of legal challenges and will appear in Federal Court to contest the decision. In addition, PSAC members united with members from the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC), and the Canadian Association of Professional Employees (CAPE) representing more than 270,000 workers at nationwide protests to contest the government's policy and fight for a fair approach to telework that puts workers first.

Telework has become more than just a temporary solution, it's a proven model that enhances productivity and the wellbeing of workers. It helps workers balance their personal lives with their jobs, reduces our carbon footprint, and creates a more inclusive public service and will lead to considerable savings for Canadian taxpayers.

In partnership with other major federal unions, PSAC will be kicking off a national telework campaign this fall. Fueled by a \$1 million resolution — a clear demand from members at our National Triennial Convention — the campaign will drive the fight for a fair and flexible future of work, that truly works for workers.



Wrestling with the Phoenix pay saga

Eight years later, the frustration and anxiety created by the federal Phoenix pay system continues. There are still a staggering 430,000 pay transactions in the Phoenix backlog, and paycheque after paycheque, hundreds of thousands of workers are still not being paid accurately or on time.

More than 75% of the cases in the backlog are not being processed within service standards, leaving workers waiting two or more years for their issues to be resolved.

Each pay period brings more uncertainty, with many putting off advancing their career or retiring from the public service. The growing backlog of pay issues and wait times weighs on the mental health of workers, and has damaging tax implications. Pay problems follow workers long after they've changed jobs, left the public service or retire.

Instead of addressing these critical issues, the government is instead focused on clawing back overpayments, diverting compensation staff away from eliminating the backlog.

PSAC continues to seek justice for the Phoenix pay disaster.

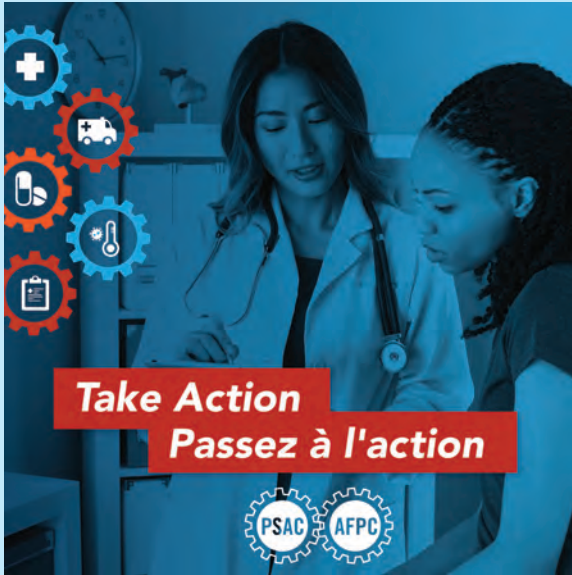
We are calling on the government to:

- Extend Phoenix damages compensation and the severe impact claims process;
- Hire and retain more compensation advisors to eliminate the backlog of pay problems;
- End the aggressive overpayment recovery process and provide more information about the process;
- Allow workers to speak directly to a compensation advisor about their case;
- Outline clearly workers' obligations around the six-year statute of limitations to pay back overpayments;
- Launch a national inquiry into the Phoenix pay disaster.

Victory on Phoenix damages

PSAC negotiated up to \$2,500 in damages for members who suffered under the Phoenix pay system from 2016 to 2020. Our longstanding position has been that these damages are not taxable. PSAC secured an agreement in February with the Canada Revenue Agency to treat up to \$1,500 of the compensation as non-taxable.





Making our members whole: The botched Canada Life transfer

On July 1, 2023, key improvements to the Public Service Health Care Plan (PSCHP) negotiated by PSAC and other unions came into effect. On the same date, the employer transferred the PSHCP provider contract from Sun Life to Canada Life, resulting in changes for more than 1.7 million federal public service workers, retirees and their dependents.

Almost immediately, members began dealing with significant issues, including the interruption of their benefits, the inability to contact the insurer, long delays and arbitrary and wrongful denial of claims.

Some members had to make the difficult decision to stop their medical treatments because they could not afford to pay out of pocket and wait for the eventual reimbursement by Canada Life. An apology from Canada Life or the federal government is not enough to redress the harm already caused, as well as the harm members continue to experience.

PSAC is seeking remedies for the problems the transition caused, including:

- Recognition that the government violated members' collective agreement rights;
- Compensation for the harm members experienced since the transition to Canada Life, including:
 - general damages for all employees for the stress, aggravation, and pain and suffering they experienced;
 - damages for impacts to those who experienced financial losses;
 - damages under the *Canadian Human Rights Act* for adverse effects experienced on the basis of prohibited grounds.



Bringing job classifications into the 21st century

For decades, PSAC has been calling for classification reform in the federal public service to better reflect the work our members do serving Canadians. We are seeking improvements that would modernize job evaluation standards and job descriptions to represent current work realities and that are compliant with pay equity standards.

Treasury Board has been conducting the Program and Administrative Services Occupational Group Structure (OGS) review in an effort to modernize classifications in the core public service however, claims it was unable to meet its target date of June 24, 2024.

Meanwhile, Treasury Board employees working on the new TC classification standards have been redeployed to work on pay equity and no date has been given for the new standards.

PSAC continues to push for a modern classification system by:

- Filing a policy grievance on Treasury Board's lack of meaningful consultation;
- Pursuing a policy grievance on the TC classification reform;
- Ensuring that meaningful consultation takes place, and that our members are kept informed throughout the process.



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Dismantling racism in our union, workplaces and communities

PSAC's Anti-Racism Action Plan

The Anti-Racism Action Plan aims to address the underrepresentation of Indigenous, Black, Asian, and other racialized members in leadership roles within PSAC, and to improve representation and union support for members experiencing racism in their workplaces.

As one of the first steps in the Plan, PSAC conducted consultations with Indigenous, Black, Asian and other racialized members across the country through surveys, telephone town halls, and focus groups.

Developing and delivering PSAC's *Advocacy and Representation on Workplace Racism* course was one of the top demands put forward by members during the consultations. The course, which rolled out in the fall of 2023, equips PSAC leaders and local executives with the skills and competencies needed to better represent, advocate for and recognize the intersecting realities of Indigenous, Black, Asian and other racialized members in the workplace.

We have also built an Anti-Racism Action Plan hub on PSAC's national website that provides resources on our ongoing anti-racism work, education courses and opportunities for further learning.



Seeking justice through the Black Class Action lawsuit

PSAC has repeatedly called for the federal government to settle the Black Class Action launched in 2020 for tens of thousands of Black federal public service workers.

The Liberal government set aside close to \$50 million dollars in the 2022 and 2023 federal budget to develop a Black-led Mental Health Fund, but Black federal public workers have not yet seen actual support provided to them.

Meanwhile, the government has spent nearly \$8 million in their efforts to have the lawsuit dismissed. Our union will continue to provide both financial, legal, and staff support to ensure our members are made whole.

Our commitment as part of the Anti-Racism Action Plan includes:

- Creating a leadership program for Indigenous and racialized members;
- Auditing the union's constitutions, collective agreements and processes with an anti-racist lens;
- Developing and delivering workshops/webinars on the Indian Residential School System;
- Expanding partnerships with community organizations.

Ongoing support for the Indigenous Class Action

In 2021, a group of Indigenous workers filed a class action lawsuit against the federal government for widespread systemic racism in federal Indigenous agencies and departments. Although eligible plaintiffs are not PSAC members, we will continue to support the Indigenous federal public service workers who launched the legal challenge, and we will monitor this legal action as it develops.

Challenging racism at the Canadian Human Rights Commission

In 2020, PSAC, alongside other unions filed a policy grievance on how the Canadian Human Rights Commission was not adequately addressing race-based complaints, tokenizing equity workers, and failing to consult with racialized staff on how to address the systemic issues in their organization.

Three years later, Treasury Board found the Commission had discriminated against its own Black and racialized employees. In February, PSAC, as part of a coalition of unions and community groups, announced a formal complaint against the Commission, a critical step in holding it accountable for its discriminatory practices. The Commission now faces a special review of its accreditation by the oversight body, Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI).

Review of Employment Equity Act moving forward

PSAC has long been calling for changes to strengthen the federal *Employment Equity Act* (EEA) since equity groups in the federal public service continue to be denied opportunities at all levels of the staffing process.

In 2021, an Employment Equity Act Review Task Force was established, and PSAC recommended significant changes to improve the Act.

In a victory for PSAC and all federally regulated workers, the Task Force's final report included many of PSAC's key recommendations, including the inclusion of Black and 2SLGBTQIA+ as equity groups, the collection of disaggregated data, and the creation of an independent Office of the Equity Commissioner.



PSAC Free \$10,000 Basic Life Insurance

The Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) will provide you with \$10,000 of life insurance plus \$10,000 of accidental death and dismemberment (AD&D) insurance **absolutely free** through the **PSAC FREE \$10,000** program.

That's right! Free insurance!

This offer is available only to members in good standing of the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

If you have not yet taken advantage of the PSAC Free Basic Life Insurance, you can scan the QR code to access the online enrolment form.



We also offer very competitive, discounted rates under the **PSAC Enhanced Coverage** for up to \$250,000 of life insurance coverage for you and your spouse.

For more information, visit www.coughlin.ca/psac-afpc.



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PSAC members are Still Thirsty for Justice

Phase 2 of our **Still Thirsty for Justice** campaign launched in November 2023 with a series of digital ads encouraging Canadians to take action on water justice for all. The campaign highlights how clean water is a human right, yet hundreds of communities across the country — the majority of them Indigenous — still do not have access to safe, clean water.

In honour of World Water Day this year, PSAC hosted a virtual panel discussion with renowned speakers Bomgiizhik (Isaac Murdoch) from Serpent River First Nation, Melissa Mollen-Dupuis from the David Suzuki Foundation, and Judy Da Silva, a longtime water protector from Grassy Narrows.



We're continuing the fight for pay equity

In 2021, the landmark *Pay Equity Act* came into effect. Federally regulated workplaces were given three years to develop pay equity plans with unions to fix gender-based discrimination in their compensation systems and practices.

While the three years are up, Treasury Board has used much of that time to undermine the intent of the law. Under the Act, Treasury Board had until September 3, 2024, to post its final equity plan but they did not meet this deadline. They requested a three-year extension, which PSAC vehemently opposed. It is incredibly disappointing that the government is delaying pay equity justice for women working in the federal public service.

We're pursuing justice in the courts

PSAC has been an important intervenor on cases related to labour issues. Here are some cases that we have intervened on:

- Anti-scab provisions of Quebec's *Code du travail* on whether the legislation extends to replacement workers who work remotely
- Quebec's Bill 21, which prevents public service workers from wearing religious symbols while at work. If the case goes to the Supreme Court of Canada, PSAC will seek to intervene and argue against the constitutionality of the law
- The constitutionality of excluding low-level managers from collective bargaining
- The constitutional challenge of the Ontario government's wage legislation which capped wage increases for 780,000 Ontario public service workers at 1% for three years.



We are taking our members' issues to Parliament

PSAC is committed to protecting the rights of workers by pushing for changes in legislation.

Federal labour law

It takes far too long to negotiate each collective agreement in the federal public service. In other jurisdictions, it takes months, not years, to reach a deal. When grievances go to adjudication, it takes too long for grievances to be heard and to get decisions from arbitrators. These outdated laws need to be more worker friendly.

Anti-scab law

PSAC has been fighting for protection against the use of replacement workers by employers using union-busting tactics. We welcomed the passing of long-awaited anti-scab legislation in June 2024. Using replacement workers drags out labour disputes and divides communities by pitting workers against each other.

Federal Budget

PSAC's latest submission to the Minister of Finance in advance of the 2024 Federal Budget outlines several recommendations, including providing funding to resolve the Phoenix pay disaster, pausing proposed cuts to public services until a full analysis can be performed, modernizing the *Federal Public Sector Labour Relations and Employment Act*, and settling the Black Class Action lawsuit.

Advocating for members on the Hill

PSAC regularly makes appearances and submissions to both House of Commons and Senate committees on key issues including:

- Contracting out and outsourcing
- ArriveCan
- Official languages
- Canada Life
- Whistleblower legislation
- Cancers related to firefighting
- Budget and Economic Update implementation bills
- Automated decision making
- Pension protection
- Access to Information

We're meeting in person again

In January 2023, after almost a three-year long pause, members welcomed the return of in-person national conferences. Since then, we have held a number of in-person conferences including the:

- National Health and Safety Conference
- National Women's Conference
- National Equity Conferences
- PSAC Triennial Convention.



PSAC's first National Young Workers Conference was a success!

PSAC's first-ever **National Young Workers Conference**, took place September 15 to 17, 2023, and close to 100 delegates all aged 35 and younger from across the country came together. The conference was an opportunity to tackle some of the issues that particularly impact younger workers such as childcare, parental leave, health and safety, and precarious work.



We're supporting our members and leaders with education and training opportunities

- National Leadership Training
- Union Leadership Development Program
- PSAC Scholarship Program
- Joint Learning Program
- Occupational Health and Safety Training

We're part of a bigger movement

Building union solidarity

Unions across the country rallied around PSAC during our historic Treasury Board and Canada Revenue Agency strike in 2023.

In 2022, PSAC put our full support behind education workers who took strike action to oppose the Ford government's unconstitutional use of the notwithstanding clause.

PSAC also donated \$100,000 to support provincial public sector workers in Quebec — most of whom are women — in December 2023 during their Common Front strikes for fair working conditions.

PSAC is involved in our communities and fights back against hate

In recognition of World AIDS Day, PSAC announced a partnership with Max Ottawa, a community organization for queer men's health. This marks the first step in a campaign fulfilling a PSAC convention resolution aimed at advocating for better HIV treatment.

Delegates at the 2023 Canadian Labour Congress convention adopted an emergency resolution on anti-hate directing the CLC and its affiliates, including PSAC, to take action to address the rising waves of anti-2SLGBTQIA+ hate across the country.

PSAC is also part of an emergency task force to address escalating anti-2SLGBTQIA+ hate across Canada to defend queer and trans people in our workplaces and our communities.

PSAC joins international unions to protect health care workers

Alongside unions across North, South and Central America, PSAC lobbied the Minister of Health to address significant concerns in the negotiations of the World Health Organization (WHO) Pandemic Treaty. As negotiations for the Pandemic Treaty enter a critical phase, PSAC remains committed to championing the rights of health care workers and ensuring a resilient and equitable global response to future pandemics.

We're making an impact through our Social Justice Fund

Members across the country continue to support and advance the work of the Social Justice Fund (SJF).

For more than 20 years now, the SJF has focused its work on five key priority areas: humanitarian relief in Canada and around the world; anti-poverty initiatives in Canada; international labour development; worker-to-worker exchanges; and worker education in Canada and around the world.

Providing emergency humanitarian relief

The SJF provided relief at home when wildfires, spring flooding and Hurricane Fiona devastated parts of Canada. Around the globe, the SJF assisted those displaced and suffering from flooding, earthquakes and wars in Morocco, Turkey, Haiti, Pakistan, Cuba, Peru, the Horn and East Africa, DRC, Colombia, the Ukraine and beyond.

International Initiatives

The SJF's international initiatives include Worker Education in Action, an initiative in Guatemala that engages PSAC members through action and builds solidarity with organizations protecting the rights of Indigenous peoples, workers and land defenders.

PSAC also participated in number of worker-to-worker exchanges abroad and at home:

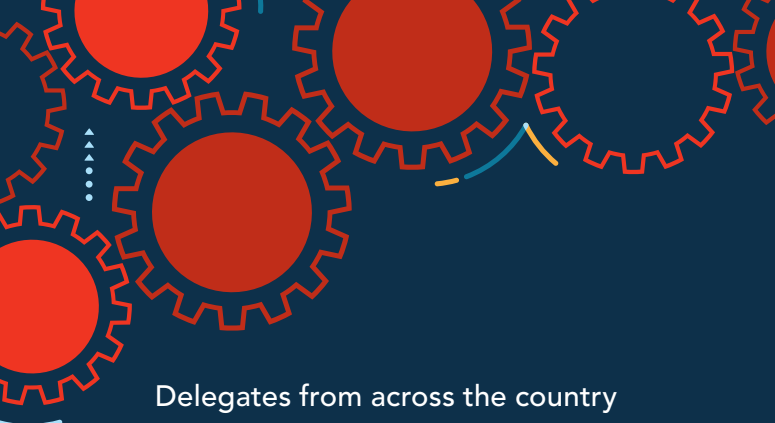
- A multi-union delegation to Colombia met with union and human rights defenders;
- A delegation to the Philippines met with workers, union leaders and social movement activists;
- PSAC hosted union leaders from Haiti;
- PSAC hosted meetings with union leaders who are working to ensure Mexican workers are aware of their rights.

The SJF also supports the struggle of garment workers in Bangladesh, union organizing in Haiti and Mexico, the strengthening of health sector unions in Zimbabwe, capacity building for collective bargaining among Colombian public sector workers, better labour rights for women in Palestine, and so much more. Strengthening the capacity of unions across the globe and advancing the rights of workers in the developing world is an essential priority for the SJF

Anti-poverty initiatives in Canada

For many years, the SJF has worked to alleviate poverty in Canada. In 2023, well over half of the approved projects addressed Indigenous poverty and women. The fund continues to increase its impact in Canada and now supports 54 initiatives and two national networks including the right to affordable housing across the country.





Delegates from across the country attended the **2024 National Triennial Convention** in Ottawa, ON.

During convention, they elected Sharon DeSousa as National President, Alex Silas as National Executive Vice-President (NEVP), and Craig Reynolds as alternate NEVP.

Delegates debated and adopted resolutions to step up the fight for telework, national campaigns to oppose the privatization of Canada's public health care and to fight for affordable child care for precarious workers, an increase in strike pay to empower workers for the fights ahead, and more.

Members also passed resolutions to strengthen PSAC's efforts on diversity, inclusion and human rights.

