



**LET'S GET
POLITICAL!**
APRIL 8, 2015

- **What it means to be political**
- **Unions involvement in political activity**
- **Political rights of PSAC members**
- **How to get involved in the upcoming elections**
- **Questions**



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“Unions not only have a right to engage in political activities that build a better [society] – indeed they have a responsibility to do so.”



KENT PETERSON
STRATEGIC ADVISOR
SASKATCHEWAN FEDERATION OF LABOUR

@ActivistKent 



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project:community

The Project is a progressive coalition of community groups from across Saskatchewan, combined with the strength of 100,000 union members from all over the province. Together, we aim to build capacity for positive change within our communities. With a focus on education, solidarity, and electoral engagement we hope to engage First Nations communities, student groups, feminists, New Canadians, and any person or group of people that wants to work together to make our voices even louder.



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Politics (Political)

The practice of influencing people. The study of distribution of power and resources within a community, and interrelationships between communities of people. Also the exercising of power and protecting or advancing particular ideas or goals.

Partisan

Someone prejudiced in favour of a particular cause, specifically a political party.



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Get involved!

- Pick an issue you care about and join a community campaign or organization that does work on that issue
- Donate to groups who are doing on the ground work
- Go door to door to sign up people who support particular policies



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Get involved!

- Help do back end organizing on campaigns you care about
- Partake in online activism
- Support your unions efforts to achieve fairness for all PSAC members



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Unions are political

By: Kent Peterson, SFL Strategic Advisor and Labour Reporter editor

The very act of signing a union card is a political act. When we become a member of a union we signal that we believe in workplace democracy. We signal that we think people deserve fair wages, a good pension, and the right to work in a safe environment - all of which are radically political ideas.

The adversaries of working families - such as corporations and conservative governments - advance the idea that unions ought not be political at all. They say unions have no business talking about gender equity, job security, or tax fairness. It is very easy to see why corporations and conservatives try to frame being political as a bad thing - it threatens their authority and, of course, it threatens their almighty profit. Ultimately, though, the priorities of a union are set by the workers that make up that union. If workers want to take a political stance and stand up to the forces that enable domestic violence, they should do it. If workers want to take a political stance and say they believe in a robust, publically-funded and publically-delivered healthcare system, they should do it. And, more to the point, those workers should not be ashamed of doing those things. Being political is a good thing.

Saskatchewan's labour movement has always practiced social unionism, and social movement unionism. We concern ourselves with achieving fair wages, good pensions, and job security - of course. However, we look beyond those direct workplace issues and focus on people's lives outside of work. We build community coalitions, and take up the causes of our allies, and we work towards a better society for everyone - these, too, are fundamentally political acts.

From supporting women's suffrage to organizing waitresses at the Baltimore Café in Regina in 1918, this Saskatchewan's labour movement has taken on political issues from the founding of this province in order to build better lives. Saskatchewan's unions have never hesitated to withdraw labour if the result meant better working conditions for all people. One such example occurred in 1920 when the Plumbers, Gas and Steam Fitters union (current-day UA Local 179) went on strike, because they believed people shouldn't die as a result of going to work. Furthermore, our unions recognized early on the need to force a workers' agenda in elections. Indeed it was Saskatchewan's Labour Movement that rallied behind J. E. Woodsworth's Independent Labour Party in 1929, and partnered with M. J. Coldwell and the farmer-backed Progressive Party to ultimately form the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF).

It was the political activity of workers and their unions that won all of Saskatchewan's residents many of the rights we enjoy today, as well as a strong social safety net.

These are but a few examples of how unions are inherently political, and how being political is the only path to real change - change that is good for all people. Throughout all of those examples, workers and women and all marginalized groups of people were opposed - and sometimes even murdered - by the forces of the right-wing. The right wing, such as corporate bosses and conservatives, said back then as they say now: unions have no right to talk about issues that affect people outside of workplaces.

Well, unions not only have a right to engage in political activities that build a better province - indeed they have a responsibility to do so.



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“Freedom of political expression and an impartial public service are both important elements of a democracy and they need to be balanced”



EDITH BRAMWELL
COORDINATOR OF REPRESENTATION
PSAC, COLLECTIVE BARGAINING BRANCH



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There are also separate and special rules that apply if you wish to be a candidate in a federal, territorial, municipal or provincial election.

When determining how you want to exercise your democratic rights, follow some guiding principles.

- **Don't conduct any political activity on the job.**
- **Don't identify yourself as a federal public sector worker when working on a campaign, e.g. canvassing, making phone calls, etc.**
- **Don't identify yourself as a federal public sector worker when communicating opinions about election issues, political parties and politicians through blogs, Facebook, Twitter or other social media.**
- **Don't wear your uniform if you are required to wear one at work, or your government identification, at public meetings such as candidates' meetings.**
- **Don't drive a government identified vehicle when participating in election activities.**

If you are disciplined in any way for participation in a political activity, this can be grieved.

If you are disciplined, contact your Local/ Branch or your Component for representation and advise your PSAC regional office. Any attempts by management to restrict your political rights should also be brought to the attention of the PSAC regional office.



Public Service Alliance of Canada
Alliance de la Fonction publique du Canada

www.psic-afpc.com



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Supreme Court Decision: Political neutrality of Public Service employees

The Supreme Court of Canada's pivotal Osborne decision in 1991 changed the landscape for public servants, who were once forbidden to take part in political activities. That ruling recognized the importance of political neutrality while balancing the right of ordinary public servants to participate in political activities.

As a result, public servants are allowed under the Public Service Employment Act to take part in political activities as long as it doesn't impair or compromise their ability to do their jobs impartially — or leave a perception of compromise.



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Public Service Employment Act

Part 7: Political Activities

“political activity” means

(a) carrying on any activity in support of, within or in opposition to a political party;

(b) carrying on any activity in support of or in opposition to a candidate before or during an election period; or

(c) seeking nomination as or being a candidate in an election before or during the election period.



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Your political rights – **USE THEM!**

One of the hallmarks of a healthy democracy is the ability of citizens to participate freely and actively in determining who they elect to govern and make decisions on their behalf.

PSAC members are encouraged to take an active role in exercising their democratic political rights by:

- Signing a candidate's nomination papers.
- Wearing a party or candidate button in public.
- Placing an election sign on your property.
- Giving political opinions in public or elsewhere.
- Working as a canvasser for a political party or candidate.
- Working in a campaign office.
- Participating in the formation of party or candidate policies.
- Taking part in election-day activities on behalf of a party or candidate.
- Attending peaceful demonstrations on political topics.
- Soliciting funds from the public for political campaigns and parties.
- Attending a political convention as a delegate.
- Writing letters to the editor endorsing a candidate or party.

For some PSAC members – those covered by the *Public Service Employment Act* – some restrictions apply. None of the activities listed in the previous column should be carried out during your working hours.



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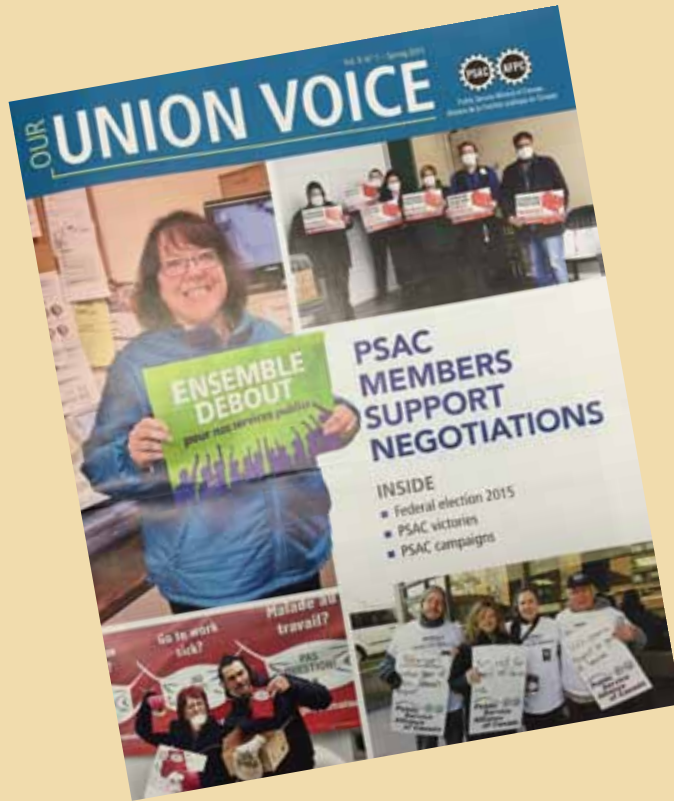
MARIANNE HLADUN
REGIONAL EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT
PSAC PRAIRIES

@mshladun 



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Tear out this page and post on your union bulletin board



Five easy things you can do to help elect an MP who supports public services

1 GET the FACTS

Get information about this government's record on public services and other important issues.

2 FIND OUT about your LOCAL CANDIDATES

Ask your candidates what they will do to protect and promote public services.

3 SPREAD the WORD

Talk to your friends and co-workers.
Share information about the election on Facebook, Twitter and other social networks.
Encourage others to vote.

4 JOIN US

on Facebook, Twitter @psacnat and sign up for email at psacunion.ca/signup to keep up to date.

5 VOTE on ELECTION DAY!

Want to get more involved?

- Contact your PSAC regional office to reach out to other members
- Place an election sign on your property
- Attend all-candidate debates
- Volunteer in a campaign office


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FEDERAL ELECTION 2015

The 2015 election is an opportunity to set a different course for our country. When you go to the polls this year, keep in mind the Conservative government's record on the public services Canadians depend on.



Child care

Fewer than 1 in 4 Canadian kids have access to regulated child care. The Conservatives abolished the federal-provincial-territorial funding agreements on child care, cutting \$1 billion out of child care in Canada. Instead of making child care affordable, the government introduced cash payments directly to parents, which represent only a small fraction of monthly child care costs.



Job cuts

The Conservative government cut 26,000 jobs in the public service with plans to cut 9,000 more, putting families and local economies in jeopardy. These job cuts mean that 35,000 full-time jobs will have been permanently eliminated from the economy. The cuts have directly hurt front line public services.



Employment Insurance

Legislative changes to EI are hurting workers and economies in many communities in Canada. Fewer than 40% of laid off workers are now covered by EI, the lowest in 40 years.



Retirement security

The government is planning legislation on target pension plans that will erode pension benefits for workers and undermine existing pension plans, including those of our members. It also increased the age of eligibility for Old Age Security from 65 to 67 – a direct hit on the retirement security of the next generation of Canadians.

Health care

Because of federal outbacks – estimated at \$36 billion over the next decade – and changes to the funding formula, our health care systems will soon face serious spending cuts and will not be sustainable.



Human rights

The Conservative government has been steadily reversing gains on women's rights, including gutting pay equity for federal employees. The Conservatives have also cut funding for Aboriginal education, employment and living standards, and have targeted any group that criticizes the government with funding cuts.



Environment

Over the last decade, Canada has gone from having a good record on environmental protection, to one of the worst among industrialized countries. Environmental laws and standards have been gutted, and the government abandoned its Kyoto Accord commitment to reduce greenhouse gases.



Veterans

This government closed nine Veterans Affairs offices and cut hundreds of front line workers who provide services to veterans. As a result, many veterans are not getting access to the services they need.



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Area Councils

Members come together to engage with PSAC campaigns at a political level, lobby their political representatives and raise awareness of issues affecting our members, workers and the Canadian public.

The PSAC Prairie Region has eight Area Councils in the following areas: Winnipeg, Westman, Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Lethbridge & Area, Calgary, and Edmonton.

Contact your regional office to find out how to get involved with your Area Council.



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The PSAC Prairie Region hosts monthly, interactive webinars as an outlet for members to learn about critical issues and get important updates. The webinars are held on the second Wednesday of every month and feature guest speakers who are experts in the field. The webinars are also an opportunity for members to ask questions and give feedback.

————— PRE-REGISTER ONLINE NOW! —————

BARGAINING BASICS

January 14, 2015, 7pm (MB/SK) / 6pm (AB)

Learn how bargaining works and the process required to implement your collective agreement.

RETIREMENT REVOLUTION

February 11, 2015, 7pm (MB/SK) / 6pm (AB)

With pensions under attack and no increase to CPP in sight, we discuss how to protect your future and retire with dignity.

CHILDCARE: OUR VISION FOR TOMORROW

March 11, 2015, 7pm (MB) / 6pm (AB/SK)

Don't have kids? Doesn't matter! Access to quality, affordable childcare affects everyone. Find out why.

LET'S GET PHYSICAL POLITICAL

April 8, 2015, 7pm (MB) / 6pm (AB/SK)

With a federal election looming, find out how to exercise your political rights while protecting your jobs.

TURN BACK TIME

May 13, 2015, 7pm (MB) / 6pm (AB/SK)

Not just for history buffs! A look back at labour history, the origins of your union, and what we're fighting to hold on to.

HEALTH & SAFETY SOLUTIONS

June 10, 2015, 7pm (MB) / 6pm (AB/SK)

Bill C-4 changed workplace health and safety as we know it. Learn about your rights under the Code and provincially.



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CREATE CHANGE ONE DAY AT A TIME



HOW YOU CAN TAKE PART

- Rally or BBQ over the lunch hour
- Demonstration at an MP's office
- Informational picket or plantgate outside the workplace
- Create a song or video, or artistic message
- Send letters to your MP
- Collectively wear buttons, bracelets or arm bands

Members in other regions have come up with some creative and visual ideas to mark the 19th each month. Some of these ideas include, a tree planting ceremony to recognize the harmful cuts to the environmental, creating a video with members listing 19 ways Harper must be stopped, handing out treat bags to public with information on cuts to public services.

Be creative and have fun!



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THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!

Please take a few moments to complete the short survey following this webinar to help us improve our future events.



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