



Powering Progress

National President's Report



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

PSAC National Triennial Convention
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National President's Report

As we reflect on the past two years, I am filled with pride at the resilience and tenacity our members have shown.

Together, we took on difficult employers who expected workers to accept less — emerging victorious and empowering workers across the country to fight for better. Our historic national strike in 2023 was a watershed moment in Canadian labour history, raising the bar for all workers. Soon after, our members at the Iqaluit Housing Authority and civilian military workers at Non-Public Funds picked up the torch during their own strike action, sending a clear message that fair wages and better working conditions are non-negotiable.

Our organizing efforts have seen notable victories that have grown and diversified our membership. Thirty years after the creation of directly chartered locals at PSAC, the sector continues to grow faster than any other as workers — largely post-secondary education workers — organize and turn to PSAC to secure better working conditions.

We also continue to follow through on our commitment to address systemic racism and discrimination within our union, our workplaces and our communities. As we implement our Anti-Racism Action Plan, we have consulted with thousands of our members who have been impacted by systemic discrimination for far too long, and we are now taking concrete steps to build a truly anti-racist union by breaking down the barriers that prevent many members from fully participating in our 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 have held governments and decision-makers to account; not just for our members, but for workers and their families everywhere. From the broken Phoenix Pay system and Canada Life fiasco, to pushing for stronger anti-scab legislation, universal child care and pharmacare for all, PSAC has been on the front lines fighting for workers' rights.

I have seen a new generation of PSAC activists on picket lines, in MP's offices and at community rallies over the past two years, and I can confidently say that the union we have built together is stronger and more united than we have seen in decades.

With the looming threat of a Conservative government on the horizon, we will need to build on that solidarity now more than ever. We must be prepared to counter potential public service cuts that would impact our members and the critical services Canadians rely on each and every day.

Together, we will face these challenges as a united front, ready to defend the rights of workers and fight for a fair future for all.

We're building a fighting union: PSAC strikes

Striking Iqaluit workers — small but mighty

For 137 days, thirteen PSAC-NEU Inuit members braved Nunavut's unforgiving weather and battled an unrelenting employer in 2023, the longest job action in the territory's history. The Iqaluit Housing Authority locked out its workers and quickly hired replacement workers from southern Canada, paying them more and providing them with housing and additional benefits.

The employer refused to take concessions off the table that would impact maternity leave, severance, leave without pay, and make working conditions even more precarious for casual and term workers.

After their long struggle, our members secured an agreement that protects them against Nunavut's high cost of living. Not only do they have a new collective agreement with better working conditions, but their resilience demonstrated the immediate need for strong anti-scab legislation in Canada.

The historic Treasury Board and Canada Revenue Agency strike

For the third time in PSAC's history, our union took to the streets in a nationwide strike by 165,000 federal public service workers, the largest against a single employer in Canadian history.

On April 19, 2023, members in the PA, SV, TC, EB and CRA bargaining units put everything on the line and showed up to more than 250 picket lines around the country to fight for a fair contract. Their action inspired workers around the country and their courage and perseverance empowered other workers to push back and fight for something better.

Our bargaining teams were tenacious and determined, and their decision-making was firmly grounded by the members they were elected to represent. For two years, they faced an employer intent on dragging the negotiations on as long as possible.





By the numbers

- More than **100,000 members** attended picket lines across the country
- Our Picket Line Finder tool mapped out more than **250 locations** — it was visited over **4 million times!**
- Bargaining updates were sent daily by email to over **170,700 members**; with an average open rate of **77%**
- More than **45,000** international media hits
- **39,000** new followers on social media

Big gains by using our collective bargaining power and strike action

By taking strike action, PSAC secured the strongest collective agreement in the federal public service that raised the bar for our members — and all workers in Canada.

Federal public service workers achieved wage increases that helped close the gap with inflation, a \$2,500 pensionable lump sum payment, and first of its kind remote work language that protects workers from a one-size-fits-all approach, ensuring their requests are assessed individually and protected through a complaints process.

Despite ongoing delays from the employer, PSAC continues to work towards establishing joint union-management panels on remote work within each federal department to hold the employer accountable to equitable and fair decision-making on remote work. Our agreement also established a joint committee to review and update the outdated telework policy for federal public service workers.

PSAC also obtained a commitment from Treasury Board and CRA to incorporate seniority rights into the work force adjustment process.

PSAC has what it takes for a successful strike

The massive undertaking of a national general strike could not have been accomplished without the work of the thousands of members who rose to the challenge and took on leadership roles before and during the strike. The strike unleashed a wave of activism and energy within our union and provided the blueprint for future contracts for all our members.

Every part of our union was involved to make it a success. Our bargaining teams worked around the clock both at the bargaining table and keeping members informed. Strike training was prepared and delivered across the country. Staff provided support to prepare for picket activities, and helped ensure the lines were effective.

For the first time, new digital tools like PSAC's picket line finder were used to direct members to their closest picket line, check them in and out of the line, and provide strike pay via direct deposit. It was a coordinated effort to pull off the largest national strike in Canadian history, and we are so proud of what we accomplished together.



Strike gains spread to other bargaining units

New agreements were subsequently negotiated and signed with Parks Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency that reflected the gains made by our members at Canada Revenue Agency and Treasury Board.

The improvements secured during the strike also helped set the bar for our members who reached collective agreements at the Office of the Auditor General, Canada Council for the Arts, the National Gallery of Canada, the Museum of History, the Bank of Canada and the National Battlefields Commission.

Non-Public Funds members striking for survival

Nearly 500 workers who provide critical support services on military bases across Ontario and Quebec began strike action on January 15, 2024. They are employed by Non-Public Funds, a separate agency that forms part of the federal public service.

Strikes took place on Canadian Forces bases in Bagotville, Kingston, Montreal–St-Jean, Ottawa, Petawawa, and Valcartier.

Non-Public Funds workers hold jobs in retail and food services on military bases, provide financial planning, insurance services, and operate community programs such as physical fitness and recreation services for members of the Canadian Armed Forces and their families.



Many of these members barely make more than minimum wage, and the majority are women. Their demands at the table included fair wages, a national pay grid for all NPF workers across the country, and wage parity with the core public service. Striking workers have not restricted their activity to picketing at Canadian Forces bases, taking their message to decision-makers in Parliament, marching to the office of the Prime Minister and Privy Council, escalating their actions across the country with national days of mobilization, and lobbying to bring NPF members into the core public service.

After almost 100 days on the picket lines, nearly 300 civilian military workers in Kingston, Ottawa, and Petawawa returned to work after voting in favour of a settlement reached through mediation that provided wage increases totalling 13.75% over the three-year agreement and a commitment to consult with the union on the implementation of a single national job classification for all jobs.

Workers in Bagotville, Montreal–St-Jean, and Valcartier — some of the lowest paid NPF workers in the country — remained on strike after rejecting the settlement.

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

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

Iqaluit Housing Authority
137 days

We are tackling the big bargaining battles ahead



Border Services Group ramping up activities

More than 9,000 members in the Border Services (FB) group have been without a contract for nearly two years, and FB members are continuing to mobilize in support of key bargaining demands. They've ramped up the pressure on the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) by holding strike votes in April and May, launching strike and essential services training and holding national mobilization activities across the country.

FB members want a fair contract that protects their hard-fought gains and provides retirement benefits and wage parity with the broader law enforcement community, particularly their fight for a 25-and-out pension. They are also fighting for stronger job protections, access to telework, and new rights around variable shift scheduling agreements (VSSAs).

Public Interest Commission hearings took place in April 2024, and FB members will be in a legal strike position later this spring.

We saw what we could achieve last round when FB members came together. International borders were brought to a standstill August 6, 2021 through work-to-rule action, and we secured important

gains for FB members, without concessions. Members will continue to escalate pressure on CBSA to reach a fair contract and secure equitable retirement benefits.

Increasing representation for directly chartered locals

This year, PSAC celebrates the 30-year anniversary of directly chartered locals (DCLs) within our union. DCLs were recognized in PSAC's constitution at the 1994 National Triennial Convention, with Western University of Ontario and Casino Regina being the first DCLs to join PSAC. This marked a significant turning point as our union continued to diversify and grow.

As PSAC's fastest-growing sector, today PSAC represents 34,000 DCL workers from more than 70 locals, ranging from post-secondary education workers, private employers, municipal governments, and not-for-profit organizations.

While some PSAC members in DCLs are permanent full-time employees, many, including most university workers, are precarious workers with little or no job security, irregular or part-time hours and have few or no benefits.

PSAC has made great strides closing the gap for DCL workers, including recent victories for postdoctoral fellows across the country that have resulted in increased wages, setting a pattern that has benefited all workers in the sector.



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, with the majority working in hospitals located in the three northern territories and others work on military bases, in correctional institutions and other federal workplaces. Many of these workers have precarious employment, and have faced decades of chronic underfunding and understaffing with the threat of privatization making the situation more dire in recent years.

Rather than staffing appropriately, territorial governments are hiring contract workers from private agencies, which is inefficient, costly and reduces the quality of service for Canadians. Workers on private contracts typically come in for short periods of time, often without adequate training, 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.

The decision to integrate SSO members into the core public administration is an important one that fully recognizes SSO members as federal public service workers who deserve better terms and conditions of employment including fair wages, improved job security, better benefits, and opportunities to apply internally to positions across the federal public service.

All members that were part of the SSO group are now covered by the recently negotiated PA agreement. All issues, including outstanding issues prior to the transition, will be dealt with under the PA collective agreement going forward. This includes a review of the current structure of SSO locals and how best to integrate them into existing PA locals.

RCMP civilian members still in transition

In 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that RCMP members could unionize, allowing RCMP civilian members (CMs) to join public sector unions.

In 2020, we began the deeming process that would transition more than 700 RCMP CMs into the federal public service and be represented by PSAC.

However, after lengthy delays in the deeming process, Treasury Board announced in November 2023 that deeming would be postponed indefinitely. Since then, negotiations have continued between PSAC, Treasury Board and RCMP representatives to provide a path forward to transition CMs into their respective PSAC collective agreements.

PSAC is seeking to address the differences between CMs' terms and conditions of employment with the RCMP and those contained in existing PSAC collective agreements. PSAC and the Union of Safety and Justice Employees have been consulting with CMs through national townhalls and member surveys, and is committed to addressing these differences equitably.

PSAC expects to wrap up consultations in the spring of 2024 before returning to the table to bring forward members' feedback and conclude the transition.

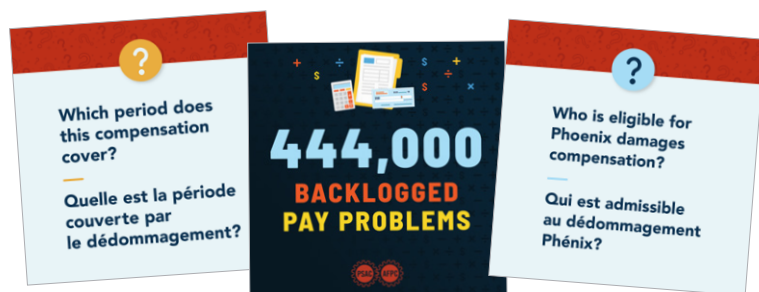
Wrestling with the Phoenix pay saga

Eight years later, the frustration and anxiety created by the federal Phoenix pay system continues. There are still a staggering 424,000 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. The frustrating issues continue to linger for our members. Tens of thousands of pay file terminations are still in the backlog. Thousands of workers who have changed jobs or departments still aren't receiving their correct pay while workers are not getting paid when they return from maternity or disability leave.

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:

- Formally begin negotiations to extend Phoenix damages compensation and the severe impact claims process from 2020 onward for as long as members continue to be impacted by pay issues;
- Eliminate the backlog of Phoenix pay problems and prevent further issues by hiring, training, and retaining more compensation advisors;
- End the heavy-handed and aggressive overpayment recovery process until workers can be provided with clear and accurate information;
- Provide more detailed information about the recovery of overpayments for workers;
- Improve communication by allowing workers to speak directly to a compensation advisor about their case;
- Clearly outline workers' obligations around the six-year statute of limitations to pay back overpayments;
- Launch a national inquiry into the Phoenix pay disaster.

Victory on the taxability of Phoenix damages

In 2020, PSAC negotiated up to \$2,500 in Phoenix damages for members who suffered under the Phoenix pay system from 2016 to 2020. Our longstanding position has been that these damages — specifically those allocated to cover the pain and suffering experienced due to the broken pay system — are not taxable.

In a recent victory for PSAC members impacted by Phoenix, PSAC secured an agreement in February with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) to treat up to \$1,500 of the Phoenix general damages compensation members received in 2021 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.

When the change in service provider was announced, PSAC provided recommendations for a smooth transition, which included a full-time call centre where members could call for help. Unfortunately, these recommendations were not implemented when the transition took effect.

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;
- Compensate members for all harms 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 will be 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.

Dismantling racism in our union, workplaces and communities

We are implementing PSAC's Anti-Racism Action Plan

In 2021, the PSAC National Board of Directors approved PSAC's Anti-Racism Action Plan (the Plan) to build a truly anti-racist union. The Plan was formulated 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. The Plan identified 20 action items to be implemented and included 5 priorities.

One of the first steps in the Plan included consultation with Indigenous, Black, Asian and other racialized members across the country. We also gathered input from the National Indigenous Peoples' Circle (NIPC) and the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) to identify barriers to engagement and full participation within the union.

PSAC conducted consultations with Indigenous and racialized members through surveys, telephone town halls, and focus groups between February 2022 and November 2023. 902 members participated in engagement sessions and 8502 members participated in the online survey.

A full consultation report is being prepared and will be released later this year.

Our important work continues

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 began to roll out in the fall of 2023 and has been delivered more than 16 times. PSAC's National Board of Directors, and several component executives, regional councils, and local leaders have already completed the course, and nearly a dozen more courses are scheduled this year.

This is a critical education tool that 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.

PSAC is committed to building on the objectives of the Plan and rolling out several more action items throughout the next cycle. Planned initiatives include 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, and expanding partnerships with community organizations that work to combat systemic racial discrimination.



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 for Black federal public service workers. Yet workers who face systemic barriers have not seen actual support provided to them or a concrete plan outlining how the government plans to establish dedicated career development programs, including initiatives to prepare Black public service leaders for executive positions.

Meanwhile, the government has spent nearly \$8 million in their efforts to have the lawsuit dismissed.

As Canada's largest federal public service union, PSAC represents more than 1,100 of the nearly 1,500 plaintiffs, over 70% of whom are women. We thank these members for coming forward and sharing their painful stories of discrimination, employee exclusion and racial trauma.

PSAC has provided financial contributions and legal support to the Black Class Action and is committed to seeing justice carried out for Black federal public service workers.

A certification hearing date for the class action is set for October 28, 2024. Our union will continue to provide both financial and staff support to ensuring our members are made whole through this legal action.

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.

The original statement of claim initially included workers represented by PSAC. However the statement of claim was recently amended to limit eligible plaintiffs to only current and former Indigenous employees and contractors at Indian Oil and Gas Canada who are not PSAC members.

PSAC continues to support the Indigenous federal public service workers who launched the legal challenge, and we will continue to monitor this legal action as it develops.

Challenging racism at the Canadian Human Rights Commission

A policy grievance filed by PSAC, the Association of Justice Counsel and the Canadian Association of Professional Employees in 2020 alleged the Canadian Human Rights Commission (the Commission) was not adequately addressing race-based complaints, tokenizing equity-deserving workers, and failing to consult with racialized staff on how to concretely address the systemic issues in their organization.

Three years later, Treasury Board found the Commission had discriminated against its own Black and racialized employees. This prompted

an investigation by the Senate Committee on Human Rights. PSAC had an opportunity to provide our concerns and recommendations to the committee on how to address the systemic barriers at the Commission and more broadly to address, fight, and sustain action against racism in the federal public service.

The Senate Committee released its report in December 2023, and PSAC fully supports the recommendations — including the appointment of a Black Equity Commissioner and more mandatory anti-racism training for all federal public service workers — to restore confidence in the Commission and ensure all Canadians can depend on a human rights system that is fair and free of bias.

PSAC takes an unprecedented step against systemic discrimination

In February, PSAC, as part of a coalition of unions and community groups, announced a formal complaint against the Commission marking a critical step in holding the Commission accountable for its discriminatory practices.

The coalition has filed for a special review of the Commission's accreditation status with the Global Alliance of Human Rights Institutions, underlining the urgent need for reform to ensure the Commission can effectively protect individuals from discrimination, safeguard human rights and foster an inclusive society.

Review of *Employment Equity Act* moving forward

PSAC has long been calling for changes to strengthen the federal *Employment Equity Act* (the Act). Introduced almost 40 years ago, the Act was intended to remove barriers and address the chronic under-representation of historically disadvantaged equity-seeking workers.

However, it is clear that equity groups in the federal public service continue to be denied opportunities at all levels of the staffing process. Workers have been overlooked and held back from career advancement for years because of systemic barriers, policies and practices that perpetuate discrimination in our workplaces.

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

In a victory for PSAC and all workers in federally regulated workplaces, the Task Force's final report, released in January 2024, included many of PSAC's key recommendations, including the inclusion of Black and 2SLGBTQIA+ as equity groups in the public service, the collection of disaggregated data for all equity groups, and the creation of an independent Office of the Equity Commissioner, among other important improvements.

Moving forward, PSAC will continue to hold the government to account and ensure these critical improvements are implemented into the Act to better protect our members from all forms of discrimination in the workplace.

PSAC commits to equity everywhere in the union

PSAC has created an internal **Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights Bureau**.

The Bureau is staffed by a director, a conflict resolution advisor, a psychological health and safety advisor and administrative support. It will implement proactive strategies, measures and mechanisms to prevent and resolve internal conflicts and disputes with a trauma-informed approach.

The Bureau will also implement and maintain the Canadian Mental Health Commission's National Standards for Psychological Health and Safety and develop and deliver evidence-based supports and solutions that foster positive workplace mental health and psychological safety that is trauma-informed.

Among the Bureau's initiatives are anti-oppression training for all staff and a review of the union's staffing policy.

Connecting with our members and the public: Communications

In the wake of the pandemic, PSAC has revolutionized the way we communicate and reach out to our members, broadening our digital reach and connecting with more members on more platforms than ever before.

Thanks to our historic strike and growing mobilization efforts across the country, our national email subscriptions have jumped to 330,000 — an increase of more than 15% — and more than 205,000 members have provided their cell phone numbers to get urgent updates from their union.

Since 2022, PSAC has published over 300 articles and resources for members on our national website, with close to 1,000 posts on our national social media accounts.

PSAC has also responded to record-breaking numbers of national member enquiries — more than 112,000 member calls and emails, in this two-year cycle. We continue to reach out to members in the official language of their choice — translating 2.3 million words per year!

Our Union Voice

Our Union Voice continues to be published and shipped directly to more than 220,000 members, with a new digital format allowing us to reach more members than ever before.

Facebook:

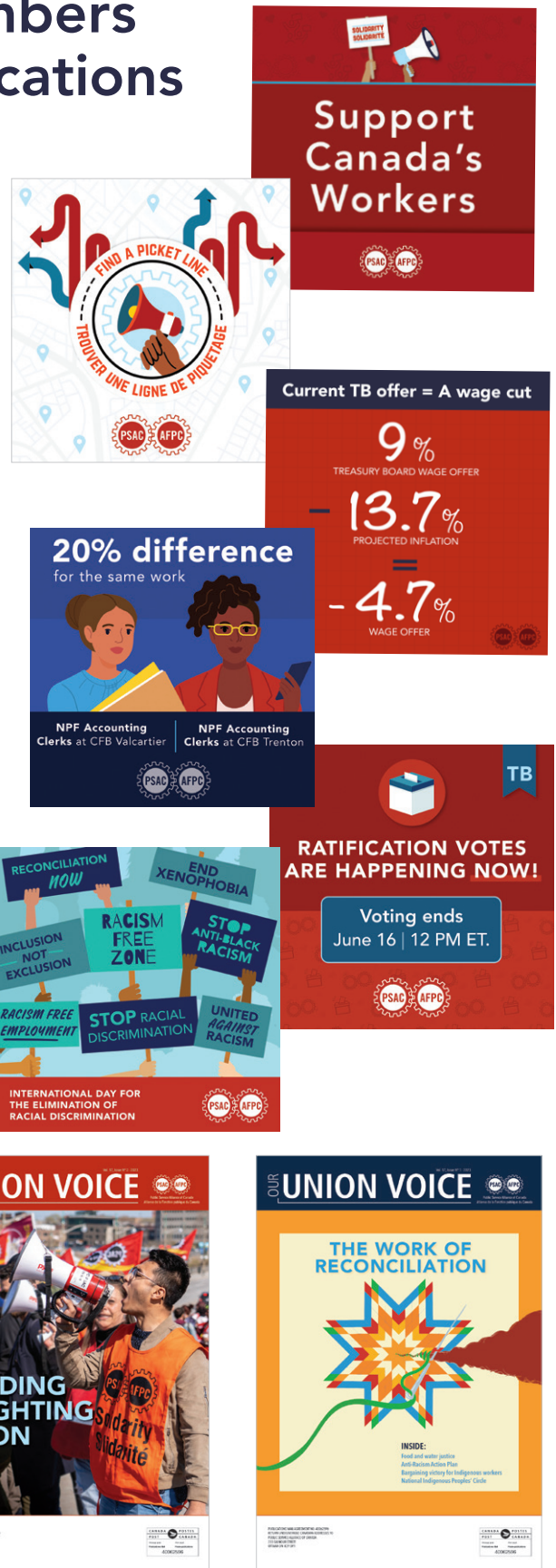
- Followers nearly doubled from **41,747** to **78,819**
- More than **6.7 million views**

Instagram:

- **12,000 followers**
- More than 1 million views

X (Formerly Twitter)

- **30,000 followers**



Fighting for Fairness: Campaigns

PSAC has developed and conducted several major campaigns in the last two years.

- PSAC launched our biggest campaign this cycle to apply pressure to Treasury Board and CRA during the lead-up to the 2023 national strike. The **Workers Can't Wait** national advertising campaign appeared digitally, via connected TV, on digital and traditional radio, in print and bus shelter ads. Our campaign received more than 85 million digital impressions, featuring PSAC members telling real stories about the challenges of the rising cost of living, workplace health and safety, the fight for better work-life balance and other key bargaining issues.
- After the disastrous transition to **Canada Life** insurance for federal workers, PSAC quickly launched a campaign, organizing dozens of rallies across the country demanding that the government hold Canada Life accountable, with over 13,000 letters sent to MPs and federal ministers, and direct lobbying actions continue to increase the pressure.
- Our **Uncover the Costs** campaign continued in 2022, fighting against the contracting out of the work of case managers at Veteran Affairs Canada.
- **It's time to hire more border officers**, a joint campaign with the Customs and Immigration Union ran over the 2022- 23 holiday season, targeting travelers waiting at borders to demand an end to understaffing at Canada's points of entry.





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, with an updated website and member water stories. 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.

The campaign won two awards at the 2023 Canadian Association of Labour Media conference, securing best narrative video for our documentary on the water justice fights of the Grassy Narrows and Samson Cree communities, and best hard copy promotional material for our *Still Thirsty for Justice* colouring book.

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

On August 31, 2021, the landmark *Pay Equity Act* (the Act) covering federally regulated workplaces came into effect. Employers were given three years to establish pay equity committees and jointly develop pay equity plans with unions to remedy pay inequities.

One pay equity plan victory

While the three years are almost up, Treasury Board has used much of that time to undermine the intent of the law. In 2022, Treasury Board submitted an application to the Pay Equity Commission, proposing to establish three separate pay equity plans divided along bargaining agent lines. This three-plan model risked denying equal pay for work of equal value because predominantly female job classes would have been compared against only a portion of the predominantly male job classes in the core public administration.

PSAC, together with other federal public service unions, vigorously opposed Treasury Board's proposal, and filed extensive submissions in favour of a single plan. The interim Pay Equity Commissioner ruled in PSAC's favour and supported one plan.

Under the Act, Treasury Board has until September 3, 2024 to post its final equity plan. It is also required to give employees 60 days to comment on a draft plan before posting the final plan. However, having not shared a draft yet, PSAC is concerned they will not meet the deadline. If that is the case, it will not affect the date on which any pay adjustments are owed to employees, with any adjustments retroactive to September 4, 2024.

Other employers followed Treasury Board's lead

Other employers, such as NAV CANADA and the Senate of Canada, followed Treasury Board's lead and requested approval for multiple pay equity plans. Once again, PSAC opposed these requests.

In December 2023, the Pay Equity Commissioner rendered a decision favourable to PSAC, directing that NAV CANADA could not create a separate pay equity plan for the senior management category. A decision on the Senate's application is pending.

Union resources for pay equity committee members

PSAC *Pay Equity Act* training sessions have been delivered in person, and the presentations are available for any pay equity committee members wishing to undertake self-scheduled learning.

PSAC is working closely with components to support its representatives on pay equity committees, and has also developed comprehensive reference documents and training specifically designed for committee members and component staff.

We're pursuing justice in the courts

Remote scab labour is still scab labour

Our union obtained intervenor status in an important case about whether the anti-scab provisions of Quebec's *Code du travail* extend to replacement workers who work remotely. We filed our brief in December 2023 arguing in favour of legislation preventing workers from performing struck work remotely. We are currently waiting for hearing dates.

There is a strong likelihood this case will be appealed all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. Any rulings could have a broader impact nationally, including on the proposed federal anti-scab law currently before Parliament.

Quebec's *Loi sur la laïcité de l'État* (Bill 21)

PSAC is disappointed by the Court of Appeal's March 2024 decision to uphold Quebec's *Loi sur la laïcité de l'État* (Bill 21) which prevents the province's public service workers from wearing religious symbols while on the job. The law infringes on workers' fundamental rights of freedom of religion and expression, the right to equality and freedom of association.

In our challenge to Bill 21, filed in 2021, PSAC presented arguments based primarily on the infringement of fundamental rights. One of the main sticking points for PSAC and other human rights advocates is the use of the notwithstanding clauses to override fundamental rights and freedoms.

The Quebec government's use of the notwithstanding clause to isolate their actions from full Charter scrutiny is deeply worrying. If the Supreme Court of Canada accepts to hear the appeal in this case, PSAC will seek to intervene and argue against the constitutionality of this law.

Challenging workers being excluded from bargaining

In April 2023, the Supreme Court heard a case on the constitutionality of excluding low-level managers from collective bargaining. This is an important case for the labour movement as it threatens to water down gains made in past Charter decisions, such as the one that effectively granted RCMP officers the right to join a union.

PSAC was an intervenor in the case and delivered both oral and written submissions to the Court, which has yet to issue its decision.

Beating wage restraint legislation

PSAC participated in the constitutional challenge of the Ontario government's wage legislation in Bill C-124 through a coalition of the Ontario Federation of Labour unions. The legislation was struck down in 2022. This legislation capped wage increases for 780,000 Ontario public service workers, e.g. those working in health care, universities, education, at 1% for three years, undermining free and fair collective bargaining. The Ford government lost its appeal and in February 2024, voted to repeal the law in its entirety.

We are taking our members' issues to Parliament

It's time to fix 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.

The *Federal Public Service Labour Relations Act* (the Act) and other laws like the *Public Service Employment Act* (PSEA) and the *Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act* (PESRA) set out the rules for federal public sector collective bargaining, the ways that public sector and parliamentary workers are hired, and how grievances are handled. They also complicate the process and make it harder for workers to seek justice. Workers elsewhere have fairer, quicker, and more effective options.

Moving forward

PSAC is committed to changing these outdated laws with more worker-friendly legislation. We are in the process of developing a campaign to influence decision-makers and put pressure on the government to build a fairer process that puts workers first.

Proposed anti-scab law is a start

PSAC has been fighting for protection against the use of replacement workers by employers using union-busting tactics. We welcomed the tabling of long-awaited anti-scab legislation in November 2023 that aims to ban the use of replacement workers under the Canada Labour Code.

Using replacement workers drags out labour disputes and divides communities by pitting workers against each other. During the Iqaluit Housing Authority



strike, our members were on the picket line for over four months while their employer brought in replacement workers to do their jobs instead of negotiating with them.

The federal bill also includes the concept of remote work, which will prevent an employer from using this route to employ replacement workers during a labour disruption.

Anti-scab legislation is critical to ensure that the right to free and fair collective bargaining rights is protected for all workers, and PSAC expects to work with the government to strengthen the legislation.

PSAC has suggested amendments to improve the proposed law to ensure that we have anti-scab legislation that truly puts workers first.

Giving pensioners priority

PSAC joined in making one of many supportive submissions on private member's Bill C-228, the *Pension Protection Act*. In spite of considerable opposition from the corporate community and their allies, C-228 became law on April 27, 2023 and will come into force four years later.

For workers with a defined benefit pension plan, any plan deficits in place when their employer is in bankruptcy and insolvency proceedings will have to be paid in priority to most other creditors, helping to protect their earned pensions.

The new law represents several decades of effort by the Canadian labour movement to protect workers' pension entitlements.

PSAC represents members at budget time

Federal budgets affect all PSAC members and our union advocates on their behalf to both the Minister of Finance and to Parliamentary finance committees.

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.

The submission also urges the government to reform pension legislation to eradicate the existing two-tier system within the federal government, and to ensure that public safety workers in the federal government have access to the same pension benefits as other public safety employees.

PSAC's submission also calls for enhanced support for all Canadians through measures such as increasing Employment Insurance benefits, the establishment of a national housing plan, and enhancing funding for post-secondary education.

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. The **National Health and Safety Conference** was the first large in-person PSAC event since the easing of COVID-19 public safety measures with almost 300 delegates participating. The conference covered the topics of telework, hybrid work, workplace violence and harassment, and trauma-informed approaches to health and safety and education.

A national **Health and Safety Forum** was held in May 2024 to bring together union representatives on national policy committees to discuss common issues and discuss best practices for this work.

PSAC's **National Women's Conference** was held in Ottawa, March 31 to April 2, 2023. More than 210 delegates participated in workshops, plenary sessions, regional sessions, resolutions debate and representatives were elected to attend the 2024 PSAC National Triennial Convention.

The final set of national conferences held in 2023 was the **National Equity Conferences (NEC)**. The NEC includes four distinct conferences: The Indigenous Peoples, Racially Visible Persons, PRIDE and Access Conferences, but also includes space to explore common human rights issues and areas of intersectionality. Under the shared theme "Rise for Equity: Working Together for a Better Tomorrow", close to 400 participated in the event held on October 19 to October 23, 2023 in Montreal.



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. For those in the federal public service, the government's increased reliance on 90-day hires, contracting out, and other forms of temporary work, continues to create unstable working conditions for young workers. Resolutions were adopted and two representatives were elected as convention delegates.

The delegates took part in workshops on mobilizing millennials, building kick-ass campaigns, forging strong networks, strengthening their committees and preparing for the next federal election. They also joined striking TVO Ontario workers on their picket line.



We're supporting our members and leaders through education

Leadership training

Close to 300 leaders attended the **National Leadership Training** in December 2023. Keynote and workshop sessions featured lively and inspiring discussions on the topics of movement-building, key lessons from established union leaders, avoiding burnout and effective communication and public speaking.



Leadership development

Almost 350 members applied for PSAC's revamped Union Leadership Development Program (ULDP) which launched in January 2024. This advanced, year-long leadership course with six steps, including three weeks of in-residence training, has been designed for members ready to expand their leadership roles within the union. Going forward, ULDP will be offered once per cycle and delivered in all seven regions.

PSAC scholarship program

The union's long-standing scholarship program available to members and their children has been expanded to include five equity scholarships. The scholarships are awarded based on the merit of applicants' responses to a question developed each year. Applicants have provided their responses in essays, videos, infographics and audio productions and recipients are acknowledged on the PSAC website.

Joint Learning Program (JLP)

By the end of 2023, the Joint Learning Program had delivered 8,000 in-person workshops and virtual discussions, reaching over 100,000 federal public service employees since its inception in 2007. In 2023 alone, the JLP delivered 383 learning events, with just over 40% delivered in-person.

Following the pandemic, the program needed to return to in-person learning and rebuild

JLP's facilitator pool. Despite the challenges, the program was able to return to — and exceed — its pre-pandemic average of about 50 monthly learning events by November 2023 and is well placed to re-establish its pre-pandemic reach in 2024 and 2025.

The JLP is reviewing existing workshops to apply a trauma-informed approach to learning activity design, updating scenarios to reflect the diversity of federal workplaces and starting all workshops with a personalized and action-oriented land acknowledgement. Workshop content is regularly updated to reflect new collective agreement language, harassment and violence prevention regulations and directives, as well as the *Accessible Canada Act* and new workplace realities.

In 2024, updated versions of *Understanding the Collective Agreement* and *Mental Health in the Workplace* workshops are being released, as well as the relaunch of the *Duty to Accommodate* workshop.

Occupational health and safety training now available

As of November 2023, a two-day in-person workshop, *Creating a Healthy, Safe and Inclusive Culture: Training for Occupational Health and Safety Committee Members*, is now available to members. Workshops are being scheduled throughout 2024.

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 a show of our solidarity, PSAC put our full support behind Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) education workers who took strike action in 2022 to oppose the Ford government's unconstitutional use of the notwithstanding clause, joining them on the picket lines and publicly pressuring the government to respect the right of workers to free collective bargaining and reverse Bill 124.

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

In recognition of World AIDS Day in December 2023, 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, including universal coverage of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), a highly effective medicine for preventing HIV.

PSAC and MAX Ottawa are working together to highlight the inequality Canadians face accessing PrEP and drive home the case for including it in both public and employer-funded health care plans across the country. This research will also consider how increased education among health care workers could improve access to HIV testing and treatment, including PrEP.

Canada's unions fight back against hate

Delegates at the 2023 Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) 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.

An Emergency Task Force was struck, of which PSAC is a member, to address escalating anti-2SLGBTQIA+ hate across Canada and begin mobilizing 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, in December 2023 PSAC lobbied the Minister of Health to address significant concerns in the negotiations of the World Health Organization (WHO) Pandemic Treaty.

The Public Service International's (PSI) Health Workers' Union Federation has flagged several issues with the current drafting of the treaty that does little to protect health care workers. PSAC is an affiliate of PSI, the international voice for public services and the workers and unions which deliver them.

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), and I want to especially thank our bargaining teams who have ensured that 99 PSAC collective agreements now include provisions to support the work of the Fund. Moreover, four components have taken steps to provide annual funding.

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; the international labour development; worker-to-worker exchanges; and worker education in Canada and around the world.

The SJF annual report details the vast reach and impact, despite its modest budget.

Providing emergency humanitarian relief

In 2023 the SJF provided relief when wildfires ravaged the Northwest Territories (NWT), causing evacuations in communities where PSAC members live and work, and when wildfires caused widespread damage in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Northern Alberta and BC. Funds were also sent to support communities impacted by severe spring flooding in the NWT and when Hurricane Fiona left an unprecedented trail of destruction across the Atlantic.

Throughout 2021-2022, the SJF, PSAC, regions and components stepped forward in an unprecedented way to set up the SJF BC Emergency and Resilience Fund, to address the flooding in BC. By pooling resources together, SJF has been able to provide a united and comprehensive response to the immediate and long-term needs of impacted communities.

Around the globe, the SJF responded to calls for assistance for those around the world displaced and suffering from flooding, earthquakes and wars in Morocco, Turkey, Haiti, Pakistan, Cuba, Peru, the Horn and East Africa, DRC, Colombia, Ukraine and beyond.

Worker Education in Action

Worker education provides PSAC members with the tools and information they need to mobilize around current global issues — and the SJF does this in many ways by promoting various initiatives and sponsoring the participation of PSAC members in exposure visits to the Global South.

This includes Education in Action, an initiative in Guatemala that engages PSAC members through action and building solidarity with organizations protecting the rights of Indigenous peoples, workers and land defenders. Visits resumed in March 2024 after being postponed for a few years due to the pandemic and political violence in the country. Since 2007, 81 members have participated.



The Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network also organizes annual visits for participants to learn about the efforts of Guatemalans struggling for social, economic and environmental justice. Visits resumed this year and PSAC Atlantic region members will be participating in May 2024.

Worker-to-Worker Exchanges

Participants on a multi-union delegation to Colombia met with unions as well as human right defenders from Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities, with whom we have worked for twenty years. The delegation offered solidarity and protection to our counterparts at a time of heightened repression and violence.

PSAC also joined a delegation to the Philippines to meet with workers, union leaders and social movement activists. The visit provided an opportunity to strengthen relations with the Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees (COURAGE), which represents 30,000 workers mainly from federal government agencies and ministries.

Here at home, a series of meetings were hosted with union leaders from the independent labour movement who are working to ensure Mexican workers are aware of their rights under the new labour reforms. Meetings were also held with union leaders from Haiti to plan an extensive visit with Canadian stakeholders in early 2024. However this has been postponed due to the escalating crisis in Haiti.

International Labour Development

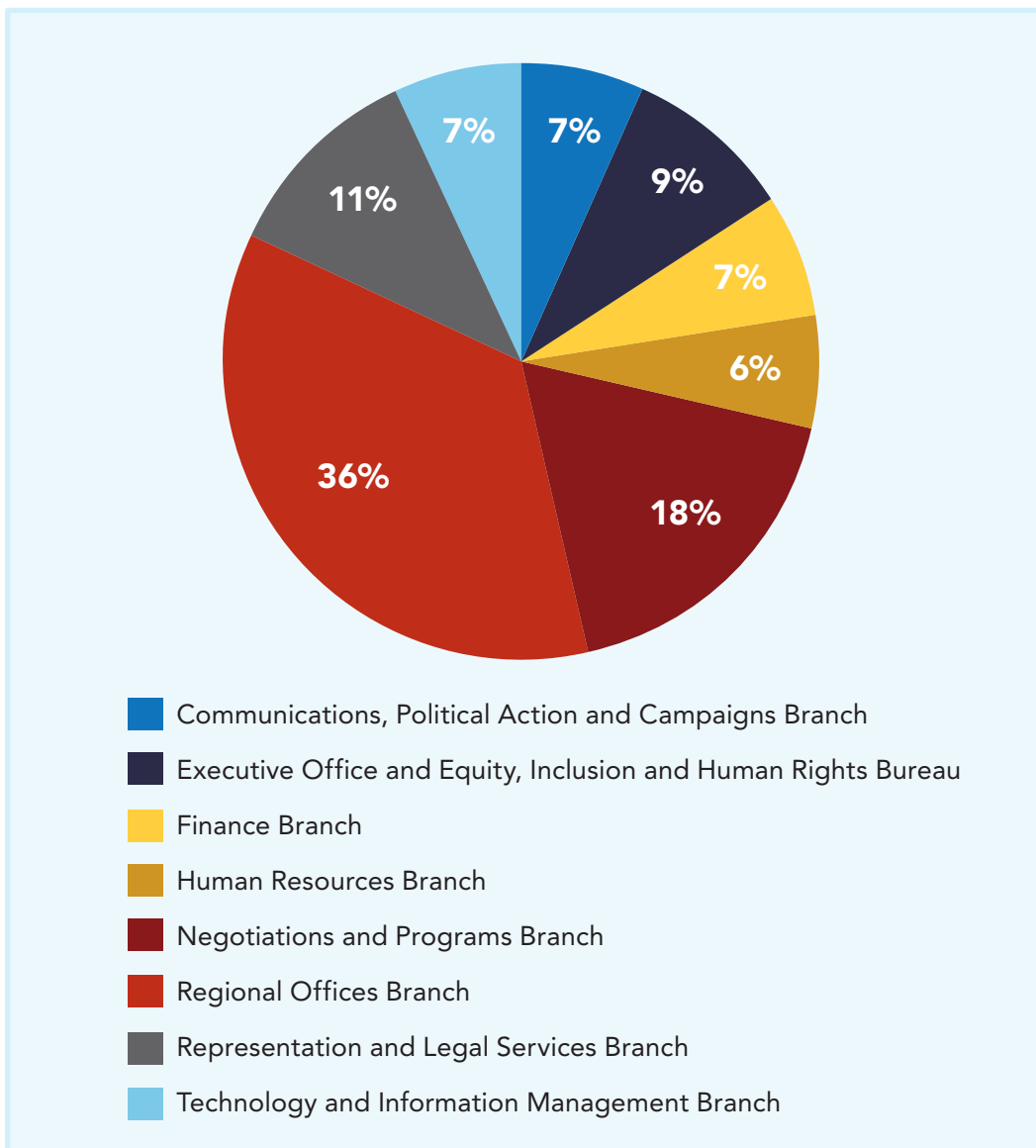
The SJF aims to strengthen the capacity of unions across the globe and support initiatives that advance the rights of workers and their unions in the developing world. It supports the struggle of garment workers in Bangladesh for decent working conditions, union organizing in Haiti and Mexico, the strengthening of health sector unions in Zimbabwe, capacity building of collective bargaining among Colombian public sector workers, better labour rights and decent work for women in Palestine and so much more.

Anti-poverty initiatives in Canada

For many years, the SJF has spent a significant amount of its budget 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. Many proposals submitted by PSAC regions, area councils, and human rights committees and we are grateful for their participation and commitment to social justice. As part of the global movement for sustainable development and progressive change, PSAC and its SJF must play its part, advancing equity rights, climate justice, and advancing the rights of workers, and communities, and social protection for all by 2030 — and urgent demand put forward by the International Labour Organization.

Our staff make the union stronger

PSAC's employees provide critical services and support to our members day in and day out — from collective bargaining to education, negotiations, legal representation, communications and campaigns. They process our members' expense claims, manage our finances, and look after our buildings. They provide technological support that makes our work possible, while our human resources and Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights Bureau ensure all our employees are supported in safe and healthy workplaces.



Celebrating our achievements together

My term in office as PSAC National President will soon come to an end.

It seems like a lifetime ago since I was first elected as a shop steward for UTE local 90000, back home in St. John's, at the tax centre.

What I may have lacked in experience was made up for by sheer determination to make sure the members of my local were well represented by their union. I took that responsibility to heart then, and I have tried to do the same in every leadership position I have held since.

The highlight of my years as your National Executive Vice-President and later as National President has been meeting and spending time with you in your workplaces and in your communities.

Talking with you about your work and the challenges you face. Pushing your union to be better and demanding more from your leadership, including me. Sharing your concerns, your hopes and your ideas to build our union and achieve change that benefits all workers — in the workplace, and beyond.

This is the part of the job I have loved most and been most humbled and inspired by. I am grateful for your support and confidence in my leadership. And I wish that I had more opportunities and time to have met and worked alongside more of you.

The pandemic brought about unprecedented changes — including the way in which many of you work and how we operate as a union. Despite the many challenges we had to overcome along the way, we've done some remarkable things together. While there is always more work to be done, we should all take pride in the long list of our accomplishments, many of them highlighted in this report.



I want to thank all of the PSAC staff who have helped make everything possible. I can't say enough about their unwavering dedication and commitment to the membership — they are the ones that keep this union moving forward. I am grateful for their daily support, and I will miss working with them. On behalf of myself and all our members from coast to coast to coast, I extend my deepest appreciation.

The leadership shown by PSAC's Alliance Executive Committee and our National Board of Directors has also been appreciated during my time in office. It has been an honour to work alongside each of you.

One of the most incredible transformations I've been privileged to see has been the emergence of a new generation of activists and leaders. This was apparent during our historic national strike last year, and on PSAC picket lines I have walked both small and large across the country. I have seen firsthand that the spirit of union solidarity is truly alive and well.

I am immensely proud that I am stepping down at a time when our union is stronger and more united than ever. I may be stepping down, but I am not stepping back from the fight for justice and equality — and I will continue to join you in solidarity in the streets and on the picket lines.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Aylward", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Chris Aylward
National President



psacunion.ca

