

Report of the Regional Executive Vice-President Jeannie Baldwin

Public Service Alliance of Canada
7th Triennial Atlantic Regional Convention
June 23 – 25, 2017, Saint John, NB



Introduction

It is an honour and privilege to submit this report to the delegates, observers and guests of the Seventh Triennial Atlantic Regional Convention and to the entire membership of the Atlantic Region of the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

This report highlights some of our victories, our struggles and our activism over the three years since the last Convention.

Atlantic Regional Council: Leaders in Constant Action



(Members of the Atlantic Regional Council)

At the 2014 Regional Convention, the membership elected a dedicated group of leader-activists to the Atlantic Council. Following their election, Directors received social media training and many have become the voice of the union in their regions. They also received safe space training which is aimed at increasing the visibility of supportive people and positive spaces for the GLBT community.

Council members have worked tirelessly to promote our union in the Atlantic Region. As a group, we've worked closely together and with other unions and community groups to support political campaigns within our region, ensure an ambitious education program and provide support to our members in need. Council members are leaders who acted as mentors to other union members.

Council meets twice a year in person and holds teleconferences when needed. Whenever we meet in person, we seize the opportunity to initiate political action

for the greater good of the membership. For example, we denounced the fact that the Chronicle Herald newspaper was delivered to us at some facilities, walked the picket line with workers on strike and organized an impromptu rally to denounce the lack of government help to fix the Phoenix Pay System. These are some examples of initiatives that are undertaken when we meet in person.



(Members of the Atlantic Regional Council, guests and observers at an impromptu rally in Charlottetown, PE)

Council members serve on the following committees:

- Health, Safety and the Environment
- Political Action
- Education
- Human Rights
- Finance
- Women's

Many Council members are also active members of their respective unions, PSAC committees and other broader labour movement organizations. On behalf of our 18,000 PSAC Atlantic members, I would like to thank them for their work, dedication and leadership.

Your Atlantic Regional Council:

Regional Executive Vice-President
Jeannie Baldwin

Alternate to the Regional Executive Vice-President
Colleen Hodder

Provincial Directors — Newfoundland and Labrador
Chris Lansdell and Jill Power

Provincial Directors — Nova Scotia
Chris Di Liberatore and Colleen Hodder

Provincial Directors — Prince Edward Island
Debi Buell and Jody LaPierre

Director for Non-Treasury Board | Separate Employers Newfoundland and Labrador
Bill Bennett

Director for Non-Treasury Board | Separate Employers — Maritimes
Brian Oldford

Director for Aboriginal Members
Joey Dunphy

Director for Francophone Members
Shanny Doucet

Director for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Members
Wayne Kelley

Director for Members with Disabilities
Nathalie Paulin

Director for Racially Visible Members
Neville David

Director for Women — Maritimes
Rhonda Doyle-LeBlanc

Director for Women — Newfoundland and Labrador
Angela Decker

Director for Young Workers
Allyson Garrison

PSAC Atlantic Members

PSAC represents roughly 18,000 members in the Atlantic Region, and our numbers continue to grow. We represent 208 locals belonging to 13 different Components. We are also very proud to represent 18 Directly Chartered Locals. Over the past three years, we have organized over 200 new members, postdoctoral fellows at Dalhousie University and we continue to be the union of choice for academic workers in the Atlantic.

Our members are federal, provincial and municipal public sector employees, as well as workers from the academic, community and private sectors. We are tax experts, compensation advisors, fisheries officers, border services workers, food inspectors, park wardens, Service Canada payment services officers, operational communication centre 911 operators, search and rescue maintainers and so much more. Our members also work as First Nations educators, commissionaires, teaching assistants, academic instructors, transition house staff and the list goes on. We can be proud of the diversity in our membership as it only makes us stronger.

Education

PSAC has one of the best education programs in the labour movement. In the last three years, 1,138 members participated in our basic program, 113 members in our advanced program and 413 members took part in special training like *Internal Investigations Training*, health and safety training on the impacts of Bill C-4 (2013) on federally-regulated workers and *Violence Prevention in the Workplace*.

We also offered *Unionism on Turtle Island* for the first time in Halifax, NS on February 18–22, 2017. The training brought together 21 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members from the four

Atlantic Provinces for a five-day, in-residence course. The purpose of the training was to build meaningful, long-term relationships with Aboriginal peoples inside and outside of our workplaces, with the aim of both supporting the decolonization of Aboriginal peoples and increasing Aboriginal peoples' representation at work and in the union.

We are also using webinars more frequently to provide additional training opportunities and general updates on certain topics. Furthermore, we are currently running a pilot project for online registration for weekend courses. If the results are positive, we are hoping to roll out this initiative in the entire region very shortly.

Political Action

Day of Action on the 19th



May 19, 2014 signaled the launch of our Day of action campaign designed to highlight the importance of the federal election. We continued to organize various activities for this campaign on the 19th of every month until election day, October 19, 2015.

These activities resulted in a successful campaign that proved to mobilize our members, educate the general public and contribute to the defeat of the Harper government. It fostered creativity and presented the perfect opportunity for members to get involved in their union for the first time. We organized demos, a flash mob at a local shopping centre and fundraising activities for local communities. We signed banners to

support bargaining teams, supported food banks and much more. All of this guaranteed us great positive media coverage in the entire region and strengthened our relationships with other unions and local community groups.

May 19, 2014 — launch of the Day of Action in the Atlantic.

141 — total number of activities organized.

92 — number of locals participating in events.

17 — number of Days of Action since May 19.

90113 — CEIU local that organized 17 consecutive events.

5,656 — number of times the flash mob video was viewed.

VICTORY: Defeat of the Harper Government

While the Day of Action was instrumental in bringing about the defeat of the Harper government, PSAC members played various roles in ensuring we elected a different government. Our members volunteered on various campaigns, and some of us, including myself, ran as a candidate. On October 19, 2015, the Atlantic region sent a clear message and painted all four provinces red. Although we were happy to defeat the Conservatives, we were also sad to see strong allies go down in defeat such as our friends: Megan Leslie, Peter Stoffer, Jack Harris, and Robert Chisholm. It is also worthy of note that PSAC member Ginette Petitpas Taylor was elected in the New Brunswick riding of Moncton-Riverview-Dieppe. Ms. Petitpas Taylor was a member of the City Hall Employees Association (CHEA), local 60200.

VICTORY: Sick Leave Protected



(Members of CEIU local 60269, Bathurst, NB)

Thanks to our members and the determination of the bargaining teams, we were able to protect our current sick leave provisions. Although we replaced the government, we had to keep up the pressure on the Liberal government to protect this important benefit that should be accessible to all workers. I'm extremely proud of all the mobilization activities we did to promote healthy workplaces.

VICTORY: Search and Rescue



The Atlantic Region, in collaboration with the Union of Canadian Transportation Employees and the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, fought until the bitter end to save the Maritime Rescue Sub-Centre in St. John's, NL. It proved to be successful! In November 2015, the federal government announced it would re-open both the Kitsilano Coast Guard station in BC and the Maritime Rescue Sub-Centre in St. John's, NL. The Kitsilano Station is already open and the St. John's Station should be open by next year.

VICTORY: Veterans Affairs



(Left to right: Ron Clarke and the late Vince Rigby)

Everyone, except the Harper Conservative government, was devastated about the closure of Veterans Affairs offices. The Atlantic Region was instrumental in leading the fight on behalf of veterans and the PSAC members who work with them. We held rallies, helped with the production of videos, launched a postcard campaign and worked with local community groups. Our efforts proved to be successful and the newly elected government reopened the offices. I need to recognize two veterans from our region who played a vital role in our campaign: Ron Clarke and the late Vince Rigby. We couldn't have done it without them. It also saddens me to report that M. Rigby passed away this year—he will not be forgotten.

Budget Watch

Our Budget Watch is part of our permanent political campaign action plan. The success of this event is due to the strong collaboration we have had, through the years, with other unions and local community groups. We have made our budget watch events the “go-to place” for reporters who wish to obtain perspectives and comments from various groups. Budget Watch events are promoted by the Political Action Committee of Council and organized by Area Councils and other PSAC committees.

Phoenix

It goes without saying that the Phoenix pay system has been an ongoing campaign for the PSAC. In the Atlantic Region, we have provided support to various Components who took the lead on many activities. For example, a plantgate, demo and press conference organized in St. John's NL by the Union of National Defence Employees and an appreciation lunch provided to the staff at the Miramichi Pay Centres sponsored by the Union of Solicitor General Employees and lobby campaigns. The St. John's Young Workers Committee also took advantage of the snow and spray painted the words "Fix Phoenix" on the snow — this action also guaranteed us media coverage.



(Rally in St. John's, NL)

My office has provided support to locals and committees at every opportunity. We encouraged mobilization and promoted respect for the work done by members of the Government Services Union who work at the pay centres. As important as it is to denounce the Phoenix pay system, it is also crucial that we defend members who work at the pay centres. I've given numerous interviews on this issue that impacts so many of our members. I've also written to all of our Members of Parliament and I encourage our members to do the same.

Health and Safety

In 2013, the Harper Conservatives introduced Bill C-4 which changed the definition of danger. We fought those

changes then and we have lobbied the Liberal government since but haven't yet seen the result we were aiming for. We continue to work very closely with the Canadian Labour Congress to reverse the changes made by C-4.

PSAC Social Justice Fund



(Members of the Cape Breton Area Council and Regional Women's Committee presenting a cheque to the United Way)

The PSAC Social Justice Fund plays an important role across the country and in the Atlantic Region. We have done our share to promote the value of the fund in our region. We reported on the various anti-poverty initiatives supported in every province of the Atlantic as well as the international solidarity work done with the Tatamagouche Centre in NS through *Education in Action* and *Breaking the Silence* projects. We also accessed special funding to help local communities hit by acts of nature such as flooding in Nova Scotia and major ice storms in New Brunswick. It is important that our members see first-hand the impact of the PSAC Social Justice Fund in their local community.

Communication

Communication is key and I'm proud to report that we've made vast improvements since our last Convention. We have significantly increased our social media presence and reach 10,000 Facebook users on a weekly basis. Our website is constantly being updated which guarantees higher traffic volume that translates into at least 2,500 hits a

week. We also introduced an e-newsletter that is sent biweekly to over 7,000 subscribers.

Challenge: Race to the Bottom

Unfortunately, corporate greed is still alive and well and it has impacted our members who worked as commissionaires at the Halifax Stanfield International Airport. The contract was awarded to the lowest bidder which brought an end to the services provided by Commissionaires Nova Scotia for over 56 years. Throughout this process, we remained committed to our members and provided support to the local.

Our Regional Committees

The Atlantic Region now has 7 Regional Women's Committees, 3 Human Rights Committees, 7 Area Councils and 2 Young Workers Committees.

Area Councils: The Political Arm

Area Councils are the political arm of the PSAC. They organize Budget Watch events, speak out on behalf of workers at various functions and organize demonstrations. They work with Components, Directly Chartered Locals and community groups. They always play an important role during lobbying campaigns and elections, whether municipal, provincial or federal. I'm extremely delighted to report on the creation of a new Area Council in New Brunswick: The Saint John and Vicinity Area Council.

Regional Women's Committees: Proudly Fighting on Behalf of Women

Regional Women's Committees focus much of their work around International Women's Day and the National Day of Remembrance & Action on Violence Against Women. They also provide workshops and training on various issues that impact women.

They play a vital role in PSAC campaigns that have a direct impact on women and have lobbied many Members of Parliament since our last Convention.

Human Rights Committees: Defending Human Rights

Regional Human Rights Committees have played an important role in their communities. They help the less fortunate and defend human rights. They have prepared and served food at the Soul's Harbour Rescue Mission in Halifax, NS, taken part in the Multiculturalism Festival in Moncton, NB and invited special guests to speak at their committee meetings.

Young Workers: Onward and Upward!



(2016 Young Workers Symposium)

Following the 2015 PSAC National Convention, the age for young workers has been changed to 35. Since our last Regional Convention, we organized a Young Workers Symposium in Port Blandford, NL, Nov. 4–6, 2016. It was a highly successful event with a multi-pronged mission: explain the structure of PSAC and how to establish young workers' committees, provide lobby training, forge new friendships and build networks between young workers in our region. The feedback received from the 18 participants was overwhelmingly positive. The St. John's Young Workers Committee played a pivotal role as the host committee. Since the retreat, members have established a committee

in Halifax, NS and are actively working to form two other committees: Fredericton and Moncton, NB.

Racially Visible Members Conference

We held our first ever conference for racially visible members. It was held September 23 – 25, 2016 in Halifax, NS under the theme: “Race Forward: Our Union, Our Community, Our Future!” Over 50 PSAC members took part in this successful event.

Regional Women’s Conference

The Eleventh PSAC Triennial Atlantic Regional Women’s Conference, bringing together over 100 women, was held at the campus of St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, NS, June 3 – 5, 2016. Its theme was “Reflecting, Refocusing & Rejuvenating — Our Voices & Energy.” Under this theme we endeavoured to strengthen the PSAC Women’s Program at the regional level through stronger connections between the Regional Women’s Committees, Council Representatives and local activists. Participants discussed domestic violence at work and what can be done at the bargaining table. Special guest speakers included Maria Fitzpatrick, member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta who addressed domestic violence and Barb MacQuarrie, Director, Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women & Children at Western University.

Celebrating Our Diversity, Fighting for Equity



(2016 St. John’s Pride Parade)

We continue to demonstrate our pride and support at numerous pride parades in the region. Various regional committees work hand in hand in ensuring a strong PSAC presence at these events.

Support for all Aboriginal Peoples

As a union, we can be proud of our ongoing support for all Aboriginal peoples. We worked tirelessly in advocating for a public inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and we continue to raise awareness on that issue. In our region, we sponsored the *Walking With Our Sisters* project, a commemorative art project that pays homage to the lives lost. PSAC launched its *Thirsty for Justice* campaign, demanding all levels of government provide safe drinking water to First Nations communities. We have also worked closely with First Nations communities to fight against fracking and we have found success on many fronts. We remain dedicated and ready to fight back.

Solidarity: A Cornerstone of Our Union

We can be proud of the solidarity we have demonstrated to other workers in the Atlantic Region, at Covered Bridge Potato Chips, Chronicle Herald and D-J Composites, just to name a few. We have also supported health care workers and

teachers in Nova Scotia when the government attacked their basic bargaining rights. These actions only strengthen our bond and working relationship with the various Federations of Labour in the Atlantic region. I would like to thank the PSAC representatives who serve on Federation boards and committees. I wish to also recognize the important work done by our members on various labour councils.

New Brunswick Federation of Labour
Shanny Doucet and Rick Cormier

Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour
Dennis Sheppard

Nova Scotia Federation of Labour
Terry Kiley and Jeannie Baldwin

Prince Edward Island Federation of Labour
Jody LaPierre

A final note

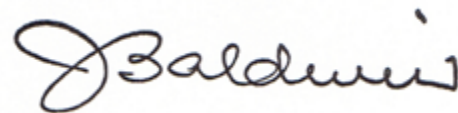
Since the Atlantic Regional Convention in 2014, I have attended hundreds of Regional Committee, Area Council, Local and Component meetings. I have met with most of our regional MPs on more than one occasion and talked to many reporters. I have stood on picket lines, marched in solidarity demos, addressed courses and delegates at various conferences. I have had the privilege of representing PSAC at bargaining tables, at meetings with the employer, and at public hearings and private consultations from Parliament Hill to the workplace.

I continue to be inspired by the diversity, creativity, energy, commitment and hard work of PSAC members in every corner and community of this region. It is a true honour to work with each and everyone of you.

My sincere thanks go out to all of you, members and activists, who make our union and our Region strong.

And finally, sincere thanks go out to all PSAC staff in the regional offices and a special thank you to my staff: Katie and Sébastien, who ensure that the work gets done, while having fun.

Respectfully submitted,



Jeannie Baldwin

