

PSAC Lobbying Kit

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

www.psac-afpc.com

PSAC Lobbying Kit

Meeting with MPs: Our objectives

We need to inform all MPs about the consequences of cutting federal public services and win their support in the fight to stop the cuts and save and enhance public services.

We want to leave them thinking hard about what cuts could mean for their constituencies. What services could be cut? Who could lose their jobs? How could this impact the local economy?

Our members are in a unique position to provide MPs with insights into the workings of the federal government, the services citizens depend on from their federal government and the impact that cuts will have on individuals and communities.

Meeting with a member of the opposition?

If you are meeting with a new MP, your goal will be to get to know each other and make sure they know what's at stake. More experienced MPs may already know. Either way, you want them informed and ready to speak out against cuts both before they happen and if they happen, both in the community and in the House of Commons.

Meeting with a Conservative MP?

Here's an opportunity to demonstrate that we are organized and working to bring the community on side to stop the cuts. Emphasize the impact that cuts could have on the local economy, and let them know you are meeting with other stakeholders (Chambers of Commerce, small businesses, community organizations). Leave that MP worried about how cuts could cost them support in their constituency.

What we are asking of MPs

1. **Ask all MPs to sign the “Pledge in support of federal public services” included in this Lobby Kit.** That pledge simply asks MPs to pledge that they will work to ensure federal public services are maintained and improved for all Canadians.
2. **Ask all MPs for a photo with the sign included in this Lobby Kit.** We’ve included a sign saying *“I support federal public services and the people who provide them”* in this kit. At the end of each meeting ask if you can have a group photo of the MP holding up the sign.
3. **Get a commitment from opposition MPs to present our signed petitions in the House of Commons.** Our petition calls on Treasury Board President Tony Clement and the Conservative government to:
 - Reverse plans to cut jobs and public services by \$4-billion.
 - Maintain and improve federal public services to all Canadians.
 - Reverse corporate tax cuts as a cost effective way to reduce the deficit.

Key messages for MPs

Cuts to public services are not the best way to reduce the deficit.

- Public services are a major contributor to the security and prosperity of our families and communities.
- Cuts to services undermine our safety, our health and our environment.
- Eliminating public service jobs reduces household income and consumer spending, which end up hurting businesses in our communities and our economy.

There are better economic alternatives.

1. We need a fair tax system

- We need a fair tax system that will contribute to job creation and the expansion of public services that keep Canada working, such as a national child care program.
- Tax cuts may sound good but they come with a big cost for most of us. The Harper government's corporate tax cuts between 2006 and 2013–14 have cost us a staggering \$220 billion. Now Harper wants to cut the corporate tax rate to 15%. Instead, corporate taxes should be restored to the pre-2008 rate of 21%.

2. We need to control ballooning outsourcing costs

- If the federal government wants to get serious about spending controls, it needs to look critically at its ballooning outsourcing costs.
- Since 2006, personnel outsourcing costs have risen 79%. While federal departments have had their budgets capped, expenditures on outside consultants have not been touched and remain above \$1 billion a year.

3. We need to stop wasting resources

- A patchwork pattern of hiring term employees, refusing to renew their contracts and then re-hiring a whole new crop of people is reproducing itself across the federal public sector. The time and cost required to constantly train new people is significant. Not to mention the stress on workers who have no guarantee of a job beyond the next few months.

4. If it's really about the economy, then think about our contribution

- Eliminating public service jobs reduces household income and consumer spending, which end up hurting businesses in our communities and our economy. Small and medium sized businesses will suffer disproportionately as more federal public service workers end up out of work.
- On top of the obvious social benefit, public services have a tangible financial impact on people's lives. According to a 2009 study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, public services significantly improve the standard of living of each individual Canadian – worth at least 50 per cent of their income.

Tell your MP what is happening in your workplace

Members of Parliament need to hear about how public service cuts are affecting the people in their riding. Consider the following questions to prepare specific information for each MP visit.

- How have the previous expenditure reviews and the departmental budget freezes affected the work you do and the work being done in your department or Agency?
- Are vacant positions not being filled in your workplace? Are workloads increasing and how is this affecting the delivery of services?
- How is the public being affected already? How would more cuts in the workplace affect the delivery of service? What impact would they have on your community?
- Are some services being diminished to the point that they appear to be no longer useful and will become targets for elimination? What are these services and what will be the impact on individuals/communities?
- Do you foresee some services disappearing altogether? What are they and what will be the impact on individuals/communities if they are no longer provided?
- What is the impact of job loss on your family and community?

Background: Why we are lobbying now

The Conservative government plans to slash \$11 billion in government expenditures through 2014. So far, they have been short on details, with Finance Minister Flaherty saying that information will be in the 2012 federal budget. He has been quoted as saying “there’s no question” programs will be cut.

Spending reviews have already been taking place. In 2010, the Conservative government placed a two-year freeze on departmental budgets. A report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer indicates that this freeze, combined with previously announced cuts, will already total \$1.8 billion in annual savings.

The Conservatives have targeted \$720-million worth of program and operating cuts over the next year for a range of areas that include sensitive agencies such as the federal nuclear safety watchdog, the public health agency, another agency that tracks hazardous materials and an as yet unexplained 20 per-cent reduction in the budget for Environment Canada.

The government is attempting to justify the cuts by saying that there will be no impact on services, but there will be. Their claim that cuts can be handled by attrition doesn’t stand up to close scrutiny. Just because workers are eligible to retire does not mean they will.

What the government would consider non-core departments and agencies — things they think from an ideological perspective that the private or voluntary sector should be doing — are likely to be hit hardest. They are chipping away at services they consider have no value: arts, culture, heritage, language, and environment and even the coast guard.

These cuts are less about saving money and more about ideology and a shift to private for-profit federal government service delivery. Public Works documents specifically say that this is the case. If so – where are the savings? Where is the evidence that it will be cheaper?

Instead, we are seeing the privatization trend increasing with the federal government relying more and more on contractors and, in particular, on temporary staffing agency contracts that cost over a billion per year.

Private contractors must build in profit margins which mean higher costs for taxpayers combined with lower salaries and fewer benefits for the people they employ. It’s a lose-lose situation.

This practice also lowers the quality of services delivered to the public, with less accountability and control. Public sector workers are accountable to the people of Canada. Private companies are accountable to their shareholders.

The Conservative government plans to reduce the deficit on the backs of hard working Canadians by slashing essential services. At the same they are giving huge, no-strings tax breaks to corporations, who are making record profits already.

Background: What we know about the cuts so far

Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness

Spending is being reduced by 5.9 per cent to \$414.6-million.

Security Intelligence Review Committee

The budget of this Committee, which monitors the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, is set to increase by only 0.5 per cent.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

The training of new recruits for federal and contract policing has fallen from a high of nearly 1,800 in 2009 to under 300 this year — an 84 per cent drop. Questions about exact cuts go unanswered. The RCMP Public Complaints Commission will receive a spending increase of only 0.4 per cent.

National Research Council

Spending is being cut by 7.8 per cent to \$690,836,000.

Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission

Spending is set to drop by 10 per cent to \$118,264,000. A spokesman at the commission said specified funding to deal with nuclear license fee exemptions for hospitals and university and risk mitigation after the 9/11 terrorist attacks is ending. But the spokesman told *The Hill Times*: “The [commission] is currently working with the government to ensure that it is adequately funded to meet its mandate.”

Hazardous Materials Information Review Commission

The Commission is targeted for a 20 per-cent reduction in its spending, to \$4.5-million from \$4.7-million.

Public Health Agency of Canada

Spending is to be cut by 8.2 per cent to \$622-million.

Public Works and Government Services Canada

As of June 20, 2011, 687 positions are being cut (556 NCR and 131 in regions). Many of the positions being cut are auditors at a time when contracting out is increasing. PSAC members affected – 78.

150 term employees at the public service pension centre in Shediac, New Brunswick. An additional 30 to 40 cuts expected this fall.

The Translation Bureau cut 17 term employees and abolished 23 permanent positions in September. These included both translators and administrative staff.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada

275 positions expected to be eliminated.

Environment Canada

700 employees cut including meteorologists, scientists, chemists and engineer.

50 contract employees cut: technicians and junior scientists supporting senior scientists in the research in the areas of water, atmospheric science and technology are being cut. The job cuts affect four different research groups that do modeling and data analysis work on climate change and on how Canadians can adapt to climate change and shifting weather patterns.

Department of National Defence

Contracting out is increasing and current plans are for the elimination of 2,100 civilian jobs over the next three years. Contracts are going to another (non-unionized) government agency Defense Construction Canada which is playing the role of public works at DND. Some of the jobs may be transferred to the private sector and some may disappear through attrition.

Heritage Canada

There have been cuts right across the board affecting 60 people over the last year. Areas such as Official Languages are trying to carry out with their mandate with fewer staff.

Parks Canada

Some of the funding cuts are being made to work the Agency believes could be handled by volunteers rather than experienced staff. Cuts are also being made to professional staff behind the scenes including scientists, geologists, and naturalists.

National Gallery

In order to find savings, the Gallery has laid off five curators. These cuts follow the elimination of 27 educators and administrative staff and eight guides.

Service Canada

600 positions across Canada will be affected by cuts at Service Canada.

Some specifics in Newfoundland and Labrador: Over the next three years, Service Canada will be reducing the number of employees at its Corner Brook office by 10. Goose Bay will lose 12. The unit in Gander is being closed, the loss of 20 or more positions.

Background: What Tony Clement has been saying

- “Yeah, there are going to be reductions,” he said. “I don’t want to sugar-coat that. There are going to be reductions and we’re going to try and make it as connected as possible to Canadians’ actual expectations of what they want government to do.”
- “It may well mean that some other things that perhaps were important 20 or 30 years ago are less important now and we can logically get out of those things without doing too much harm to the public or to people’s expectations of what government should be doing.”
- “We feel that a lot of the public service numbers can be reduced mainly through attrition. We said that during the campaign, so I’m not moving away from that,” Mr. Clement said. “And obviously the public service, by and large, does a good job for Canadians.” (*Globe and Mail*, May 2011).
- “A review of this magnitude has not been done at the federal level in 15 years, whereas the private sector does it every year,” he said.
- “I reject the notion that this is about ‘slashing and burning.’ This is about identifying inefficiencies within government and making them more efficient, while saving the taxpayers’ hard-earned dollars.
- “Furthermore, given that departments have not even begun to make their presentations on their cost-saving proposals, it is premature to comment as it’s merely speculation.” (*Ottawa Citizen*, June 19, 2011).
- “The first responsibility of any government is to protect the health and safety of their citizens. This is something our government does not take lightly. It should go without saying that the health and safety of Canadians will always be protected by this government.” (June 19, 2011).
- “The first responsibility of any government is to protect the health and safety of their citizens. This is something our government does not take lightly. It should go without saying that the health and safety of Canadians will always be protected by this government.”
- He [Clement] pointed out that the government has committed \$100 million over five years to improve food inspection capacity.
- He added that “expenditures for temporary workers represent a very small portion of total payroll expenditures” and that these workers perform important duties for the government. “That said, if we can find efficiencies we will.” (*Ottawa Citizen*, June 19, 2011).

Myths and realities

Myth: *Reductions are being achieved largely through attrition and non-renewal of term positions and will have little impact on public services or the people who deliver them.*

Reality: It just doesn't make sense to say on the one hand that government departments have to cut by 10 per cent and on the other that it will happen through attrition. There is no guarantee that workers who are eligible to retire will do so in time to create room for "surplused" employees.

When the government says it is going to save money by cutting term positions, it is ignoring a serious reality. Under the rubric of a backlog or an emergency situation, government departments hire term employees to fill in the gaps, refuse to renew their contracts and then re-hire a whole new crop.

This patchwork pattern of hiring term employees, refusing to renew their contracts and then re-hiring a whole new crop of people is reproducing itself across the federal public sector. Under the rubric of a backlog or an emergency situation, government departments hire term employees to fill in the gaps.

Cutting term positions means shutting the door on young Canadians eager to break into permanent jobs and hope to devote their careers to public service.

Relying on attrition and efficiencies will reduce the quality of the services provided by public service workers as they are called upon to provide the same service with less resources and staff. And it's the most vulnerable who feel the effect: people waiting for EI cheques, veterans needing accommodation, immigrants waiting for their citizenship applications to be processed.

Myth: *The cuts being made are about reining in spending and making government more cost-effective and efficient.*

Reality: If this is really about reining in spending, the Harper government should reduce its reliance on expensive temporary help services and invest in public services instead. Despite the capping of departmental budgets, personnel outsourcing costs have remained above \$1 billion a year.

A handful of outsourcing firms have become parallel HR departments for particular federal government departments. There is a double standard at play – a hiring freeze for permanent employees and departments being told to freeze operating budgets, yet contracting costs continue to skyrocket.

Myth: *The reductions being planned will have no impact on public health and safety.*

Reality: Thousands of our members work hard to keep Canadians healthy and safe in positions such as accident inspectors, chemical decontamination technologists, grain-handling regulators, ship and train safety inspectors, counter terrorism specialists, fishery officers, nutritional researchers and ammunition technicians. They inspect food, protect our borders and conduct search and rescue operations

Over the past few years there has already been a steady erosion of regulations by governments who are intent on reducing “red tape”. The 2008 listeria food poisoning outbreak is just one example of the impact deregulation has had on Canadian lives.

Now the Harper government wants fewer inspections and fewer regulations, but 9 out of 10 Canadians say their government should do more to protect the environment, health and safety, and 83% believe that regulations should be enforced by government workers, not the industries themselves.

Myth: *The federal public service has increased in size and is now at record numbers, so it's only natural that we cut back on its size.*

Reality: The facts just don't support this premise. The supply of public services, through program spending, has increased over a number of years in response to rising demand, not due to out of control hiring. Both the population and the economy have outgrown the capacity of governments to provide the services required to keep pace.

Between 1983 and 2010:

- The population expanded by almost 34% (25.4M to 34M)
- The public service increased by about 12.7% (251K to 283K)
- The numbers look large, but the public service in 2010 was only 0.83% of the total population. And that is still below the ratios in the 1980s and early 199s, which were very close to 1%.

(Source: name of 2010 Treasury Board report)

Myth: *Federal program spending has ballooned and must be cut.*

Reality: Federal spending has not kept up with growth in our economy (the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), notwithstanding the significant increase in real program spending due to the recent stimulus program. In fact, as a percentage of GDP it has decreased over the last three decades.

Since 1983:

- Increase in real GDP: almost 100%
- Increase in federal program spending: 60.9%
- Federal program spending as a percentage of GDP:
 - 1983: 0.2%
 - 2010: 0.17%

(Source: name of 2010 Treasury Board report)

Myth: *The federal government must cut spending because Canada's debt and deficit are our #1 problem.*

Reality: The federal government deficit is actually very small. It's just 1.9% of Gross Domestic Product this fiscal year. The Conservatives' themselves acknowledge in their June budget forecasts that this deficit will continue to fall to just 1.1% next year. This fall is mainly due to previously announced cuts to federal program spending and doesn't include the five to 10 per cent cuts the government is forcing on departments now.

Canada has a low level of public debt. Total Canadian net debt (what's left after deducting our assets from what we owe) is just 33.7% of Gross Domestic Product. Compare this to US net debt of 74.8%. Interest rates are at historically low levels so the Government of Canada can borrow (which it does by issuing bonds) at well under a 3% rate of interest. While our fiscal situation is relatively strong compared to other developed countries, we're cutting spending more deeply.

The deficit is minor and our debt is not unreasonable or out of control. Large spending cuts are not needed and will be harmful. There is a real danger of a "double dip" recession if the government's focus remains on rapid – and unnecessary – deficit and debt reduction through damaging spending cuts. Austerity actually stifles growth when private sector investment and consumer demand is weak.

More reality: The real problem is unemployment.

Government stimulus spending investment is drying up and there are signs the economy is slowing down. Unemployment is on the rise. The number of unemployed Canadians in August was a quarter of a million more than it was before the beginning of the "Great Recession" in October 2008.

The latest information (August 2011) from Statistics Canada on the job situation shows that the labour market has stalled with a loss of 5,500 jobs and unemployment up to 7.3%. Meanwhile, the population and labour force continue to grow, leaving an additional 16,000 Canadians without a job. There have been significant reductions in private sector employment (-24,300 in the construction industry; -13,500 in transportation and warehousing). These losses were offset by an increase in public sector employment in the health care sector.

Myth: *We need to keep cutting corporate taxes to create jobs*

Reality: Cutting corporate taxes is the weakest option for creating jobs. Spending on infrastructure has the most impact.

Corporate tax rates have fallen 10% in ten years but business investment has stayed the same, so corporate taxes are not a primary factor in investment decisions.

Instead of cutting corporate taxes, the government should make long term investments in Canada's aging infrastructure and overstretched public services. Cutting corporate taxes is the wrong priority at the wrong time.

Canadian corporations are sitting on a pile of cash: over \$500 billion. The government should support jobs and retirement security for unemployed Canadians and seniors, instead of financing the bloated bank accounts of the corporate sector.

Myth: *the private sector is better at delivering public services.*

Reality: The federal government plays an important role protecting Canadians' rights, health, safety and security through the provision of a wide range of public services. Privatization of these public services undermines the democratic control that citizens have over the public services that their governments are obligated to provide on their behalf.

Privatization hurts both taxpayers and workers because it increases the cost of public services. Contracts with the private sector include many hidden costs, such as the free use of public equipment, infrastructure and public support services in some contracts, as well as the increased human resource, management and administrative costs necessary to deal with the bidding process, administer the contract and monitor the results. Additional costs are passed on to future generations and public wealth is diverted to pay for private profits.

Privatization increases the potential for the misuse of public funds because the Auditor General cannot oversee private spending. Private providers are accountable to shareholders not the public. Workers are paid lower wages while receiving inferior benefits when their jobs are privatized and corporations seek to maximize their profits.

Lobby Meeting Checklist

Before the meeting:

Decide who will be meeting with the MP. You must include members who live in the MPs' riding. Be sure to include both seasoned representatives and new members on your lobby team. Wherever possible bring along a member with a story to tell about how their job is threatened, and how losing their job will affect their life, family and the service they provide.

Contact the MP's office to ask for a meeting; confirm the time and date and tell them who will be coming.

Talk to the political communications officer in your region. Find out what we may know about what this MP and other MPs in his/her party are saying about our issues.

Construct a profile of the MP. A quick check of the internet and FaceBook can tell you what particular interests your MP has and who their connections are in the community. This will help you frame your approach and discussion at the meeting. If the MP is unresponsive, this information will help you determine which groups or individuals in the community you need to make connections with and convince them to influence the MP in support of our positions.

Meet with your team to prepare for the meeting to:

- review the points you will raise with the MP;
- pull together examples (stories) of how cuts in services are affecting the public, particularly in the MP's riding;
- review answers to possible objections the MP may raise;
- decide what commitments you want to obtain from the MP;
- determine who will say what during the meeting.

During the meeting:

- Confirm at the outset how long you have with the MP and plan accordingly.
- Present your position clearly and don't be sidetracked.
- Listen well but don't let the MP talk so much that you don't get a chance.
- Answer questions to the best of your ability. Make a commitment to follow-up if you don't have immediate answers.
- Ask the MP to take some specific action(s), and take very accurate notes when they explain why they will or won't take those actions (such as signing the pledge or presenting our petition). If you aren't sure you got the quote right, ask the MP to repeat it.

After the meeting:

- Debrief with your team right after the meeting. Decide what follow-up action is needed, who will do it and when.

- Send a follow-up letter thanking the MP for the meeting and support. Provide any follow-up information you agreed to provide. Remind the MP of the actions she or he agreed to take.

* Monitor the MP's performance on this issue. If the MP is negative or hostile to our position on public service cuts, approach potential allies in the riding, particularly those who have influence with the MP. Explain the impact of the cuts in the riding and ask them to contact the MP. In addition to groups affected by the cuts, other allies could include, e.g. chambers of commerce, local businesses, and city councillors.

Report to the PSAC database

The union is keeping a data base of information on meetings with MPs and any other relevant information.

It's important that you prepare a report on each meeting with an MP. Make sure this responsibility is assigned before the meeting.

Each report should contain the following information:

- When the meeting took place
- Who was there: PSAC members and staff and allies you may have invited, the MP and any of her/his staff
- What you talked about
- Key statements by the MP. Make sure you record these accurately.
- Any commitments made by the MP. Did they sign the pledge? Did they agree to have their photo taken supporting public services and the people who provide them. If not, did they say why they would not? Again, be sure to include accurate quotes.
- Any follow-up tasks.

Your report should be completed as soon as possible after every meeting and sent to your regional political communications officer, and to Louise Laporte (laportl@psac.com) and France Belanger (belangf@psac.com).

Resources to prepare for MP meetings

PSAC's publication **Take Action! Everything you need to know to mobilize workers to win positive change** (pages 15-16), contains tips on setting up meetings with MPs, preparing for the meeting, lobbying and follow-up.

Pledge in support of public services

Federal public services play a vital role in keeping us safe and healthy, protecting the environment and sustaining economies in communities like mine. As a Member of Parliament serving a diverse constituency I pledge to work to ensure federal public services are maintained and improved for all Canadians.

Signed,

Member of Parliament for

**I support federal
public services
and the people
who provide them.**



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