

PSAC Pride 2009 Statement

Celebrating 40 years of freedom!

Forty years ago, it was a crime in Canada to be gay. Homosexuality was severely punished, and the police regularly raided bars and saunas to arrest and prosecute gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals and transgendered people.

In 1969, the Criminal Code was amended, and the state was officially thrown out of the bedroom: since then, our GLBT brothers and sisters can no longer be arrested and prosecuted because of who they choose to love.

The fortieth anniversary of the decriminalization of homosexuality is an event that is important to remember and to celebrate. This historic landmark paved the way for the many significant reforms in labour law, in civil law and in human rights law that were won by GLBT activists over the years.

PSAC is proud to have been a solid ally in this struggle: throughout the 1990s our union actively sought to win benefits for same sex couples at the bargaining table. PSAC was also engaged in the struggle to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act, to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

At the turn of the century, PSAC was an active partner in the campaign for equal marriage that resulted in the amendment of federal legislation to recognize marriage for gays and lesbians.

We know that the struggle is still not over. GLBT youth still have to deal with the invisibility of their lives, heterosexist environments, prejudice and harassment in schools. Our transgender brothers and sisters still have to contend with discrimination at work and in society, homophobia in the provisions of social and health care services, difficulty accessing the medical treatments they may require, as well as inadequate protections in provincial and federal human rights legislation.

PSAC is committed to ensuring that all of our members are secure in the protection and enjoyment of their human rights.

But this year, we should take stock and celebrate the very real victories that have been won over the last 40 years by GLBT activists, their allies in PSAC and in the broader labour movement.

This year, we should all be especially proud of the courage and the commitment of our members and of the general public to change and grow into a more tolerant, inclusive and respectful society. This is as good a reason as any to participate in great numbers to the regional Pride events that will be organized across the country this Summer.