

# ONTARIO COUNCIL NEWSLETTER



VOLUME I ISSUE 3

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## PSAC ONTARIO

We hope you enjoy the third issue of the PSAC Ontario Council Newsletter. While our first two issues focused on the struggles facing our union and issues within our workplaces, this issue seeks to expand our view.

Our struggles are larger than our workplaces; they are linked to anti-union governments and employers. Working people are being targeted to clear the path for inadequate wages, benefits, and job security. Right-to-work laws, back-to-work legislation, and unsafe workspaces are part of a larger threat against public services, living standards, and the international solidarity of working people.



Leadership Meetings, clockwise from the top:  
Kingston, Kitchener,  
Toronto, Sault Ste. Marie,  
Hamilton





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### Right-to-work: Where did it come from, what is it, and why is it wrong?

When you hear the words “right-to-work,” there is a positive suggestion, almost as if this is a human rights campaign. However, this deceptive and misleading name has more to do with destroying workers rights and the unions that protect them.

#### Right-to-work laws can take many forms including:

1. Outlaw mandatory dues, to create division through freeloading
2. Outlaw employer collection of dues, forcing unions to spend time on collection and administration
3. Outlaw dues for political activity, so unions cannot lobby governments to avoid interference in collective bargaining
4. Change how unions are certified, so it is harder for workers to join a union



These laws are meant to diminish union resources, create a divide in the workplace, and prevent unions from being able to represent their members effectively. This union-busting tactic has been imported from the USA, where 24 out of the 50 states now have them. This has led to lower rates of pay, a decline in benefits and pensions and diminished the ability of unions to defend their members.

Everyone benefits in a unionized workplace from the collective agreement negotiated. Workers have the choice to join the union or not, but no one has the right to freeload.

#### What "Right to Work" Laws Actually Do

<b>Wages:</b>	<b>LOWER</b>	Average worker in RTW state makes about <b>\$5,333 a year less</b> than those in free bargaining states.
<b>Health Benefits:</b>	<b>FEWER</b>	<b>21% more people lack health insurance</b> in RTW states compared to free bargaining states.
<b>Poverty Rate:</b>	<b>HIGHER</b>	RTW states have a <b>poverty rate of 12.5%</b> , compared to 10.2% in free bargaining states.
<b>Workplace Fatalities:</b>	<b>MORE</b>	<b>The rate of workplace deaths is 51% higher</b> in RTW states, where unions can't speak up on behalf of workers.

Source: <http://www.aflcio.org/content/download/4358/46418/version/1/file/rtw.pdf>

#### Of the **10** states with the **HIGHEST POVERTY RATES** **8** of them are so-called **"RIGHT TO WORK" states\***

<b>Mississippi: 20.1%</b>	<b>Arkansas: 15.9%</b>
<b>Louisiana: 18.3%</b>	<b>Oklahoma: 15.6%</b>
<b>Alabama: 16.7%</b>	<b>Arizona: 15.2%</b>
<b>Texas: 16.2%</b>	<b>Tennessee: 15.0%</b>

\*Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Not Fox, not MSNBC. The United States Census.



**STANDING TOGETHER**  
for our public services



## The Hypocrisy and Ultimate Aims of Bill C-377



Bill C-377 is a private member's bill put forward by Conservative Member of Parliament Russ Hiebert. While it has passed through the House of Commons, the Senate has just amended this legislation and sent it back to the House of Commons. Even with the amendments proposed, this Bill essentially requires unions to disclose unprecedented levels of financial information to the Canada Revenue Agency.

### This bill is unfair for 3 key reasons:

**Unions are the only group being targeted.** Many groups, including political parties, professional organizations, registered charities, religious institutions, and private businesses obtain tax benefits, and yet they are not required to file reports in the same way.

**Unions already deliver regular financial updates to their members at General Meetings and Conventions.** By making this information public, employers can see sensitive information during bargaining, such as how much is in our strike fund.

**Waste of money.** The bill will cost a great deal to administer, follow and enforce. Instead of our government going after corporations who don't pay their fair share of taxes or wealthy Canadians who hide their money overseas, they are targeting unions, who are non-for profit defenders of workers rights.

The real goal here is nothing more than union busting, by a Conservative government that is extending its powers unjustly to silence opposition.



## The Battle for Sick Leave



On June 10, Treasury Board President Tony Clement announced the government's plans to overhaul our current system for sick leave. Using faulty statistics, he reported that the average public sector worker uses over 18 sick days per year, compared to 6.7 used by the average private sector worker.

It's a case of comparing apples and oranges, but it's catching the public's attention. No doubt the government is hoping it will deflect attention from their current problems in the Senate.

Robyn Benson, PSAC National President, has declared, "Sick leave is a negotiated benefit that is a part of our Collective Agreements. We won't trade it, sell it, swap it, lose it or give it away."

## The Plight of Bangladesh Clothing Workers, and why it Matters



You may have heard about a factory collapse in Bangladesh, which killed over a thousand workers. The factory was noted to be unsafe, but ruthless employers and weak regulations left workers with little choice but to risk their lives to feed their children. Sadly, many Canadian companies (including Loblaw's owned Joe Fresh) have taken advantage of the low minimum wage labour and anti-union policies that fostered this tragedy.

The struggle for workers rights is international. We cannot ignore what is happening in other parts of the world, because our struggles are linked. The loss of the textile industry in Canada, as well as manufacturing and many other industries, are from large multi-national corporations shipping jobs overseas to take advantage of cheap labour and selling those products back to Canadians at a larger profit.

### Therefore, we are all part of the problem and of the solution:

- Buy union-made clothes: In these poorer nations, the need for a union is often even greater, and where they have unions, workers enjoy much higher wages and job safety.
- Push for better international safety regulations: Political pressure should be put on governments and major corporations who benefit from these labour conditions.
- Support international labour solidarity: The attack on workers rights is happening all across the globe. By improving working conditions internationally we set labour standards higher everywhere.

Bangladesh and the struggle of workers internationally matter. Canadians must be more conscious of how we are connected to all workers in this new globalized world. By forging an international alliance against corrupt bosses and governments we make our local and global communities, better.



### 2013 Labour Day Call-Out

PSAC Area Councils are preparing for the 2013 Labour Day events across Ontario.

**Contact your Area Council representative and get involved!**

<http://ontario.pvac.com/pvac-ontario-area-council>