

Thursday, June 15th, 2017 Edition

PSAC and Treasury Board sign collective agreements for PA, EB, TC and SV



After much delay on the part of the employer, Treasury Board and PSAC have finally signed collective agreements for the PA, EB, TC and SV bargaining units on June 14, 2017. This is the result of significant pressure from our union.

These agreements, which cover over 85,000 workers in the federal public service, were ratified by the membership in April. Since then, PSAC had been pushing the employer to sign the agreements.

Letter sent to Trudeau; ULP complaint threatened

Last week, due to the excessive delay, PSAC National President Robyn Benson sent a letter to the

Prime Minister. She expressed her disappointment and urged him to compel Treasury Board to set a date for signing.

PSAC also told Treasury Board that further delays would result in an unfair labour practice (ULP) complaint being filed with the labour board.



Senate votes to repeal anti-union laws

Two Conservative anti-union laws, Bills C-377 and C-525, are now history with the adoption of Bill C-4.

“Both of these Conservative bills were an attack on working people,” said PSAC National President Robyn Benson. “Canada’s labour movement mobilized fierce opposition to these laws. This victory is thanks to the vocal solidarity of union members and our allies.”

The bill reverses changes that were made to the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Income Tax Act.

Bill C-525 made it more difficult for workers in the federal sector to unionize. It also gave employers more opportunity to interfere in the process of establishing a union in the workplace.

Bill C-377 required unions to make public detailed financial information, unlike any other type of organization. Privacy commissioners called the bill a violation of privacy laws, while others described it as unconstitutional. While the law was in force, the Liberal government had waived the requirement for unions to file this information for 2016 and 2017.



Government releases consultation report on proposed accessibility legislation

Earlier this year, the federal government held consultations on what should be included in new legislation dealing with accessibility for people with disabilities.

On May 29, the government released a report on its consultations. While the report contains some important recommendations, they remain vague. There is also no timeline for when the legislation will be put forward.

Federal government should be a leader

The report states that the new legislation should apply to all areas under the control of the Government of Canada, including the government as an employer.

It also emphasizes that “the Government of Canada should be a leader in accessibility by hiring and supporting employees with disabilities.”

Employment a top concern

Employment was listed by participants as one of the top issues when it comes to accessibility. While current legislation, such as the Federal Employment Equity Act, is positive, participants in the consultation felt that more needed to be done.

Participants stressed the importance of such things as:

- accessible recruitment and hiring processes
- requirements to support employees' return to work if they acquire a disability while employed
- inclusive workplace policies that do not result in more barriers to accessibility

Enforcement and monitoring

The report notes that the new legislation could include a variety of tools to monitor progress, including actions plans, progress report, reviews, and a complaint process.

Participants supported the idea of creating a new, independent body, which would be responsible for oversight, response to individual complaints and ensuring organizations are following the legislation. As well, the results of any reporting process should be done regularly and made public.

PSAC made recommendations

During the consultations, PSAC submitted a brief focusing on our members in the federal jurisdiction, which identified key priorities, including strengthening employment equity, accommodation, and staffing processes for persons with disabilities.

PSAC will continue to push for strong legislation that ensures accessibility for Canadians with disabilities.



Harassment in the federal public service has increased: Survey

The latest results of the annual survey of the public service show a disturbing rise in workplace harassment and a significant rate of workplace stress.

"This is a very disturbing trend," said Robyn Benson, PSAC National President. "Departments and agencies need to act on this and ensure public service workplaces are safe and healthy."

The annual survey of federal public service workers was taken in February and March of this year. It is a shorter version of the Public Service Employee Survey, which is taken every three years.

Harassment, discrimination and poor workplace mental health for many

One-third of public service workers (34%) said their workplace stress was "high" or "very high". A similar number of respondents (27%) felt that their workplace was not "psychologically healthy."

The percentage of workers who said they have been harassed at work was up to 22% from 19% in 2014. The results were even higher for equity groups, with the highest rates of harassment (40%) being reported by workers with disabilities. Aboriginal

workers also reported high rates of harassment (33%).

Discrimination at work is also a growing problem. The survey shows a higher rate of employees who said they were victims of discrimination at work, particularly for members of equity groups. In the survey, discrimination was reported by 32% of workers with disabilities, 20% of Aboriginal workers, and 19% of “visible minority” or racialized workers. In all cases, those numbers were up from the previous survey in 2014.

Work of Joint Task Forces clearly needed

PSAC and Treasury Board recently began work on two important joint initiatives: the Joint Task Force on Mental Health and the Joint Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion. Both of these bodies are made up of representatives from the union and the employer.

“The survey results show the urgent need for this work to continue,” said Benson. “In the years to come, surveys like this will be the benchmark of how successful we are at addressing these important issues.”



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This format also allows for local printing and a PDF download, in order to share with colleagues, friends and family.

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