**REPORT OF THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL**

**HEALTH, SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**NOVEMBER 13, 2015**

**PRESENT:** Jody LaPierre Bill Bennett

Steve Johnson Colleen Hodder

Brian Oldford Nancy MacLean, PSAC Staff Advisor

Jeannie Baldwin, REVP

**REGRETS:** Nathalie Paulin

**1. National Bullying Awareness Campaign**

The National Bullying Awareness Campaign commenced in September and all areas of the campaign are to be completed by December 31, 2015. The purpose of the campaign is to provide information and education so that PSAC Locals can better enforce Part II of the *Canada Labour Code* and Part XX of the *Canada Occupational Health & Safety Regulations* which both pertain to violence prevention in the workplace. Upon completion of the campaign, Local health & safety representatives and/or Executive members will be able to define violence in federally-regulated workplaces; will know the employer’s responsibility regarding workplace violence prevention; and will be able to identify supports and redress mechanisms if workers are experiencing workplace violence. The campaign is comprised of the following: two (2) day Violence Prevention Course; 45 minute lunch and learn training module; webinar; e-learning course; tool kit; a dedicated section on the national health & safety website.

1. **Two Day Violence Prevention Course**: The course was offered in each Atlantic province as follows:

* Halifax, Nova Scotia: September 12 – 13 and November 28 - 29
* Moncton, New Brunswick: October 3 – 4 (bilingual)
* Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island: October 17 – 18
* St. John’s, Newfoundland: October 24 – 25

1. **Lunch and Learn:** Several members in each province have agreed to host a workplace lunch and learn session. Any interested Locals may contact Sister MacLean to obtain the session materials.
2. **Webinar:** The Atlantic will hold two webinars as follows:

* December 1 (English)
* December 2 (French)

1. **E-learning Course**: The course is available for viewing on the PSAC National e-learning web page at <http://psacunion.ca/online-learning>.

**(e) Toolkit:** A toolkit on violence prevention and bullying has been produced. One toolkit will be distributed to each PSAC Atlantic Local.

**(f) National Website**: A dedicated section on the National PSAC Website will contain additional resource information on Part XX of the Canada Occupational Health & Safety Regulations (on violence prevention), bullying, workers compensation, etc.

**2. National Mental Health Task Force**

In March 2015, Treasury Board of Canada and the PSAC reached an agreement to establish a Joint Task Force to address mental health in the workplace. The Joint Task Force is comprised of a Technical Committee and a Steering Committee. Pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding, the Technical Committee was tasked to provide a report of recommendations to the Steering Committee. Over the past four months, the members of the Technical Committee have worked closely to learn, listen and gain a better understanding of the important and complex issue of improving psychological health and safety in the workplace. In doing so, the Committee focused on activities that target changing the workplace culture, as well as related health and safety practices.

To achieve its objectives, the Committee held eight full day sessions and had many presentations from guest experts from within and outside the federal public service. The report containing recommendations from the Technical Committee was provided to the Steering Committee on September 30, 2015. A total of 11 recommendations were included in the report covering many issues such as leadership, engagement, training, communications and accountability. The Steering Committee will be meeting soon to discuss the recommendations as they were awaiting the results of the federal election to move on to the next phase of work.

**3. Regional Health & Safety Committees**

As previously reported, during the 2015 National PSAC Convention, a resolution was passed to recognize the establishment of Regional Health & Safety Committees under the PSAC Constitution. As Regional Health & Safety Committee(s) are not funded and following discussions with Jeannie Baldwin, REVP – Atlantic, it was decided that the Atlantic Council Health & Safety Committee would serve as the Atlantic Region’s Committee. This committee is representative of each Atlantic province and all committee members have knowledge of Health & Safety Legislation.

**4. Amendments to the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS)**

Changes to the Hazardous Products Act (HPA) were introduced in March 2014 through Bill C-31, which passed into law in June 2014. The new Hazardous Products Regulations (HPR) came into force on February 11, 2015. The regulations will implement the Globally Harmonized System for the Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) hazard classification criteria and communication requirements. This includes updates to product labels and safety data sheets (SDS). It is recommended that all Local Workplace Health & Safety Committees discuss the training requirements for workers given the amendments.

**5. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) Study on Federal H&S Officers**

In 2010, the CCPA produced a study on the impact of Government interference in the work of Labour Affairs Officers (now called Health and Safety Officers) resulting in their inability to keep workers safe in federally regulated workplaces. A new study was released in October 2015 entitled, “Waiting to Happen”. This study outlined the many developing problems in occupational health and safety in sectors under federal jurisdiction. Of particular interest is the decline in federal inspectors in the last ten years. In 2005 there were 151 inspectors in Canada and in 2015 only 90 inspectors remain. The study found that there were almost 21,000 disabling injuries in the federal sector in 2012 alone, and that 684 employees died as a result of workplace injuries over a period of 12 years (between 2002 and 2013). These rates are high considering 60 % of the employees are office workers. The study made a number of recommendations that include: repealing the 2013 changes to the Canada Labour Code; that the practice of conducting regular field inspections in all workplaces be reinstated; that staffing of health and safety officers be increased; that a new training program for health and safety officers be developed and that the pay gap between federal inspectors and provincial inspectors be addressed.

In addition, in March 2014, federal fire protection services delivered by Labour Program of HRSDC ended. Departments are now responsible for their own fire protection. It is important that Unions continue to lobby for the reinstatement of these services.

A copy of the full report is available free of charge at [www.policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca) or on the PSAC Atlantic website.

**6. Water Protection in Canadian Indigenous Communities**

“Water is life and a vital part of our day-to-day lives. We need it for drinking, sanitation and domestic uses.” Following the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Report the PSAC joined with a large number of Indigenous communities and organizations calling on the federal party leaders to commit to adequate funding for drinking water and sanitation in Indigenous communities in Canada. The letter also demanded that the government implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the human right to water and sanitation.

**7. Atlantic Region Health & Safety Conference**

The Atlantic Region Health & Safety Conference is scheduled for **April 22 – 24, 2016 in Halifax**. Additional details regarding registration, funding and conference agenda will be forth-coming in January 2016.

**8. Committee 3-Year Mandate and Plan**

The Atlantic Council Health and Safety Committee 3-Year mandate and Plan will remain as a standing agenda item for each Committee meeting. The document was distributed to the Atlantic Health & Safety networks and to all Locals. This Committee would ask each Atlantic PSAC Local to provide their respective Regional Office with the name and contact information of the Workplace Health & Safety Committee Union Representative so that they can be added to the distribution lists.

**9. Environment**

The NBoD has established an Environment Committee. The Committee Officers are Todd Panas, UEW, and Bob Jackson, REVP –BC. There was a suggestion that each PSAC Region have an Environment Committee. This Regional Committee has a mandate to include the environment and to support environmental initiatives. ***The committee recommends that at the next Atlantic Council Meeting that an invitation extended to the Director of the Halifax Ecology Action Centre to present.***

**10. Roundtable**

Jeannie Baldwin, REVP, was invited to speak at the NL Federation of Labour Convention and she is unable to attend; therefore, Sister Colleen Hodder will be speaking.

Brother Jody LaPierre attended the Annual General Meeting of the PEI Federation of Labour and UVAE Local 90001 called on the Provincial Government to reduce the wait time for injured workers to claim workers’ compensation. As a result, the two day wait time was eliminated.

Brother Steve Johnson spoke about the Newfoundland environment issue of farm salmon placed in an open pen which is contaminating the wild salmon population. This has the potential of creating a vast environmental disaster. Additional discussions will be held at the next meeting.

Brother Oldford just attended the Union of Taxation Employees National Health & Safety Conference. The conference focused on mental health.

Respectfully Submitted on behalf of the Committee;

Brian Oldford

Chairperson

Atlantic Council Health, Safety & Environment Committee