

Activities of the REVP North

Political Action and Mobilization

At the federal level, Treasury Board negotiations and the disastrous effects created by the Phoenix Pay System remain our key concerns.

We were happy to see our Sisters and Brothers from Canada Revenue Agency reaching an agreement, as their successful bargaining sends a much needed positive sign to PSAC members from other federal government units.

Our federal members have been tested not only at the bargaining table, but also in their workplaces.

The faulty introduction of the new pay system Phoenix has created havoc for our Sisters and Brothers across the country, and across the North. Many of them have been paid erroneously, whether overpaid, underpaid, or not paid at all. Although since the

2014 devolution numbers of federal members have decreased in the North, negative impacts have been felt nevertheless. One of the unique

for their federal housing.

In conjunction with PSAC National, we kept the pressure on the federal government and Minister Foote,



June 8 Demo - Yellowknife

problems Nunavut federal workers have been experiencing is related to their isolation pay (Northern allowance). Many Nunavut employees say they haven't been getting isolation pay lately, while they've still had rent deducted from their pay cheques

through both social media channels and mainstream media. Lines of communications with our members were, as always, kept open. On August 4, Northern members were invited to attend a webinar on Phoenix organized by REVP Marianne Hladun,

PSAC Prairies. The webinar offered members an opportunity to discuss their challenges with the Phoenix pay system, learn about how PSAC had been addressing it, and what actions could be taken moving forward.

We will continue to monitor this closely and push for a solution.

In our continuous effort to track the promises of the

new Liberal govern-

ment, we have been pushing for public consultations to be held in the Territories. Alongside our allies in the NWT, we have send letters to MP McLeod asking for town halls on issues that matter to Northerners, such as climate change, electoral reform and trade agreements such as the TPP. We are happy to report that our efforts have been successful. This summer, NWT residents had the chance to express their views on both climate

change and electoral reform, and I had the opportunity to share my views publicly, and have brief discussions with both Min. McKenna, and Min. Monsef.

I have also had informal meetings



Climate Change Townhall, Yellowknife July 2016

with MPs from all three territories. During those conversations I've presented the concerns of our members on key Northern issues (such as the Nutrition North Program, impacts of climate change, free trade deals etc.).

My engagement at the territorial level remains strong. I've already attended several NWT Legislative Assembly sessions, including the June Budget Address and continue to engage with politicians to raise

their awareness on matters that are key to our community and union members. Some of the newly-elected politicians in the NWT maintain their commitment to positive change, while acknowledging the low revenue base and high demands on programming and services. The current Legislative Assembly is the first one to publicly set out its mandate and tabled it in the House for consideration and debate, which shows at least an intent to commit to public transparency and accountability.

We are waiting for the Yukon and Nunavut territories to announce their upcoming election dates, and hope they will at least continue the modestly progressive trend set out federally and territorially in the NWT. As part of our community involvement efforts to address local socio-economic issues, we will participate the following month in the Anti-Poverty Roundtable organized by the Government of the Northwest Territories in Inuvik. We will again take the opportunity to underline

the key role played by unions in addressing poverty, to advocate for concrete and urgent action, and also for accountability – as to date no accountability framework for this initiative has been implemented.

In the last few issues of the bi-monthly Labour Views column published in the Wednesday edition of the Yellowknifer, I drew attention to high levels of unemployment among the Indigenous peoples, and the challenges and opportunities that come with it. In another issue, I approached the false dichotomy between

protecting our environment and advancing our economy. In my last op-ed piece, I talked about the thinning of our social safety net and its impacts on our workforce.

Although summer is a slower period for everyone, we continued to engage with members and the community at large on social media, and during community events such as the Climate Change Town Hall, Electoral

Reform Town Hall and the Labour Day celebrations in Whitehorse, Yellowknife and Iqaluit.

We have also lent our support to our Sisters and Brothers from Canada Post, who have been treated with everything but respect during their collective bargaining process. In a show of solidarity with postal workers, we have sent a letter to MP Trudeau



and requested that their right to fair bargaining is respected, and that Deepak Chopra is let go. We have also used social media to raise the awareness of our own members and continue building solidarity with CUPW.

In a similar show of solidarity with Sisters and Brothers that face tough rounds of negotiations, the PSAC North along with YEU, UNW & NEU

made donations to AFPC 10333 – Syndicat des Employe(e)s du Vieux Port de Montreal. The support offered by PSAC North and its three components will help alleviate financial burdens on members who have been on the line for a while now.



City of Iqaluit demo, August 2016

Regional Committees

There are currently 21 regional committees operating in our region. While the distances and flight costs pose major challenges to meeting in person, I continue to join AGMs via teleconference whenever possible, and ensure support is offered as needed. We are happy to note that the Regional Council will meet in person for two full days this September, and we are expecting

healthy debates and overall fruitful discussion.

To strengthen the work of the committees and ensure consistency across the territories, I committed to developing draft Terms of Reference for the various committee categories. Throughout July and August I've finalized drafts for the Committees.

As always, I am grateful to work in conjuncture with individuals so dedicated to advance social, economic and environmental justice for Northerners in particular, and Canadians in general.

Bridge-building, Education and Membership Engagement

Two years ago I made a commitment to my Sisters and Brothers from across the North that I will wrestle geographic barriers and bridge the territories by reaching out to members from communities all across the North, especially youth members. Throughout the summer months I made good on that promise and met with members from Iqaluit, Whitehorse and Yellowknife. Listening to their stories helped

me form a better notion of what makes PSAC North thrive, and where we can work to become even better in the coming months and hopefully years together. Bridge building also happens when labour organizations across the North stand united in purpose and action. At the end of July, the Northern Presidents meeting held in Whitehorse allowed me to have the dialogue necessary for that to happen. It was a historic first for the PSAC REVP North to attend the entire two days of discussions between Northern component

building as our many common issues were addressed and consensus was reached on every topic. Clearly, we work well together and can present a common front to be reckoned with. The North is our home, its members our prime concern and together we'll work to protect and advance their interests.

The 2016 Summer Meeting of Canada's Premiers also took place in Whitehorse. During that time, so many of Canada's labour leaders were in town for concurrent events. Yukon Employees' Union organized a BBQ to

allow labour activists from Yukon and across Canada to meet in a relaxing social atmosphere. During the time spent in Whitehorse, I was also able to not only connect with members from YFL, CLC, and CUPE, but also with members of four YEU/PSAC Locals.

In the NWT, on June 12, I was invited by Brother Todd Parsons, and happy to attend, the Union of Northern Workers Local Presidents meeting.

During the meeting I presented on the work done to date, met Sisters and Brothers from across the NWT, and reconnected with the ones I had the pleasure of meeting before.

At the end of September, I also delivered a speech at the UEW Convention where I spoke about my role in the PSAC and the type of services UEW Northern members can access from PSAC North.



All Presidents Meeting, Whitehorse July 2016

presidents, and I am grateful for that opportunity. We discussed Northern issues relevant to our members and the work done so far. Our lengthy and fulsome discussions ranged from education and grievance handling to succession planning- to name a few topics. Our meeting was a positive exercise in bridge

Together with two Area Council presidents, I attended the World Social Forum in Montreal (August 2016). We were inspired by the advancements and newfound energy of the global social justice movement, and gained a broader and deeper perspective with respect to the global struggles faced by humanity today, and some of the potential solutions.



World Social Forum, Montreal August 2016

I also took part in what was my largest rally to date, consisting of some 10,000 people. It truly was a spectacle to behold and I was honoured to be a part of it. Locally, on the bargaining side of things, we have been involved in mobilizing Treasury Board Locals through connecting with Local Presidents and Local Executive and attending lunch-and-learn events.

The national Day of Action organized by PSAC, and held Canada-wide was a huge success. In the North, we held noon-hour rallies, taking place in Whitehorse, Yellowknife and Iqaluit. We were thrilled to see the solidarity across the Labour movement, as we received support from our Sisters and Brothers from YEU, YFL, UNW, NWTTA, NTFI, and NEU.

PSAC North is proud to offer members a comprehensive union education program, providing members with learning opportunities to develop knowledge and leadership skills. In July, an education survey was sent to all members in NU communities. The results will help us develop

an education schedule that will meet their needs. The educational opportunities offered to Northern members in the second half of the year have been plentiful. PSAC Regional Reps delivered and will deliver several weekend training sessions across the North of the following courses: Teaching Union Basics, Grievance Handling, Understanding and

Interpreting Your Collective Agreement, Resolution Writing, Advanced Grievance Handling and Violence in the Workplace (CLC Part II).

Alongside education, membership engagement and empowerment happens when members come together in a safe space and share their lived experiences, concerns, and plans to address those challenges. As such, a large part of our work is to create those spaces and make those events happen seamlessly for our members. To that end, preparations are underway for the Regional Racially-Visible Conference (Whitehorse, Oct 15-16 2016), the PSAC North Regional Convention (Yellowknife, June 16-18 2017), the Regional Health and Safety Conference (Montreal, Nov. 21 2016) and the Regional Women’s Conference (Toronto, Mar 22 2017).

Collective bargaining

We’ve had both successes and challenges on the bargaining front during the summer months.

New strategy committees were formed, while others continued to carry on discussions around best approaches in situations where employers refuse to bargain fairly. Arviat Housing Authority, Town of Watson Lake, Fort McPherson Housing Association, Dominion Diamond Corporations, City of Iqaluit, Yukon Government were a few of the units in question.

After months of negotiations, bargaining teams were successful in reaching tentative agreements for the Arviat Housing Authority, Yukon Government and many others.

We continue to fight unfair bargaining with the City of Iqaluit. During mid-August I traveled to Iqaluit to support Brother Fennell during a presentation to the City Council and help mobilize members. Although the presentation was postponed the City Council meeting rally was well attended.

We remain confident that the determination and dedication of our members and staff will eventually lead to obtaining fair deals, for the benefit of all members in our Northern communities.

Campaigns and community involvement

Living Wage:

This year we have lent once again our financial support to this successful initiative carried out by Alternatives North, a Yellowknife-based territorial social justice coalition. End of 2015, the coalition has unveiled the living wage calculation for Yellowknife. The living wage for Yellowknife, for a family of four, with two full-time wage earners and two children, was calculated at \$20.68 an hour for each full-time worker – not including paying debts, saving money, helping other family members financially or owning a pet, among other things. Since October 2015, the campaign has been



focusing on increasing the number of employers that pay their employees a living wage. This year, the funding will be used to continue to recruit employers in Yellowknife and to recalculate the living wage rate for Yellowknife. Two additional communities will also be addressed – Lutsel k'e and Behchoko.



Healthy Apple:

The Healthy Apple campaign aims to help food banks from selected communities throughout Nunavut and the Northwest Territories restock their shelves with much-needed donations with the help of PSAC volunteers. We are currently reviewing the campaign progress and identifying next steps. I also met with members in Iqaluit to get them up to speed on the campaign and engage them in working with the local food bank.

100% Renewable NWT research project: The economic outlook for Canada and the NWT is bleak. We haven't yet recovered from the last economic crisis, unemployment and underemployment remains high, and the environmental crisis is further reinforced by an emerging energy crisis. Still, policy makers continue to favour a resource-based economy – rip and ship-it economy. Clearly, it's time to create a renewed vision for the NWT, one that allows for clean energy generation, local sustainable economies, and new decent paying green jobs, while providing transition programs for our workers.

To initiate that effort, Alternatives North has partnered with a local energy expert to develop a research paper, an infographic and public consultations on these key topics. As a strong believer in the urgency of transitioning to a greener economy, I have decided to support this initiative financially, and in any other way needed along the way (communications with members, attending events etc.).

Another community initiative we have engaged in this summer was a rally

for the victims of the Fort McMurray fires. With the support of the North Regional Council, we made a \$5000 financial contribution and also helped with logistics to ensure items donated at the rally will reach the ones in need. I have also sponsored the following local community events that bring our members and the community together this time of the year: Folk on the Rocks in Yellowknife, Alianait in Iqaluit and the *Labour Day Feed the People Barbecue in Whitehorse.*

Other updates

The REVP office has been quite busy during the summer months. We bid our farewell to Karoline Klug, the previous Assistant to the REVP, as she was successful in obtaining a one-year assignment as a Regional Representative in the Edmonton Regional Office. Shortly after, we welcomed another PSAC member, Laurie Sawler, as a temporary Assistant to the REVP until the end of the year when our Political Communications Officer returns from his paternal leave.

We have begun the process of revamping our PSAC North website. The changes will not alter the general look of the site, but they should result in an increased ease of navigation, and a more comprehensive offer of information.

In an effort to carry on our activities in a more structured, focused fashion, we have developed a strategic plan for the next year. In the upcoming months, we

will work on developing a corresponding action plan outlining concrete actions to obtain the intended outcomes.

In preparation for the upcoming Regional Convention, we have initiated a major financial audit of our regional account. The auditors were satisfied with our accounting practices and the integrity of our files, and the final reports were presented to the North Finance Committee and the Regional Council.

I look forward to a fruitful rest of the term and a successful 2017 Regional Convention!



Jack's caricature, Montreal August 2016

Respectfully submitted,

Handwritten signature of Jack Bourassa.

Jack Bourassa

Regional Executive Vice-President, North

Itinerary highlights June – September 2016

Date	Event	Location
June 1	NWT Legislative Assembly Budget Address	Yellowknife
June 5-7	AEC meetings	Ottawa
June 8	June 8 - National Day of Action Rally and BBQ	Yellowknife
June 9	RSOC meeting - Arviat Housing	Yellowknife
June 10	RSOC meeting - DDC	Yellowknife
June 12	Presentation - UNW Local Presidents meeting	Yellowknife
Jun 16 - Jul 1	Medical leave	Yellowknife
June 14	RSOC meeting - City of Iqaluit	Yellowknife
June 20	AEC meeting - via teleconference	Yellowknife
June 21-24	NBoD meetings - via teleconference	Yellowknife
June 29	RSOC meeting - Yukon Government	Yellowknife
June 29	RSOC meeting - Watson Lake	Yellowknife
June 30	NBoD Committee on Representation	Yellowknife
July 6	AEC Conference Call	Yellowknife
July 11	Pre-town Hall discussion organized by CoC	Yellowknife
	Federal Government Town Hall on Climate Change	Yellowknife
July 15-24	Northern Presidents meeting and All Premiers meeting	Whitehorse
July 28	Conference call - Nunavut Area Council	Yellowknife
Aug 03	PSAC North 2017 Racially Visible Conference planning meeting	Yellowknife
Aug 04	RSOC Conference Call - Fort McPherson HA	Yellowknife
	Webinar - update on Phoenix	Yellowknife
August 8-15	World Social Forum	Montreal
August 17	PSAC North 2017 H&S Conference planning meeting	Yellowknife
Aug 29	Mobilization - City of Iqaluit (Discussion with Council + demo)	Iqaluit
Aug 25	Standing Finance Committee Meeting	Yellowknife
Aug 30	Conference call - NBoD Committee on Representation	Yellowknife
	Federally-organized <u>Townhall</u> on Electoral Reform	Yellowknife
Sept 7-8	Regional Council Face to Face Meeting	Yellowknife
Sept 12-14	AEC Meetings	Ottawa
Sept 26-28	YEU Shop Steward Conference	Whitehorse
Sept 29-30	UEW Conference	Yellowknife



Folk on the Rocks, Yellowknife July 2016