

Our Healthcare is Not for Sale!

The Financial Accountability Office of Ontario has reported that since the Ford government came to power, the government has underspent billions of dollars on our healthcare system. This has taken place in the context of a global pandemic and calls for more support from doctors, nurses and frontline staff. Even the federal government’s providing of billions of dollars to the province went unspent.

Shocked? You shouldn’t be because this is the intent of the Conservative government - to privatize our healthcare system and package this as a lucrative opportunity for big business to cash in on people in their most vulnerable time.

They have created a “manufactured crisis” of long wait times to justify to the public that privatization will make our system better. In fact, there have been many studies showing that privatization leads to longer wait times, lower quality care and restrictive access for many poor and working-class people.

The government has now allowed the use of for-profit clinics, paying them more to do services than what they cost in our public system. This creates an incentive for doctors, nurses and healthcare professionals to leave the public system and go work for these private clinics for better wages.

The only way to stop this from continuing is to make sure we vote Ford’s Conservatives out of power in the next election. While this government is in power our healthcare system is in jeopardy and once privatization is allowed to creep in, our public system will continue to degrade.

Healthcare is a basic human right that should not be dependent on how much money you make. Allowing corporations to profit off sickness and disease is disgusting and goes against the basic principles of justice and morality.

Craig Reynolds,
PSAC Ontario
Regional Executive
Vice-President



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Strikes are Part of Labour’s History

There are many segments of Canadian union history that aren’t well known. One of them was the Coal Miner’s Strike of 1922 in Canada and the United States.

In Cape Breton coal was a leading industry. And the industry showed their might in supplying their workers with homes that they lived in, but whose rent was taken directly out of their wages. The employer also had “a company store” in which items that the coal miners and their families couldn’t make, or grow were sold at prices dictated by the company. The money was also taken directly out of the coal miner’s pay leaving them with either no money at all from their labour or with a growing debt.

In March of 1925, coal miners went on strike for better wages and to ensure the union was officially recognized. What happened next was a story of women and children being evicted from their homes in the winter.

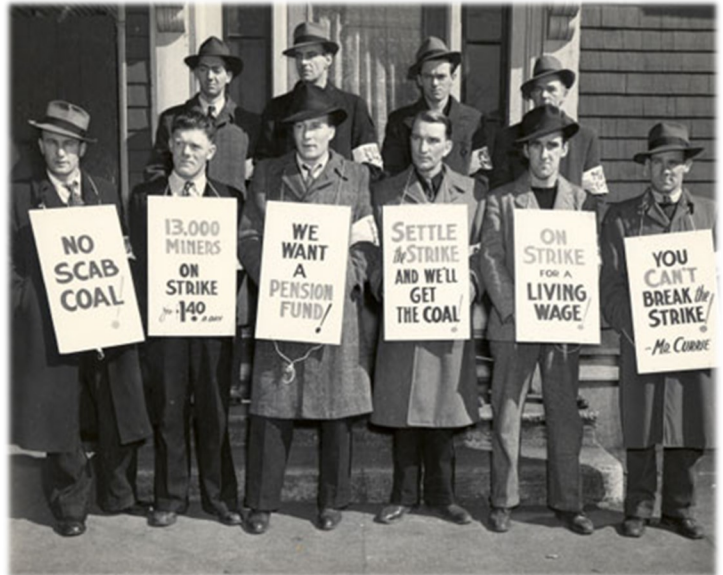
On June 11th of that year coal miners stormed the power plant to force the mining company to bargain and recognize the union. What resulted was the coal mining giant sending armed company police to break up the deadlock. William Davis, father of nine who was trying to get food for his youngest child was killed in the ensuing violence and many others were injured.

Although the fight with the Besco corporation did not end that day, the workers managed to achieve recognition for their union and William Davis Day has been honoured in Cape Breton since.

*“Let’s see now — how should I begin —
Here lies a monster born of sin,
Of graft, corruption, fraud, and worse —
Adieu, adieu, Cape Breton’s curse”*

Dawn Fraser, Labour Poet

Teresa McGillivray, Members with Disabilities Representative



Striking coal miners during the United Mine Workers’ coal strike of 1922



PSAC Ontario Health and Safety Conference



In October of 2022, I was happy to Chair and welcome Delegates to the PSAC Ontario Regional Health and Safety Conference in Toronto. This was the first in-person event in Ontario since the lockdown and everyone agreed it was nice to see people in 3D again.

The theme of the Conference was 'But First.... Mental Health', as the Conference Organizing Committee agreed that, after a difficult couple of years, mental health should be our focus.

Delegates were treated to guest speakers who spoke on topics such as Environmental Racism and Domestic Violence, as well as attending smaller workshops on Sunday morning. There was a social event where delegates were able to meet, greet, and eat! The staff and organizing committee did a great job keeping everything on track and it was a truly great event.

Leslie Searl, Region 5 (GTA) and Chair, Ontario Regional Health and Safety Committee





Rally to End Graduate Student Poverty at Western University



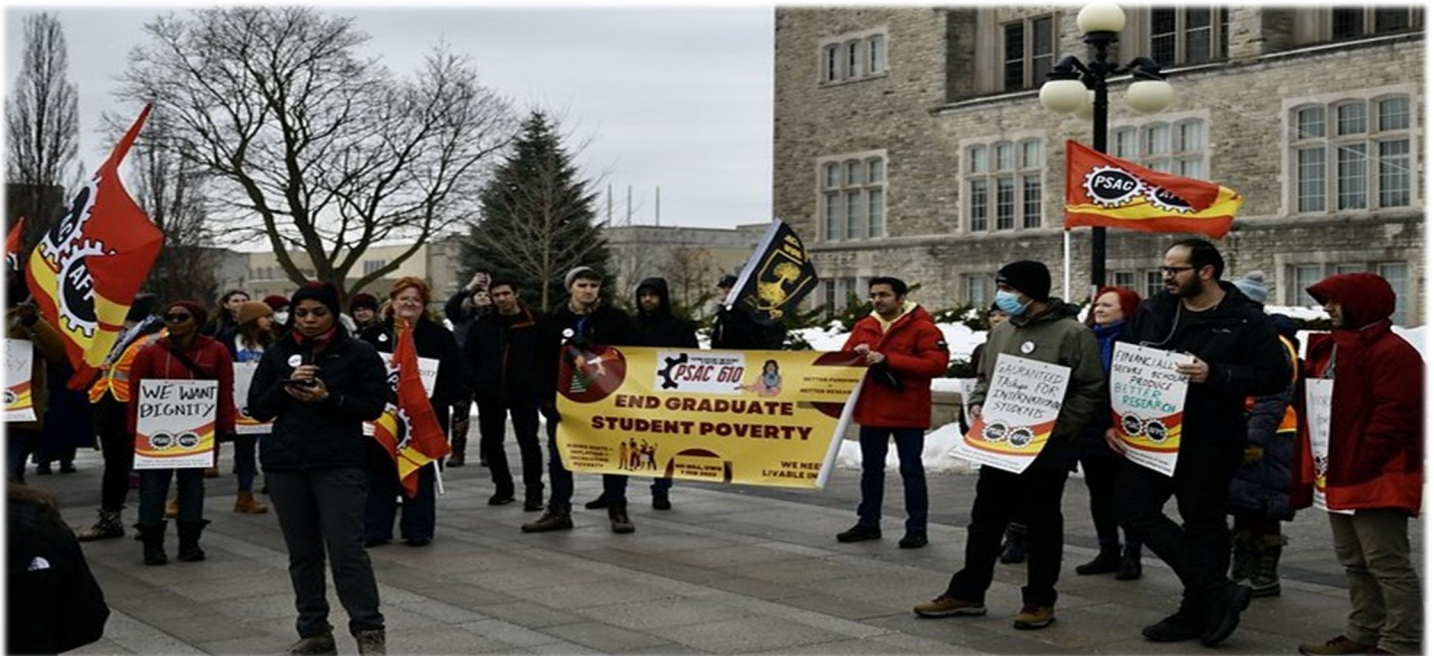
It was heartening to see so many people at our “Rally to End Graduate Student Poverty” on February 7, 2023 at Western University in London. A minimum wage job in Ontario earns around \$30,000 per year. The government recognizes that the minimum an individual needs to support themselves is nearly \$26000 per year. And this was in 2020, before the record-high inflation and rising rent costs.

Most of our members earn around \$13,000 a year, and many earn even less. On this meagre income, we are expected to study, to work as teaching assistants, to teach undergrads, and to publish research.

This is work that Western University profits from. This is work which Western makes fancy pamphlets to advertise, and it is our work upon which Western maintains its reputation and credibility.

I am angry because we have repeatedly made our concerns known to Western over the last year. We’ve had enough excuses and bureaucracy and we want a dignified life so that we can do the work we came here to do, and we want it NOW!

PSAC DCL 610 has taken up this fight because the vast majority of our members are graduate students. Labour unions are, and always have been, the last line of defence against injustice and exploitation.



PSAC DCL 901 at Queens University and PSAC DCL 555 at Ontario Tech University also staged similar rallies. This is the beginning of a movement that will continue until we have won. Our demands are clear, we want to be paid enough to do our work and our studies and live a life of dignity—the bare minimum, the amount that we need to afford a place to stay and to feed our families and take care of our children.

Karuna Dsouza, DCL Academic Sector Workers



Members' Corner

Anti-Racism Education, Training and Leadership Among Top Priorities



The 2023 Ontario Racially Visible Conference was held from February 3 to 5, 2023, and was planned around creating synergy from collective efforts. The 3-day conference was attended by more than 70 members, representing different Components and DCLs, and took place in Toronto.

National Executive Vice-President Sharon DeSousa, Regional Executive Vice-President Craig Reynolds, and Racially Visible Members Representative, Trisha Roach, spoke at the event and shared the Union's efforts to support the needs of its members.



The event offered two workshops preparing participants for leadership roles within our union and announced elected representatives of PSAC will now be required to complete mandatory anti-oppression training. The Anti-Racism plan is in the making that includes a trauma-informed approach and will push for the Union's outreach, consultation, advocacy, and anti-racism efforts, among other needs.

Jayshal (Jay) Sood



We Need Remote Work Options that Make Sense



The last of couple of months have been challenging with the government's return-to-the-office order. The ridiculous announcement issued a mandatory return-to-the-office, requiring all employees of the core public administration to return to their workplaces for 2-3 days per week, or 40-60% of their working time.

Despite their effort to sabotage our morale during the holiday season, we must thank them for uniting and igniting our passion to fight back. We are ready to do what it takes, and we must show the employer, **WE DESERVE BETTER!**

Thu Trinh, Region 4 (Southwestern) Representative



Members' Corner

We Need More Programs and Public Services for Support

I would like to raise awareness in support of my best friend of 25+ years, with her consent. She is a single mom who has been placed in a very dangerous, potentially life threatening situation within her home. Her 20-year-old son has intellectual disabilities. Over the last year he has become aggressive towards her. He is no longer a child; he has grown into a strong young man. Seeing what she has gone through to seek help has been frustrating, to say the least. Unless you have lived it, it is unimaginable the struggles that exist.

On January 30th I drove to Ottawa and accompanied my friend to surrender her son to the hospital. We had lengthy conversations with the staff about the hospital setting not being the place for him.

He has been on every waiting list in Eastern Ontario for group homes for over 2 years! Meanwhile, he is now sitting with psychiatric patients, not growing or learning as he should be. He is getting no life skills whatsoever.

After returning home from Ottawa, I came across this [article](#). This woman was in the same situation as my friend and her son took her life. The system failed this family in every way!

My friend is NOT alone! Developmental Services Ontario are the puppet masters of these services. The system is failing! I have written to several MPPs demanding more funding be allocated to group homes. I am asking for others to do the same. Here is the link for my [Facebook post](#) to message MPPs.

Tara Asselstine, UNDE Local 641



My friend and her son, Lyndz and Jeremy.

[Find mental health support | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca)



Racism Impacts Mental Health



The Mental Health Commission of Canada's 2012 report recommended the adoption of psychological health and safety standards in Canadian workplaces. In 2013 the Commission worked with the Bureau de normalisation du Quebec to develop a National Standard which is comprised of "a set of voluntary guidelines, tools and resources intended to guide organizations in preventing psychological harm at work."

These 14 factors which, if existent in the workplace, have the potential to prevent psychological harm within the organizational culture, leadership, civility and respect, psychological demands, growth and development, recognition and reward, involvement and influence, workload management, engagement, balance, psychological protection and protection of physical safety. The fourteenth standard has not been clearly defined but has only been referenced as "any other chronic stressor that may be identified by workers."

In spite of the effects of racism on members of our racialized community, anti-racism has not been clearly defined as one of the factors in the National Standard. Racial inequalities in the workplace can result in decreased productivity. It is known that racial trauma can produce symptoms similar to those of post-traumatic stress disorder which result in mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. It also has physical effects such as stomach aches, headaches and rapid heartbeat. Studies have shown that workers who encounter micro-aggressions are left feeling hurt, angry and deflated. These interactions are harder to identify but have a lasting physical and mental impact. This is especially true when organizations do not have policies and processes in place to punish racism, hence exhibiting institutional racism.

Trisha Roach, Racially Visible Members Representative

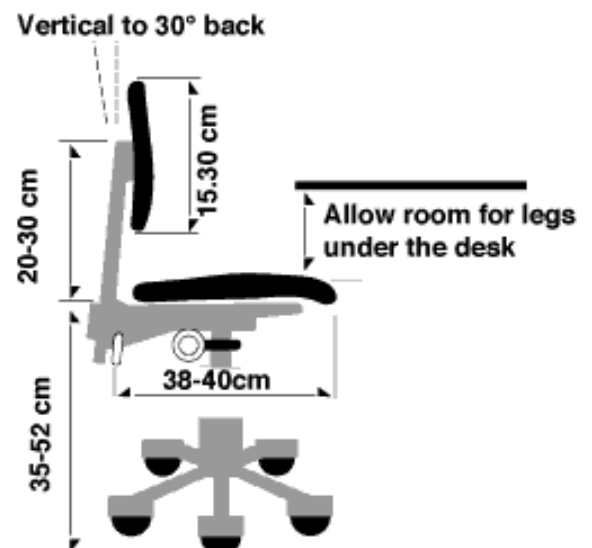
Health and Safety is Key

Health and safety must be a priority for all of us. As a health and safety committee member, I advocate on behalf of our members the need for employers to ensure our membership is working in a safe environment.

This includes home offices, which need to comply with ergonomic needs. The lack of office chairs being removed from employer offices demonstrates that many employees have not requested the basic necessities, or been granted them.

Collective bargaining to secure strong remote work policies that integrate ergonomic needs are essential. Support your health by supporting our bargaining teams and Local Health and Safety Committees. Solidarity works!

Trevis Carey, Region 2 (Northeastern) Representative





Council Member's Bio



I was born a coal miners' daughter and my great grandparents were coal miners. I am very proud of this heritage and its link to the labour movement. Members of my family have been staunch union activists for decades and I am honoured to join their ranks.

As a member who suffered a permanent workplace injury, I know what it feels like to fight against the employer. I don't want anyone to have to go through a similar fight alone. So, it's been a natural fit for me to join the Members with Disabilities Action Committee (MDAC) in Hamilton.

COVID really disrupted our Committee's ability to connect with the membership but we have learned to use new virtual tools for engagement. Thankfully this year things have opened up, so we have the opportunity to get together in person and yet we provide hybrid virtual options to maximize participation.

I am excited about the opportunity to work as the Representative for Members with Disabilities on the Ontario Region Council. I will reach out to other MDAC committees to plan events across Ontario that will allow those with disabilities to become part of a bigger family.

Teresa McGillivray, Members with Disabilities Representative

Psychological Health and Safety Hazards & Precarious Work



The PSAC Ontario Regional Council Health and Safety Committee encourages you to promote workplace inspection tools for psychological hazards in precarious workplaces.

Do you remember when jobs had stability and when one person's income could afford the rent, bills, and food costs?

Since neoliberalism and free trade agreements, we have seen a steady decline in jobs that offer stability and a living wage. More short-term contracts with limited possibilities of full-time employment are now the norm.

When people don't have financial security, savings, benefits, or a pension, there are health and safety risks. Precarious work causes stress, anxiety, depression, and physical ailments.

Please let your [PSAC Ontario Council Health and Safety Committee](#) know if you need access to the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (the Standard) with the workplace inspection tools for psychological hazards.

Marie Polgar-Matthews, Region 5 (GTA) Representative

[Health and Safety | Public Service Alliance of Canada \(psacunion.ca\)](https://psacunion.ca)



Our Healthcare is Not for Sale

On December 12, 2022, I participated in a protest organized by the [Ontario Health Coalition \(OHA\)](#) as part of a province-wide demonstration. Alongside other members of OHA and those from the Ontario Nurses Association (ONA), we gathered outside the Windsor Regional Hospital to voice our concerns about the Ford government's handling of the healthcare crisis.

Our demands included increased funding for hospitals and an end to healthcare privatization. According to the OHA, Ontario needs over 50,000 long-term care staff and more than 40,000 hospital staff. ONA also emphasized the impact on mental health from increased workloads for healthcare workers.

Unions play a crucial role in advocating for healthcare workers' rights and ensuring fair treatment. Through collective bargaining and advocacy, unions have secured better working conditions, pay, and access to health and safety resources for their members. Unionized healthcare workers are better equipped to navigate the challenges of the industry and have the support and solidarity of their unions in difficult situations. As the healthcare crisis continues to escalate, it's important for unions to continue to stand up for their members and push for improvements in our public healthcare system.

Barry Lamont, Region 4 (Southwestern) Representative



Labour-Management Consultation: Let's Talk!

The Joint Learning Program (JLP) has launched the sixth in its Empowering Conversations discussion series: **Labour-Management Consultation: Let's Talk!**

The series was developed to provide an orientation to members of labour-management consultation committees across the federal public service (Core Public Administration) with all new materials and exciting new activities.

This 7-hour discussion will support labour-management consultation, improve labour relations and strengthen the parties' capacity to positively shape a changing workplace.

This *Empowering Conversation* series is designed for intact labour-management committees to be held via videoconference.

To host a facilitated discussion from the *Empowering Conversations* series, please submit a request on the [JLP website](#).





Number One Proudest Union Moment

It was Tuesday, April 25th, about 1:15 am and I thought I would get to bed early(er), for a change. Sleep had become an option, rather than a guarantee during the strike. As Area Coordinator for the Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge and Guelph area, I found that keeping members apprised of what was happening was one of my most important duties. Information often came very late, so by the time I had updated the Facebook page, emailed the Picket Line Team (Strike and Picket Captains), and sent an email to my members, I was often heading to bed very late.

This night, it occurred to me that we would soon be entering the second week of the strike and I felt that we should do something to commemorate that milestone. How about a march through downtown Kitchener, with stops at the workplaces that are located nearby?

And that's how it started—from the sleep-deprived mind of a Union activist.

By noon on Wednesday, April 26th, we had over 700 members and local union affiliates lined up for a march through downtown Kitchener. We left the main Canada Revenue Agency building and marched to the second CRA location, where we stopped to provide some background for the issues faced by the Union of Taxation Employees. Our next stop was at Immigration, where a Canada Employment and Immigration Union member informed the crowd of their particular issues with the employer. Then it was off to Service Canada, where another CEIU member provided some insight into the issues encountered by members there. Our final stop was at the Passport office, where the Area Coordinator spoke briefly about issues there, and thanked everyone for participating, before we returned to our picket location.

The members were amazing!!! Marching, chanting, making noise and supporting our Bargaining Teams! My number one proudest Union moment!!

Melanee Jessup, Alternate Regional Executive Vice-President

