

ONTARIO COUNCIL NEWSLETTER



VOLUME I ISSUES

APRIL, 2014

PSAC ONTARIO

The Importance of Political Action



Our past Ontario Council Newsletters have all had a central theme to them, from introducing the Council and its functions, to issues of health, safety and stress.

This particular issue looks at how many new laws at the federal level are detrimental to our union, and to ourselves.

In short, this issue seeks to demonstrate that without effective lobbying and political action around our issues, we won't see the changes we need for a safe workplace, a fair retirement, and a life of dignity.



Find us online!
www.pfac.com/ontario



In this Issue:	
The Importance of Sick Leave	2
Bill C-4 and the Effects on Bargaining	3
The Importance of Good Pensions	3
Bargaining is Political	4





The Importance of Sick Leave

"The Public Service suffers from exceedingly high levels of absenteeism"
 Tony Clement,
 June 10/13

Clement

If you listen to the government and Treasury Board, you hear a tale of public servants abusing sick leave, taking many more days than workers in the private sector, and costing the taxpayer untold sums of money. The reality is that this government is lying.

The government data used to make these claims is faulty at best. Not only do their numbers include time missed because of injury, it also includes unpaid leave.

Furthermore, comparisons between the private and public sector have little merit.

Workers are forced to use up their sick leave bank before taking long-term disability, which means that day-to-day sick leave is mixed in with long term illness. Also, many workers in the private sector are forced to work sick because they do not have sick leave and simply cannot afford to miss work.

Members have fought hard for sick leave and won these provisions in collective bargaining. All forms of sick leave still require approval from management, and often require documentation from a medical professional—just like in the private sector.

The question shouldn't be if we have too much sick leave, but why other workers have none or very few? Why should people have to work sick? Choose between income security and personal health? Be concerned that people will bring infectious diseases to the office?

Why should we demonize the sick as moochers, when they want time off to recover and get back to doing what they do best—serving the public? The government isn't asking these questions, because the answers don't fit their low-wage, no benefit, and anti-union agenda.

A Message from
 PSAC National President

SICK LEAVE

*It's our negotiated right
 Back Off!*





Bill and the Effects on Bargaining

We spoke about Bill C-4 in our last issue, specifically on how it attacks a worker’s right to refuse unsafe work; raising the bar from potential danger to experiencing an “imminent or serious threat to life or health of a person.”

Equally serious is the Bill’s effects on bargaining. First, it allows the government to unilaterally determine whether a worker is essential, and force upon any bargaining unit with more than 80% essential workers binding arbitration. Workers in these units will lose the right to strike, even if they are deemed non-essential.

Further, changes to arbitration have been enacted. Now an arbitrator has to prioritize the government’s fiscal position (as put forward by the government) and economic priorities. Issues of equity, fairness, and equality will hold less sway. Now, if the government says they can’t afford something, or the worker wouldn’t make more somewhere else, arbitrators must defer to those factors first and foremost.

In essence, the government is inherently politicizing the bargaining process by essentially making our members bargain, not simply against their employer, but against the budget and other workplaces. In short, Bill C-4 is purposefully designed to chip away at bargaining and our right to strike, while changing the arbitration process in the employer’s favour.



The Importance of Good Pensions: For This Generation and the Next

The topic of pensions has become even more important, due to an influx of workers approaching retirement, and because others are entering an economy in which good pensions are increasingly rare. Young people are facing a future where they won’t have what their parents had.

Here are just some of the key reasons why good pensions matter for you, your children, your community, and the economy:

- In the aftermath of two world wars and an unprecedented depression, workers the world over were fed up: they demanded fairness at work, and dignity in their old age and retirement. Strikes, pickets and job actions across the world led to the formation of good pensions.
- While boomers grew into an economy of unparalleled opportunity, they are now seeing their children who, despite working and studying hard, are finding less opportunities exist. Good jobs with good pensions would go a long way towards helping young people achieve financial independence, and helping their parents out in the process.
- Good pensions correlate with a more just and equal distribution of wealth, which helps consumer spending and grows the economy.

Good pensions offer stability and reduce senior poverty.



Bargaining is Political



We have seen the Harper Conservative government pass back to work legislation with Air Canada, CP Rail and Canada Post. With our own members who work for the Canada Border Service Agency, the government tried to circumvent the bargaining process by forcing an illegal vote. With these examples and many others, how can members continue to ask the importance of political action?

Bargaining is done not just at the negotiations table. It is carried out by members taking actions in their workplaces, taking part in demonstrations and pickets, in the media and with our political representatives.

The limitations on bargaining brought by the Conservatives in Bill C-4 is a prime example of how quickly our rights and ability to negotiate are taken away by politics. In Wisconsin, the passing of Right to Work legislation, similar to the policies the Progressive Conservatives hope to bring to Ontario, caused massive damage to the state's public sector unions.

The Right to Work laws passed in Wisconsin have taken away the Wisconsin State Employees Union's ability to bargain pensions, health coverage, safety, hours of work, sick leave or vacations. All the union can negotiate is base pay and even that is limited by the law, which states that raises cannot exceed inflation.

Wisconsin formed part of the birth of the union movement in the U.S. and now look at what's happened.

The connection between bargaining and politics is fundamental and that's why we ask our members to get politically engaged.



PSAC
Ontario

PSAC Ontario Convention
June 6 –8, 2014
Delta Mississauga

