

ONTARIO COUNCIL NEWSLETTER



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PSAC ONTARIO

The Importance of Political Action



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www.pfac.com/ontario



Improving our collective agreements goes beyond our workplaces and extends into our homes and into our communities. Historically, Canada's unions have helped create some of the best collectively-bargained provisions into law, so that all Canadians could enjoy them. Unions fought for better unemployment benefits and safety regulations; challenged inequality, and made our country a better place to live.

To achieve these gains, working people through their unions fought for democratic rights in our workplaces and in our political structures. This legacy of democracy within unions and the promotion of democratic values continues today.

To protect and build upon our gains, our union must remain politically active. With a government that has shown that it will take away our rights unilaterally; how can bargaining not be political?

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Bill C-377: Back and Badder than Ever

In the last legislative session, a private member's bill supported by the Conservative caucus sought to fundamentally violate the civil rights of labour organizations by:

- Forcing unions to officially report to the CRA routine expenditures;
- Boggling down our staff and local activists with red tape, leaving them less time and money to fight for your interests;
- Targeting unions only! Leaving employers, political parties, charities, or right-wing organizations like the Fraser Institute or CFIB out of these requirements;
- Needlessly duplicating the already-high level of transparency found in existing laws and union practices;
- Giving employers the details of our strike and legal funds to that they can plan the right moment to push for concessions or violate our rights.

The original C-377 was forced through numerous reforms by the Senate, but died at the end of the last session during Harper's prorogation of government. It's making a comeback, and likely without any of the significant amendments.

What can you do to help?

- Tell family, friends, coworkers, and neighbours about the law, what it does, and why it is harmful to our democracy;
- Get involved in your local, PSAC Area Council and District Labour Council;
- Write a letter to your MP expressing your disdain for the bill, and write to those senators who stood up to it last time.



Bill C-525: Barriers to Union Organization in the Federal Public Sector

In the federal sector, forming a union isn't easy, and if the current government gets its way, it's about to get even harder. As it stands, all you need to do to certify a local is get a majority of workers to sign a union card. The proposed changes however, will make a vote mandatory, even after a majority of workers sign a card.

This is problematic for several reasons:

- It makes organizing harder by adding another barrier between workers and their rights;
- The vote gives the employer the opportunity to intimidate and manipulate workers who signed cards right up until the actual vote;
- It has been proven that provinces with this system find organizing unions harder;
- The bill has a provision that counts every non-voter as implicitly voting against the union. This means that if 49.9% of the local votes, and all vote union, the certification will still be denied;
- It makes decertification much easier: non-voters, even in a decertification vote, are considered automatically against the union

In short, the bill is a blatant attempt to make unionization efforts nothing short of impossible, and make decertification much easier. It looks to create voting standards replicated nowhere else in our society, including Parliament itself.





Bill C-4: a budget implementation act masquerading as an assault on your rights!

Generally, a budget implementation bill is meant to be a routine piece of legislation. With this government, however, it is another opportunity to introduce new anti-labour laws without a full debate before our representatives in the House of Commons.

Specific areas of concern for our membership include:

- It drastically increases the employer's right to classify workers as essential, and in workplaces with more than 80% of workers deemed essential, the right to strike will be removed;
- A worker deemed essential will now have to do all their duties during a strike (not just essential work);
- It reduces the effectiveness, scope, and impartiality of arbitration boards, giving them less independence to render fair decisions, and limiting them on the factors they can adjudicate;
- It also limits heavily the recourse laid off workers have in terms of discrimination and appeals, and makes the grievance process unnecessarily repetitive and costly due to limitations in policy grievances;
- It not only takes power from experienced and qualified health and safety officers, giving it to the Minister, but it also narrows your right to refuse unsafe work. Bill C-4 would only allow the refusal of imminent danger, leaving members who may be exposed to dangerous chemicals at risk.



The Bigger Picture

What do all these new laws mean? They mean our members will have fewer protections, fewer rights, and will make bargaining a whole lot more difficult! They are part and parcel of the same ideology that leaves union organizers dead in Central America, and textile workers crushed in Bangladesh.

There was a time in history, only a few generations ago, when the rise of the working class was heralded across the western world, striking fear into the hearts of Liberal and Conservative politicians. Workers were claiming power by joining together and forming strong unions that demanded that they were respected and shared in the wealth their labour created.

Unless we put up a fight against these attacks, we will see a very real decline in the quality of life for the average Canadian - so let's not let this happen!

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Resources for Action

Contact your Member of Parliament.
Mail may be sent postage-free to any Member of Parliament at the following address:

Name of Member of Parliament
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada
K1A 0A6



Contact your Senator.
Mail may be sent postage-free to any senator at the following address:

Name of senator
The Senate of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada
K1A 0A4



To locate your Member of Parliament and/or Senators, as well as the location of their Constituency Office(s) and email addresses, go to: www.parl.gc.ca/senatorsmembers.aspx?Language=E



Get involved with your District Labour Council.
To locate the nearest one, go to:
www.canadianlabour.ca and click on
“Federations and Labour Councils” under
“Navigate to...” at the bottom of the page.



Canadian Labour Congress
Congrès du travail du Canada

Join your local PSAC Area Council or Regional Committees: <http://ontario.psaac.com>



No Matter how You do it—GET INVOLVED!

