

STEWARD KIT

UNION ORIENTATION FOR NEW MEMBERS



PSAC BC
Winter 2013



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

Workplace Orientation Objectives

Under the terms of most of your collective agreements, you are entitled to introduce the union representative to your new members.

Program Administration (PA)

Article 13.05

- The Alliance shall have the opportunity to have an employee representative introduced to new employees as part of the Employer's formal orientation programs, where they exist.

Commissionaires

Article 7.01

- Upon assignment to a regular position within the bargaining unit, an Employee will be permitted to meet with a Shop Steward for a reasonable period of time, as part of the Employee's orientation for the position.

Article 7.02

- The President of Local 05/20500 or his designate will be permitted to meet with all new Commissionaires during their Basic Standards Training program for a reasonable period of time, as part of the Employee's orientation.

Vancouver International Airport Authority

Article 4.07

- The Employer shall allow a Union representative fifteen (15) minutes to meet with new employees at time of payroll sign up. The Employer will provide the Union with advance notice of payroll sign up times.

And many others.

Providing a union orientation to a new co-worker enables you to forge a link between the members and their Local and give them information about their union.

Member participation in union life hinges on the quality of our communication with them. The best means of communication is face-to-face dialogue.

In order to gain the support of our members, the dialogue must:

- Establish a relationship of trust between members and the steward;
- Include them, encourage exchanges on points of view/opinions and show interest in their concerns;
- Obtain their agreement with union projects and strategies;
- Obtain a commitment from them to stay informed, communicate their opinions to their union and participate;
- Create a solid and satisfactory link to the union.

Techniques to Communicate With Members

Here are some strategies that promote dialogue:

- Look at the person who is speaking;
- Reformulate what she is saying from time to time (active listening);
- Listen carefully to the speaker and note his/her concerns;
- Display an appropriate attitude (gestures, mimic, posture);
- Ask relevant questions;
- Respect other persons' opinions (even if they differ from your own!);
- Be courteous in your dealings.

Ask About the Members' Needs

Show your interest in learning more about your members' needs. Meetings with new members enable you to provide them information and ask questions. For example, you can ask them:

- Is this your first unionized job?
- Have you previously heard about the PSAC?
- Is there an issue or area of particular interest to you?
- Has the employer given you a copy of the collective agreement?

Provide the Member With Useful Information

New employees undoubtedly come away feeling reassured when their union provides them with information on their new workplace such as:

- What a collective agreement is and what are some of the important articles
- The probationary period
- The performance evaluation
- Protection against harassment or discrimination
- Who to contact if the member has questions or a problem
- Union dues
- Salary increases
- Leave entitlements
- Invite Members to Take Part in the Life of Their Union

While meeting with the member, you will want to encourage her/him to take part in their union by providing them with specific examples of how they can do this.

Remind the members that our structures and decision-making process are democratic.

To begin, talk to members about the advantages of joining the union.

Members in good standing

- Members who sign a union card become members of the bargaining unit and can take part in all union activities.

Rand members

- Employees who are part of the bargaining unit and have not (yet) signed their union cards are not (yet) members of the union. The term “Rand deductee” goes back to the ruling handed down by Judge Ivan Rand to the effect that members can choose to join or not to join the union. However, if someone benefits from the work done by the union, they must help pay for this work. This explains why Rand deductees pay union dues but are not members of the union.

Rand deductees do have a right to be represented by the union and enjoy all of the benefits of the collective agreement.

However, Rand deductees cannot

- Participate in ratification votes on negotiated contracts (except for strike votes or ratifications of final offers ordered by the Board and members under the BC Labour Code – where Rand deductees legally have voting rights)
- Run for a union position
- Have a voice on union matters or participate in the decision-making process pertaining to union matters.

Would-be members simply have to complete a membership card to become members in good standing of the union.

Then, provide members with additional general information about their union, such as: the date of your next union meeting, education available in the region, a description of the various committees of the local.

Tell them that we want to hear about their needs during the next round of collective bargaining. Tell them we would like their support for our campaigns.

Orientation Message Models

The following are three orientation models stewards can present to new members.

Proposed Content for a Five-Minute Session

- What is a Union? Who is the PSAC?
- Your Rights at Work
- Your Rights as a member of the PSAC
- Material to be Given Out

Proposed Content for a Fifteen-Minute Session

- What is a Union? Who is the PSAC?
- Your Rights at Work
- Your Rights as a member of the PSAC
- Your Union's Structure
- Material to be Given Out

Proposed Content for a Thirty-Minute Session

- What is a Union? Who is the PSAC?
- Your Rights at Work
- Your Rights as a member of the PSAC
- Your Union in Action: Your Union's Work
- Your Union's Structure
- Material to be Given Out

Now for the Content

What is a Union?

- Organizing means banding together and combining our efforts and voices to negotiate with the employer: It means putting an end to favouritism and arbitrariness.
- Unionizing means improving quality of life on several levels. It protects the economic and social interests of workers.

Who is the PSAC?

- Founded in 1966
- The PSAC strives to improve the quality of life of its members
- It is one of the largest unions in Canada with more than 180,000 members coast to coast to coast
- Today, our members work for the federal Public Service, Crown Corporations, federal agencies, territorial governments, the university sector and employers governed by provincial legislation

Your Rights at Work

You have the right to:

- Benefits and rights included in your collective agreement
- Become a member of the union and take part in union activities
- File a grievance
- Work in a discrimination-free and harassment-free workplace
- Work in an environment that respects your health and safety rights

Your Rights as a PSAC member

Every member in good standing has the right to:

- Be represented by the union
- Vote or be nominated for union office
- Communicate with union officers
- Receive information about the union
- Participate in union meetings and take part in union training activities

Your Union in Action: the Work of Your Union

(We invite you to select a few examples of the work done by the PSAC and to summarize the nature of our work).

Political Action

- Governments develop policies and pass legislation that has a direct effect on the lives of workers. The PSAC and its membership make their concerns known and collaborate to influence politicians.

Disability Insurance

- To achieve progress on disability insurance issues and represent the interests of PSAC members in the form of advice, representation and technical assistance relating to the interpretation and application of public and private disability insurance plans.

Advantages to Members

- Our size enables us to negotiate good rates for house, automobile and group life insurance policies for our members and their families.

Classification

- We work to ensure that the classification system is free of bias and that members are properly classified and paid fairly for the work they do.

Women's and Human Rights

- The PSAC takes to heart women's and human rights. We work hard to encourage the full participation of disadvantaged groups in our workplaces and in society.

Education

- We have a union training program that is envied by many! Our program covers a wide variety of topics and learning opportunities are numerous.

Employment Equity

- PSAC has paved the way in the fight to promote equity and to stamp out discrimination. We prepare tools and strategies to eliminate discrimination in the workplace.

Pay Equity

- In 1999, PSAC achieved pay equity for some 200,000 current and former members, one of the largest pay equity victories in North America, representing four million dollars. We work to promote fair treatment in all workplaces.

Grievances and Arbitration

- If rights are not respected in the workplace, you have a grievance procedure to resolve complaints. The PSAC also represents members during the arbitration process when grievances are referred to an independent third party for resolution.

Young Workers

- The PSAC represents an increasing number of young workers whose concerns and needs must be taken into account.

Negotiations

- Experienced union negotiators work with members to come up with the best set of contract demands for the bargaining unit. They negotiate with the employer to obtain a collective agreement that will be ratified by members.

Retirement

- To bring forth issues relating to pensions and represent the interests of PSAC members in the form of advice, representation and technical assistance regarding the interpretation and application of public and private sector pension plans and pension-related legislation and regulations relating thereto.

Health and Safety

- We work with the health and safety committees of locals and exert political pressure to ensure that health safety legislation is improved; and we negotiate health and safety provisions in collective agreements.

Organizing

- On average, unionized workers earn more and have better benefits and pension plans than workers who are not unionized. PSAC has unionists working full time to recruit Canadian workers to the union family.

International Solidarity

- PSAC members are not just members of their own union. They also belong to national and international union organizations and participate in various coalitions with other men and women to achieve social justice and equity both here and abroad.

Some of the Workplace Gains Achieved by the PSAC:

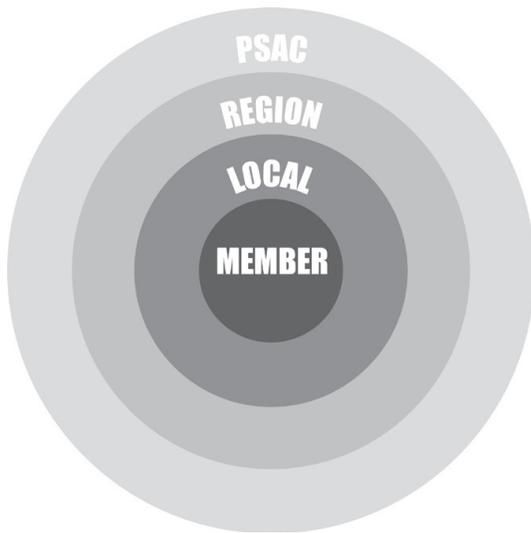
- 1986: PSAC wins health and safety protection for members under the Canada Labour Code.
- 1986: The first Master Agreement with Treasury Board is signed for 39 bargaining units. The Agreement includes a dental plan, a no discrimination clause, improved maternity leave and protection against sexual harassment.
- 1986: A PSAC campaign for labour rights for Parliamentary workers that started in 1981 finally succeeds when the Parliamentary Employment and

Staff Relations Act is adopted, paving the way for the unionization of workers on Parliament Hill.

- 1987: The Supreme Court rules that it is the employer's responsibility to provide a harassment-free workplace. It is the culmination of a long fight by Bonnie Robichaud and PSAC.
- 1987: The union obtains vision care and hearing aid benefits for federal public sector members.
- 1988: The union wins 100% employer payment of dental plan premiums for federal public sector workers.
- 1991: After a seven-year court battle, the Supreme Court upholds PSAC's challenge and removes restrictions on political activity by most federal public sector workers except for deputy heads. PSAC wins tougher employment security provisions through the Work Force Adjustment Directive.
- 1993: PSAC successfully negotiates with Confederation Life that members with disabilities, otherwise in good health, be approved coverage for life insurance.
- 1993: The Supreme Court agrees with PSAC that the federal government can't contract out work and then lay-off the workers who had previously performed the work.
- 1993: PSAC negotiates a telework policy with Treasury Board.
- 1998: PSAC negotiates spousal union leave for gay and lesbian couples at Museum of Science and Technology, the National Gallery, the Canadian Museum of Nature, Canada Post Corporation, Burnt Church First Nation and the Saskatoon Airport.
- 1999: PSAC reaches a settlement with Treasury Board that results in a pay-out of approximately \$3.5 billion in retroactive pay equity adjustments and interest for over 200,000 current and former members in Treasury Board bargaining units.

- 1999: PSAC joins other federal unions and retiree groups and files a Statement of Claim in the Ontario Superior Court against the federal government's arbitrary removal of the \$30-billion surplus in federal public sector pension plans.
- 2000: Breakthroughs begin in area of elder care with achievement of leave for case of elderly parents, elderly spouse's parents or elderly spouse at the Canada Council for the Arts. Breakthroughs follow at Canada Post Corporation, Parks Canada, Library of Parliament, Winnipeg Airport Authority and others.
- 2001: Following selective strike action in a series of "Workless Wednesdays", PSAC negotiates employer funding for a joint study on how to improve the status and job security of term workers. The study results in an employer policy giving term workers indeterminate status after three years' continuous employment. The union also negotiates funding for the Joint Learning Program, a joint union-management training initiative.
- 2001: PSAC negotiates a volunteer day for TBS members. Other units follow.
- 2001: Regional pay zones are reduced from seven to two with Parks Canada. The union negotiates annual pay increments for part-time workers with various federal employers.
- 2002: PSAC negotiates the inclusion of fiancé to the definition of family for bereavement leave for members at the Royal Canadian Mint.
- 2002: PSAC is the first union in Canada to negotiate a combined full-year of maternity/parental leave allowances for our public sector agreements.
- 2010: Bereavement leave is increased to seven consecutive calendar days for the Program and Administration Services (PA).
- 2010: PSAC obtains education leave with pay for education related to career development at the Office of the Auditor General.

The Structure of PSAC



Introduce the circles by numbering and explaining the component parts of PSAC. The following is a brief description of each:

Members

- Each time a union is certified in the workplace, it assumes the responsibility of representing in good faith all persons who are in the bargaining unit.

The Local

- Members are distributed amongst Locals which ensure a daily link between the membership and the union structure.

Component

- Components are made up of locals and have specific responsibilities such as staffing complaints and grievances (up to the arbitration stage); administering in the workplace collective agreements signed by PSAC covering members under their jurisdiction; representing their membership on issues relating to classification and working conditions not covered in collective agreements.

Regions

- The PSAC has seven regions that provide a forum where members can get together and focus on issues.

TOGETHER, THESE VARIOUS SECTIONS MAKE UP THE PSAC.

PSAC Resources

At any time, you can get in touch with both PSAC offices located in British Columbia

Vancouver Regional Office
200 – 5238 Joyce Street
Vancouver BC
V5R6C9

Victoria Regional Office
210 - 1497 Admirals Road
Victoria BC
V9A2P8

tel: (604) 430-5631
toll-free: 1 (800) 663-1655

tel: (250) 953-1050
toll-free: 1 (866) 953-1050

Material to be Distributed

Completed contact sheet (see Appendix A)
Publication: Through Membership, We Are All Stronger
▪ this is available through your Regional Office
List of useful Web pages (See Appendix B)

last but not least a **MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION CARD**

Myths and Anti-Union Messages

(Please take the time to familiarize yourself with the following myths about unions before your meeting with a new co-worker. They might provide you ideas of ways to respond to the member if some of these comments are raised during your orientation meeting.)

People Are Forced To Join Unions And Pay Dues.

A union is created in a workplace when a majority of workers in a particular workplace sign membership cards to join a union. In most jurisdictions, this action leads to a government-supervised, secret ballot vote to determine whether the majority of people in that workplace want the union to represent them or not. Despite employer opposition, unions exist because the majority of workers believe very strongly that the introduction of a union at their workplace will improve their lives through better working conditions, wages and benefits.

With very few exceptions, people who oppose unions are not forced to join the union or sign membership cards.

They are required, however, to pay dues. If every worker in a workplace benefits from a union contract, everyone should pay dues. If a union wins a wage increase, it goes to every worker, not only those that are members. People pay municipal, provincial and federal taxes whether or not they voted for the person or political party in office. Your street is cleaned, you benefit from fire and police department protection, and you are afforded the protection of federal laws and agencies because you pay for these services. You cannot opt out.

The same applies to the workplace. Every worker is protected by the union. Every worker enjoys the benefits of a union contract.

Unions Are Passé. They Used To Be Necessary But There's No Need For Them Anymore.

Not only are unions necessary, but they are often the only hope workers have of receiving fair treatment. Although employers sometimes attempt to convince employees that they would be more successful if they were not organized, this theory is not supported by either facts or statistics (go to the following link

(<http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/labr69a-eng.htm> which leads to a statistics Canada report on the salaries of unionized and non-unionized employees).

We are all aware that an increasing numbers of Canadians are unable to keep pace with the real cost of living and that many workers complain they cannot achieve balance between their work and personal lives. The gap between those making profits and those doing the work is widening and will continue to widen, unless workers band together to protect themselves.

Collectively, union members can do more to ensure that workers are paid a fair wage and a proportional share of the profits. Unions also enable workers to achieve a more balanced life, because they negotiate provisions that give workers the opportunity to take leave and maintain balance between their work and personal lives.

If You Don't Like Your Job, You Can Always Resign.

It's true that if you are a victim of injustice in the workplace, you can always quit. How many employees believe that the real meaning of the open-door policy is "if you don't like what's going on here, the door is always open and you are free to leave." Why should that be your only option? Why should employees be forced to accept unfair treatment, have to quit, lose their salary, give up their right to a pension or pension plan contributions and subject themselves and their family to uncertainty and to upheaval? Unions subscribe to the principle that good employees deserve to be treated fairly with dignity and respect.

When you are the member of a union, the rules governing your working relationship are negotiated and put in writing. If these rules are violated, all members are guaranteed access to a problem resolution mechanism. This is generally achieved through the grievance procedure. Moreover, the union has a right to represent its members in the event of a violation of the Labour Code, non-compliance with employment standards, a human rights violation, etc.

Unions Defend People Who Do Not Deserve To Have A Job

If you belong to a union, the dues you pay help, among other things, to ensure that you are represented by your union if disciplinary action is taken against you or if you are unjustly dismissed. Federal and provincial legislation gives your union a mandate to ensure that each member receives equal treatment under the law and fair

representation, just as an ordinary citizen would be entitled to legal representation if she/he were accused of breaking the law. Furthermore, since all citizens are presumed innocent until proven guilty, unionized employees are entitled to fair representation during the employer's investigation and when disciplinary action and/or, dismissal materializes if the employer has valid grounds.

This means that unionized employees have a right to have due consideration given to their version of the facts. If the union investigates and discovers that the measures an employer has taken against an employee are unfair or too harsh, it will file a grievance on behalf of the employee and will strive to arrive at a fair resolution of the situation.

Unions Are Too Powerful

This is a statement you often hear from numerous anti-union spokespeople, but on closer examination, it does not accurately reflect reality. The fact of the matter is that only 30% of workers in Canada are unionized, and even unionized employees are covered by the contracts they have agreed to. There is no correlation between the size and power of unions and the number of strikes. For example, 80 to 90% of all workers are organized in Sweden and in Germany, and despite this, strikes occur very infrequently, mainly because of the enlightened policies adopted by their governments.

In Canada, most politicians seem to be supportive of corporate interests, and their actions (and their inaction) in the past 30 years have contributed significantly to the widening gulf between the rich and the poor. Employment standards, which are supposed to defend non-unionized workers, only provide minimum protection, and even at that, they are not always followed. Workers must report the violations themselves, because no one is monitoring the employers to ensure that their workers are being treated fairly.

Governments tend to take another approach when it comes to unions. They demand that unions be certified under the law, that they receive the official support of most workers they are representing and that they go through a long and complex legal process before a strike can be called.

The federal and provincial governments can intervene in strikes, force workers back to work and impose a settlement. Workers who refuse to go back can also be fined or imprisoned.

One is left to wonder whether this approach taken by government reflects the personal opinion of our politicians or whether it is attributable to other influences. According to Democracy Watch, companies lobby Canadian politicians full time to continue to protect their interests.

Unions Go Out On Strike Too Often

Unions negotiate agreements, not strikes. No union wants a strike; however, strike action occurs when both parties are unable to arrive at an agreement otherwise. For unionized workers, they are synonymous with sacrifices both personally and for members of their family. Workers will not go out on strike unless the issues are so important that they are worth making a sacrifice for. Unions will call a vote of the membership before opting for strike action which only occurs if a clear majority of workers vote in favour.

Unions evaluate their success in their ability to avoid strikes.

In fact, 97% of all collective agreement bargaining sessions do not result in a strike. Despite that success rate, strikes remain controversial and do make headlines. That is undoubtedly the reason why so many people believe that strikes are the rule and not the exception.

There is no doubt that strikes sometimes can affect innocent people. However, the same can be said for almost any type of economic or other activity. Price hikes hurt too, and so does taking profits made in the country and investing them elsewhere.

Anti-union spokesmen disregard the fact that workers are also human beings. All workers want to be paid fairly for their work and receive a fair portion of the economic benefits that they help produce. And why is it when a strike occurs, blame is leveled against workers and their unions as if they were the only participants? After all, it takes two parties to create a dispute.

Workers join unions for various reasons. Some reasons are universal -- a greater voice, better working conditions, protection of rights, fair treatment and respect.

Appendix A – Contact Sheet

Local President

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

E-mail:

PSAC Regional Representative

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Local Vice-President

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Component Regional Vice-President

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Chief Shop Steward

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

E-mail:

PSAC Regional Executive Vice-President

Name: Bob Jackson

Address: c/o PSAC Vancouver RO

Telephone: (604) 430-0191

E-mail: revp-bc@psac-afpc.com

Appendix B

Useful Web sites

Public Service Alliance of Canada	www.pvac-afpc.com
PSAC BC Region	www.pvacbc.com
BC Region Union Education	www.pvacbc.com/education
Canadian Labour Congress	www.canadianlabour.ca
BC Federation of Labour	www.bcfed.ca
PSAC on Facebook	facebook.com/psacnat
PSAC BC on Facebook	facebook.com/psacbc
PSAC on Twitter	twitter.com/psacnat
PSAC BC on Twitter	twitter.com/psacbc
Regional email newsletter	sign up at psacbc.com