WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

Thursday, November 2nd, 2017 Edition

Victory! PSAC wins right for women to use contraceptive of choice

In a victory for women across the federal public service, The Treasury Board has agreed to cover all forms of contraceptives under the Public Service Health Care Plan pending an agreement with federal public sector unions.

The decision comes after mounting pressure from Public Service Alliance of Canada National President Robyn Benson to offer greater choice for women taking birth control.

"Women in Canada deserve better birth control coverage, plain and simple. It is 2017, after all," said Benson. "All women have the right to choose the method that works best for them, instead of simply what they can afford."

Treasury Board President Scott Brison said that his department would have to reach a consensus with PSAC and other major federal public sector unions before an agreement can be reached.

"To be clear, PSAC will not offer any concessions to current benefits under the plan in order to provide non-oral contraceptives to our members," added Benson. "It is absurd that our government does not already cover any contraceptives other than the pill for federal public service workers."

The changes could be implemented as early as January 2018.

PSAC has been lobbying the Treasury Board for years to cover the cost of intrauterine devices, the patch and other forms of non-oral contraceptives under the federal health care plan. Such an agreement was reached in 2012, only to be arbitrarily taken off the table by then Treasury Board President Tony Clement.

Currently, only the birth control pill is covered under the health care regime, and women must pay for all non-oral contraceptives out of their own pockets. Depending on the news announced today this could be removed.

Update on decisions made by National Board of Directors on dues

Dear Brothers and Sisters and Friends,

At its October meeting, your PSAC National Board of Directors made a decision about the special dues levy that members have been paying to ensure the health of the PSAC Staff Pension Plan.

There will be no impact on the amount of dues that members are currently paying. Members will continue to pay an average of $2.45 per month in a special dues levy– the same amount now being collected. Instead of being set aside to use for the PSAC Staff Pension Fund – which is healthy – it will be used to meet our operating costs until we get the Union dues that we are owed. Because of Phoenix, we can't tell the Employer to stop collecting the amount of the Special Dues Levy, without putting our members' pay at further risk.

At the 2012 PSAC Triennial Convention, delegates voted to put this special levy in place to ensure the solvency of the PSAC Staff Pension Plan. Because of your contributions, we now have about $30 million set aside for this purpose. The PSAC Staff Pension Plan was evaluated again in August and we believe the $30 million that has been set aside offers enough stability to weather a future storm.

Normally, the National Board of Directors would be able to make a decision to stop the special dues levy. However, as we all painfully know, the Phoenix pay system makes this anything but a normal time.

We know that many members have suffered because of Phoenix. We have focussed our energy on helping members whose pay has been affected, as well as supporting our members who work with the Phoenix pay system and are under tremendous stress.

Over the coming months, we will be putting even more pressure on the Employer to pay our members properly and to compensate them for all the pain and suffering that has been caused.

Just as Phoenix means that many of our members have been paid wrongly or not at all, it also means that many of the Union dues being collected are wrong or missing entirely.

Quite simply, for the last eighteen months, we have not been able to change the amount of dues that members pay, issue refunds, or collect additional dues owed to the union. We are working on a solution and intend to go after the Employer for every penny of missing dues. We have demanded an advance from the government on the dues that are owed to the union.

In the meantime, our union is suffering from the real and substantial drop in revenues.

The PSAC budget passed at the 2015 Convention mandated that: "a fall of 2% or greater of revenue – or the equivalent of $1.5 million – will trigger a Special Levy to the General Fund. The exact amount of this Special Levy will be determined based on the amount needed to maintain total revenue at the budgeted amount."

By the end of this year PSAC will be short about $6 million in missing dues. Our revenue is almost 7% less than what we have budgeted.

If we apply the Budget as mandated by Convention, we would be implementing a special levy that is higher than the levy for the PSAC Staff Pension Plan. The National Board of Directors will not implement a higher dues rate.

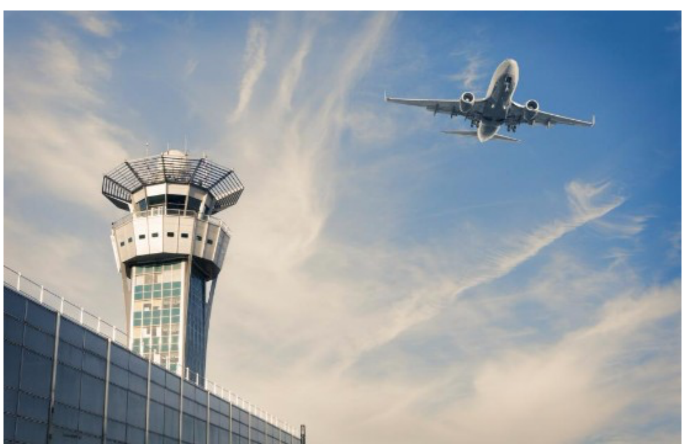
The dues we are collecting for the levy will be separately tracked, monitored, and reported on. Delegates at the PSAC Convention in May 2018 will determine the PSAC dues rate for the future.

We want to thank you so much for your activism and support through the Phoenix disaster. Please know that we are working every day to bring your voices to the Employer. We will not rest until every wrong done by Phoenix and this Employer is righted.

In solidarity,

Robyn Benson

National President, PSAC



NAV CANADA workers prepare for upcoming round of bargaining

PSAC / UCTE members employed by NAV CANADA met at the NAV CANADA National Bargaining Conference from October 24-26, 2017 in Ottawa. They discussed important issues facing their workers and prepared for the upcoming round of collective bargaining.

Conference delegates discussed current pension trends and mobilization efforts within the bargaining unit. They also selected and prioritized the bargaining demands our team will be taking to the table when they face the employer later this year.

Greg McGillis, PSAC Regional Executive Vice-President - National Capital Region, Dave Clark, UCTE National President, Chris Bussey, UCTE Regional Vice-President – Atlantic, and Chris Aylward, PSAC National Executive Vice-President, all welcomed the group and spoke about the challenges ahead in bargaining.

Retired UCTE National President Christine Collins was in attendance and was recognized by the NAV CANADA Bargaining Agents Association (NCBAA) for her work with the association. Peter Duffy, CATCA National President, presented Christine with a beautiful plaque on behalf of the NCBAA.

New NAV CANADA bargaining team elected

Delegates had the important task of electing the members that will be negotiating the next collective agreement with the employer.

The following members have been elected to our NAV CANADA bargaining team:

- Sheri Campeau
- Michelle Webster
- Michelle Timmerman
- Suzanne Dupuis (1st Alternate)
- Michael McCullough (2nd Alternate)
- Steve McCarthy (3rd Alternate)

They will be joined at the bargaining table by Larry Gagnon, PSAC Negotiator, Janson LaBond, PSAC Research Officer, Chris Bussey and Greg McGillis.

Dates for the first round of bargaining are currently under discussion with NAV CANADA Representatives. It is expected that these dates will be confirmed shortly for December.

Our high quality public services need to stay public

From the threat of airport privatization, to an expensive private Infrastructure Bank, to continued contracting out across federal government departments, our high quality public services are under threat. Join us as we work to restore and expand public services.

Government is rushing the $35 Billion project

The Finance Minister has said he would like the new Canada Infrastructure Bank up and running by the end of 2017. Operational details for the project were only included in the recently-tabled Budget Implementation Act, and the government has already begun a recruitment drive for the Bank's leadership.

What is it?

The Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB) would be located in Toronto and create a one-stop shop for new infrastructure funding, pooling investments from large investors with a small amount of seed funding granted from the Government of Canada. This approach deliberately creates huge returns for private investors, while driving up the cost of public projects and giving up important public control.

Here are some of the problems:

Private financing will more than double the cost of infrastructure projects

While the federal government can borrow at interest rates as low as 2.2 per cent, private financiers expect returns of at least 7 to 9 percent. This could have a huge impact on federal budgeting in the future.

Using this higher-cost private financing could more than double the interest costs of infrastructure projects. That's $153 billion more during a project's life span than if the government borrowed directly at 2.5 per cent - equivalent to $5 billion more per year.

There are also significant added transaction costs with private financing, including fees paid to lawyers, financial advisors, accounting firms and other consultants. These can be double what we would see in the public sector.

Private control of public projects

Key decisions rest with private firms, even though it is a question of public investment, publicly-generated assets, and public services. Cost overruns and missed deadlines can impact the expected revenue of private investors and we might see user fees and cutbacks on services.

The CIB has the potential to significantly increase overall costs to taxpayers while privatizing the most high-return, low-risk infrastructure assets. Why would we take our most valuable assets and sell them to the private sector?

Documents show the bank could take on an "equity stake" in order to make a project more attractive to private investor, meaning that the public takes on all the risk.

Lack of transparency and accountability

The public won't know who is bidding for which projects and what the conditions of the contract will be.

The current proposal does not include enough safeguards and checks to prevent conflicts of interest and ensure responsible management of its budget. Given the projected budget of $35 billion, this is a recipe for significant mismanagement and risk.

We've seen with the Phoenix disaster how mismanaged contracts can affect the entire public service, and we can't let that happen again.

Public services will take the hit

As the cost of this privatization skyrockets and Canadians are on the hook for paying billions in extra interest fees, funding for important public services will be undermined.

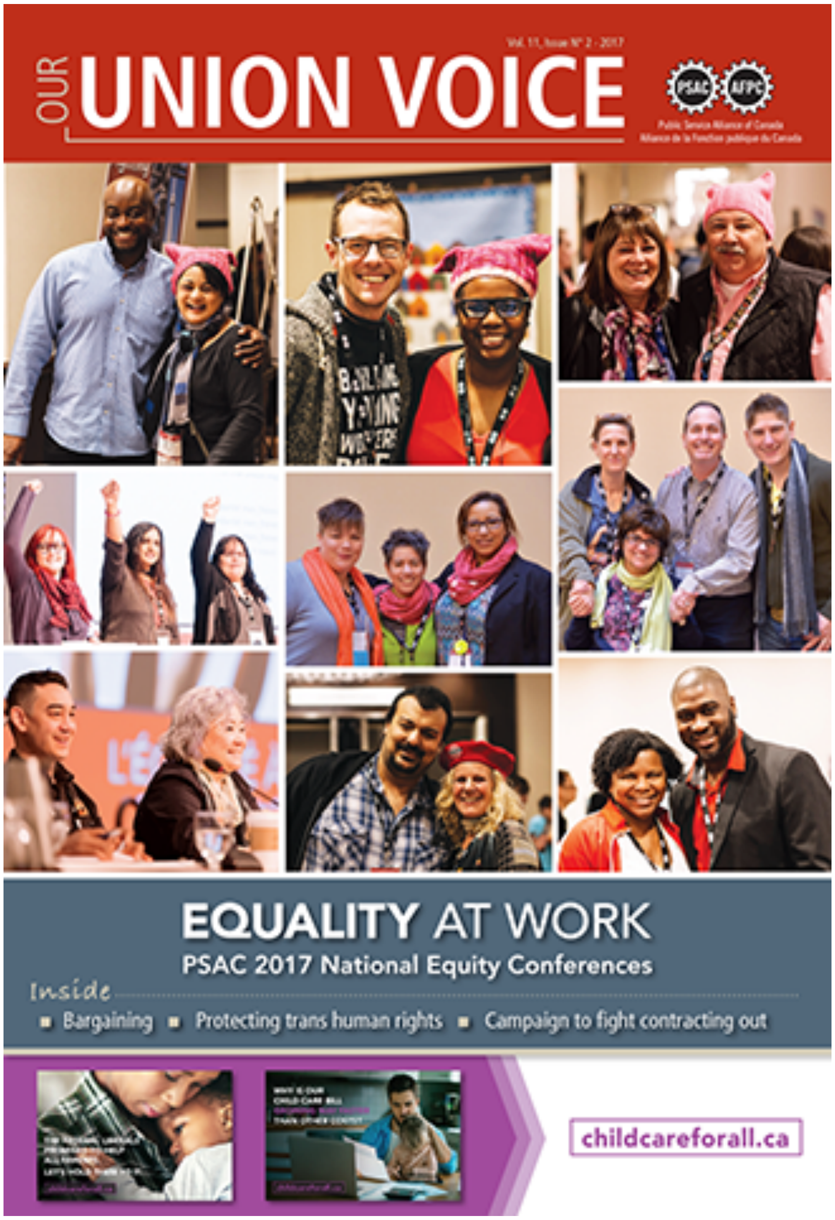
As more and more public services are contracted out and privatized, institutional memory disappears and drains capacity over the long run. This has a real impact on the quality of services for the public.

When projects go to the lowest bidder, quality and accessibility suffer.

Public financing and public control are a better approach

There is certainly a need to invest in public transit, green infrastructure, social services like universal childcare, and in rural and northern communities. But the public should retain control so these projects continue to benefit everyone, and new hidden fees, costs, and cutbacks are not forced on the public.

Instead of high-cost private loans, we could use low-cost public financing for large infrastructure projects, creating more value, saving money and making sure projects actually work in the public interest.



Get your union news – online and screen-friendly

Published three times per year, 180,000 of our members received the winter edition of PSAC's newsletter Our Union Voice.

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

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