

WOMEN OF THE UNION



PSAC Regional Women's Committee Handbook



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

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MESSAGE FROM THE ALLIANCE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (AEC)

The Public Service Alliance of Canada has a proud history of activism by the women of the union. They have been at the heart of our major strikes and campaigns. On a daily basis they are active in PSAC locals, informing, organizing and representing members. Our accomplishments as a union reflect their vision, energy, and commitment. Women keep our union vital and strong.

PSAC women have always challenged the union to address complex issues, to develop alternative ways of being effective, and to reach out to those members who, in the past, have been on the margins of union activity. Through their effort and determination, we are building an inclusive union solidly based in principles of justice and equality.

At the same time, we know we can count on the support of PSAC women. They bring to the union a solid belief in the necessity of collective action by workers. Whenever the call goes out, PSAC women respond with creativity, enthusiasm and tireless effort. They put their hearts on the line and they walk the talk!

As a focal point for mobilizing women members, the Regional Women's Committees are essential to a strong union presence in the regions. They embody the spirit of grassroots organizing and membership participation. Member-based structures such as the RWCs are the vehicles that directly contribute to our power, effectiveness and relevance as a dynamic union.

We hope this handbook will be a useful resource to PSAC Regional Women's Committees and to all women activists who provide initiative and leadership. We look forward to working with you in sisterhood and solidarity.



SECTION I

Forming a Regional Women's Committee

Regional Women's Committees (RWCs) are part of the formal structure of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. They receive their mandate and authority from the PSAC Constitution, Section 15 (see page 16).

RWCs serve an important purpose in our union including increasing the participation of women activists and leaders. RWCs provide "safe spaces" for PSAC women to identify, strategize and work on issues of particular concern in a local or region to women. RWCs also encourage the development of strong networks of women that cross racial, sexual, gender, ability and class lines.

Membership

A Regional Women's Committee can be established within a geographic area serviced by a PSAC regional office. This can be a city or a wider area in which members have common interests.

Membership in the Committee is open to all members in the specified area who self-identify as women. A local can have one or more women participate on the Committee.

However, each local is entitled to one official representative on the committee who can vote, for decision-making purposes.

If more than one woman representative attends from a local, then a decision is made from amongst the women from that local attending the meeting, as to who will be the official representative who can vote.

The PSAC National President and the Regional Executive Vice-President will have ex officio status on the committees and will provide direction and guidance on the functioning of the committees.

Steps to follow

The PSAC Regional Council Representative responsible for Women, through the regional office, is available to assist women who wish to initiate the formation of a Regional Women's Committee. The following are the steps involved:

- Interested women submit motions to their locals, e.g., "Be it resolved that our local initiate steps to form a Regional Women's Committee in (name of region)."
- Women should be prepared to speak in support of the motion. It is also useful to discuss the proposed Committee with the local executive officers prior to the motion being presented. This gives the Executive an opportunity to ask questions and learn about the role of the Committee.
- Where the local belongs to a component, the local President writes to the component President to request the component seek approval from the Alliance Executive Committee (AEC) to form a Regional Women's Committee. The component submits the request to the Regional Executive Vice-President responsible for that region.
- In the case of Directly Chartered Locals (DCLs) the local President writes to the Regional Executive Vice President responsible for that DCL, requesting approval to form a Regional Women's Committee.
- When at least three components or DCLs have submitted a request from a given geographic area, the responsible REVP places these requests before the AEC for approval. (Note: There may be exceptions to this requirement if there are not enough components and/or DCLs in the geographic area and if there is evidence that the committee can be viable).
- Once approval is granted, all locals in the jurisdiction of the proposed Regional Women's Committee are notified. Also at this time, the Committee may request a start-up grant to cover the expenses of initial organizing activities. A grant of \$500 is available for this purpose.
- A founding meeting of the approved Regional Women's Committee is held. At this meeting, the Committee receives its charter and officially becomes an established Regional Women's Committee. The women members in attendance decide who will be the official representatives from their respective locals. They also choose a Chairperson, Treasurer, and Secretary.



SECTION II

Roles and Responsibilities of Regional Women's Committees: Working together and staying active

Why Regional Women's Committees?

- To implement and action union priorities and campaigns (e.g. childcare, pay equity, domestic violence).
- To have a safe space where women can discuss their issues.
- To examine, educate and advocate for diverse women's issues from an intersectional lens.
- To mobilize and empower women to participate in the union, their workplaces and their communities.
- To network and work side-by-side with racialized women, Indigenous women, lesbians, bisexual and trans women and women with disabilities to advance equality in their region and the labour movement so that the union is more inclusive.

Some typical projects and activities might include:

- developing action plans to implement union priorities and strengthen campaigns
- collaborating with community groups to hold special events such as demonstrations, marches, conferences, issue forums and other activities designed to focus public attention on important issues
- organizing special events to celebrate or commemorate designated days (e.g., March 8 – International Women's Day or December 6 – Day of Action on Violence Against Women)
- working as allies and supporting organizations that focus on marginalized women and women from other equality-seeking groups in our communities
- conducting special education seminars and skills-building workshops
- conducting strategy sessions to advance women's issues in the union and workplaces, such as how to gain support for collective bargaining demands and for convention resolutions.

These are just a few examples of what a Regional Women's Committee can do to strengthen PSAC women and the union's presence in the region. New ideas for building support and promoting activism are encouraged and welcomed. What we know from experience is that the best results occur when the focus is on actions that are creative with goals that are achievable.

Guidelines for members of a Regional Women's Committee

STRUCTURE

a. Local representation

The Constitution (Section 15, sub-section 3) reads:

“Regional Women’s [...] Committees shall consist of representatives who should come from each component with members in the jurisdiction of the Women’s [...] Committee”.

All locals within the geographic area shall be notified in writing of Alliance Executive Committee approval and should be requested to select women representatives to the Regional Women's Committee.

A local can have one or more women participate on the Committee. However, each local is entitled to one official representative on the committee who may vote, for decision-making purposes (e.g. recorded vote; election for positions on committee and area council; or delegate selection for conventions and conferences).

If more than one woman representative attends from a local, then a decision is made from amongst the women from that local attending the meeting, as to who will be the official representative who can vote.

For all other matters, all committee members in good standing can fully participate and have voice in the decisions made by the committee.

The representative from each local shall be responsible for liaising with their local, their component representative on the PSAC National Human Rights Committee and regional representative, ensuring all of the above are informed of the Regional Women's Committee activities.

Each committee shall elect a Treasurer and a Secretary. The Committee may elect a Chairperson, or may rotate chairing of the meeting. If there is a rotating chair, then the Treasurer or Secretary will be the lead contact on the committee for the purposes of corresponding with their respective REVP. The Committee may designate other positions and may structure sub-committees if required. The term of office shall be for one year.

b. Observers

Observers who self-identify as women shall have voice but no vote, unless the Committee decides for specific periods that they shall not have voice.

c. Allies

In order to provide a “safe space” for women to discuss their issues, meetings are not open to allies, except when invited by the Committee (e.g. guest speaker, an event organized to raise awareness, etc.) When allies do attend meetings then they do so as observers.

d. Meetings

As per Section 15(4) of the PSAC Constitution, Regional Women's Committee meetings shall be held at least four (4) times a year. One such meeting shall occur prior to the PSAC National Women's Conference.

The Committee will determine which meeting expenses will be reimbursed and will do so from the operating budget submitted to and approved by the responsible REVP.

Each meeting should have a financial report that includes: current bank balance, expenses, and revenue received since the last meeting. Any other issues that need to be reported to the committee should be included and recorded in the minutes.

Meeting notices should be sent out a minimum of two weeks in advance to ensure time for circulation. The notice should indicate if any decisions need to be made (e.g., selection/ election of delegates to the National PSAC Women's Conference).

It should be noted that Regional Women's Committee should select/elect a representative to their respective Area Council, unless there is already a process in the region or by-laws that outlines who sit on Area Councils. This representative will have full voice and vote at area council meetings.

e. Minutes

Minutes of the meetings shall be forwarded within 30 days to the Regional Executive Vice-President and the Regional Council representative responsible for Women and copied to the assigned regional office and to the National PSAC Women's Program Officer.

Minutes will be finalized by the Committee at their next meeting.

Roles of Committee Executive Members

Chairperson(s)

The Chairperson(s) shall be responsible for the affairs of the regional committee between meetings.

The Chairperson(s) will be responsible to liaise and provide reports to the REVP, Regional Council representative (if not the representative themselves), and the regional staff assigned to the committee after each meeting.

The Chairperson(s) will facilitate any meetings of the regional committee held during their term.

The Chairperson(s) will ensure that committee members are provided with information from the REVP, Regional Council representative or staff in a timely fashion.

The Chairperson(s) will be responsible for the agenda and the callout for agenda items in advance of the meeting date.

Secretary

The Secretary shall be responsible for taking the minutes at all regular and special meetings which will be provided to the Chairperson(s) for approval and distribution at the next meeting.

The minutes must be provided to the REVP, Regional Council Representative and staff assigned within 30 days after the meeting.

Treasurer

The Treasurer shall provide up-to-date financial information for the Committee to the Chairperson(s) and the rest of the Committee at each meeting.

The Treasurer will prepare and present an annual financial report to the Committee and submit it to the REVP, Regional Council representative and staff assigned to the Committee.

The Treasurer will present an annual budget to be approved by the Committee before it is presented to the Regional Council representative for approval.

Support for the Committee

Regional staff

PSAC staff assigned to the Committee will provide logistical and technical support (i.e. booking meeting rooms, translation requests, etc.) and assist the Committee to fulfill its mandate.

National staff

Terms of Reference and minutes will be sent to the National Women's Programs Officer. The National Women's Program Officer will review the minutes to gather information on the current issues relevant to women and identify trends across committees. If common issues are identified, the National Women's Program Officer can facilitate cross-committee and cross-regional discussions and can develop tools and resources for the committees.

Operating a Regional Women's Committee

Although Regional Women's Committees are decision-making bodies, there are certain requirements that apply to aspects of the Committee's operations; specifically, meetings, minutes, votes, operating budget, and other sources of funding.

ANNUAL BUDGET

Central to a Committee's effective operation is the annual budget. This determines the amount of funds the Committee will require to carry out its activities.

What's in a budget?

The budget should be prepared for a fiscal period January 1 to December 31, and should include meeting expenses, operating expenses, including lost wage requirements, and project costs. Project costs should be itemized separately and priorities identified if more than one project is planned.

To whom and when do we submit the budget?

The proposed budget as adopted by the Committee is submitted to the Regional Executive Vice-President. In some regions, the proposed budget will also need to be submitted to the Regional Council representative responsible for women. The proposed budget should be copied to the assigned regional office and the National Women's Program Officer. Once approved, funds are disbursed to the Committee.

The budget should be submitted as soon as possible after the Committee is established. For subsequent years, the annual budget should be submitted, along with the year-end financial report and bank book balance. Check with your regional office or REVP about established timelines and deadlines.

A budget or a specific funding proposal may be submitted during the year to the REVP for approval if an issue or event occurs after the budget was initially approved. For example, the Regional Women's Committee may become aware of a union campaign that needs to be actioned by them in a timely way, and thus, the Committee may need to resubmit a budget to undertake the actions or activities required for the campaign.

Approval by the REVP is required prior to the committee seeking other sources of funding.

Accounting and reporting

The RWC should maintain a chequing account with a financial institution. A minimum of three members, one of whom is the Treasurer, should be selected as signing officers for the account. Cheques must have two signatures. A signatory should not include the person who the cheques are made out to. Proper records of receipts and disbursements **MUST** be maintained throughout the year, including a record indicating the breakdown for each cheque and expense.

When preparing to issue cheques, the following should be considered:

- Is the expense related to an activity that is on your approved annual budget allocation? If not, has approval for the expense been requested from the REVP office?
- Was the expense approved at a committee/ council meeting (either by vote or consensus)?
- Do you have documentation such as a receipt or email to attach to your financial records?

The RWC is also responsible for preparing and submitting annual financial reports for the year ending December 31 to the REVP and Regional Council representative responsible for women. The annual report should record expenditures for the year and indicate how they compare with the total budget. All bank statements for each month must also be attached to this report.

Continued funding in any given year is only granted upon presentation of a budget or proposal, the prior year's financial reports and meeting minutes in the appropriate format, and any other document required by the REVP.

SAMPLE YEAR-END FINANCIAL REPORT

Year-End Financial Report of the (name of region) Regional Women's Committee

Revenues:		
	RWC allocation (must name sources) (e.g. national funding)	\$3,000.00
	Other (name sources (e.g. donation from local 1234 for AB project)	\$275.00
		\$3,275.00

Expenses:		
	Meetings (breakdown of expenses such as food, per diems, taxi, etc.)	\$575.00
	Newsletter	\$175.00
	Education (on pay equity on June 1, 2018) *	\$1,050.00
	Travel (for xx event on Feb. 14, 2018) *	\$175.00
	Loss of salary (for xxx event on Feb 14, 2018)	\$425.00
	Coalition work (with ABC Women's Group) *	\$385.00
	Administration (e.g. bank costs)	\$3.00
	Total expenses	\$2,788.00

* Financial reports should be accompanied by summary activity reports which would give more details on the expensed items.

Excess of revenues over expenditures	\$497.00
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Reconciliation:		
	Bank balance at December 31, 2018	\$732.00
	Less: Outstanding cheque #5	(\$60.00)
	Less: Outstanding cheque #8	(\$175.00)
		\$497.00

NB: Proper records of receipts and disbursements MUST be maintained and may be requested to accompany any report at any given time by the REVP or PSAC National President.



SECTION III

Working together and staying active: Introduction to the feminist process

One of the main goals of Regional Women's Committees is the empowerment of PSAC women. Working together, women have the opportunity to grow as individuals and as a collective. For empowerment to happen in a meaningful way, it is important that women be conscious of how they work together. This is called "process" and it is just as important to the end result as the specific tasks involved.

The way in which women work together reflects our beliefs about how democracy is practised. There are many ways to practise inclusive decision-making and it is up to each committee to decide the process that works best for them.

FEMINIST PROCESS

Many women's groups choose to practise alternative forms of democracy by using feminist process. This is a method of working together and an approach to organizational structure that seeks to foster participation and inclusivity. Feminist process is based in the principle of equality. It emphasizes shared goals, authority, responsibility and accountability.

The advantage of using feminist process is that it is inclusive, rather than exclusive. Power is shared by many, not concentrated in the hands of a few. Differences are incorporated, not suppressed. The growth of individuals is seen to strengthen, not threaten, the collective. Unity and solidarity flow from the process; they are not forced or demanded. Where feminist process is consciously followed, sisters are more likely to feel good about themselves, each other, and the work they accomplish together.

How can RWCs put feminist process into practice if they so choose?

- Work towards inclusiveness. Work with the regional office, with locals and with PSAC Regional Human Rights and Regional Equity Committees to make contact with women who may be interested in participating on the Committee. Make outreach an ongoing activity of the Committee once it is established.
- Clearly identify your common goals.
- Establish a group agreement which sets out what women expect and need from each other in order for the Committee to be a safe, inclusive and empowering forum in which to work together.
- Explore the issue of power within the group. How is power distributed? Do the women have equal power? What influences how much, or how little, power individual women bring to the group? What is the effect of dominant culture? The purpose of this analysis is to determine what changes the group may need to make in order to share power equally.
- Pay attention to individual needs. Do the physical arrangements of meetings enable all to participate? Are necessary accommodations made? Has the RWC enquired with the regional office about assistance from the PSAC accommodation fund to help offset costs?
- Rotate the process of chairing committee meetings. The practice of rotating chairing responsibilities helps distribute workload and develop facilitation skills amongst members.

- Choose a decision-making process that works best for your committee. Some committees will choose to make decisions by consensus. This requires that all members of the Committee agree with a decision before it is taken forward. It can be effective for fostering cooperation and compromise. (For more information on consensus-based decision-making, see this guide from Seeds for Change: seedsforchange.org.uk/consensus.) However, consensus-based decision-making can also be time consuming. Some committees may find that traditional decision-making by voting is more efficient. It is up to your committee to establish what is the most inclusive system for them.
- Share tasks equitably.
- Conduct frequent check-ins.
- Build in shared accountability through a process of Committee evaluation. Members have the opportunity to identify what is working well and what needs improvement. Regular evaluations keep the Committee vital and relevant. Timely and necessary adjustments can be made before problems become major or even destructive.

Many women are new to feminist process and, through practice, we learn how to use it effectively. This is not necessarily easy and mistakes are made along the way. However, by being patient with each other and persisting in the face of setbacks, women can create committees that are more truly reflective of our democratic principles.

Staying active

Even the most active and well organized committee can go through periods when members feel exhausted or depleted. People put a lot of time, effort and personal commitment into their work for social change. For this reason, it is crucial that members attend to the health of the RWC.

It is often most effective to focus on a few key union priorities and/or campaigns rather than trying to tackle too much too quickly. Committees

should pick two to three top priorities for the year and aim to accomplish those. Severe burnout can be avoided if measures are taken to maintain and, when necessary, revitalize the committee.

Maintaining the Committee

To keep a committee active, it is important that information flow easily and quickly, that potential new members be identified and encouraged, that skills be developed, and that tasks be simplified and shared. This will happen when the Committee has:

- an up-to-date membership list with addresses, telephone numbers, and emails
- a strategy for ongoing outreach
- a speedy communications system
- a schedule of well publicized meetings
- a newsletter or bulletin published at regular intervals
- attention to and accommodation of special needs
- orderly files and records that are kept up to date
- a well thought-out and comprehensive "plan of action"
- a system of sub-committees to focus energies and interests on specific tasks such as recruitment, education, communications, community outreach, resources, social events, etc.

Most of these ideas reflect the need for basic planning and organizing. They might seem bureaucratic and mundane, but they will save a committee valuable time and energy which are more productively spent on the issues and strategies that will advance the committee's goals.



SECTION IV

Political action

Political decisions have a major impact on our daily lives. They can bring into effect policies and programs that advance social and economic equality for women. Policy changes can also have adverse effects and statistics reveal that these tend to fall disproportionately on women and equity-seeking groups. Women therefore have a significant stake in the political decisions that are made in this country. It is important to step into the wider political arena and speak out on issues that are decided at the municipal, provincial, and national levels.

Area Councils

PSAC Area Councils are made up of members from different locals to engage with PSAC campaigns at a political level. Members come together to lobby their political representatives and raise awareness of issues affecting our members, workers and the Canadian public.

Like RWCs, Area Council members work with their community partners, and build links with other labour groups.

Each RWC is entitled to one delegate at their local Area Council. RWC will appoint a member to be the official representative on their respective area council. This representative will be responsible for ensuring that priorities and issues raised by the Regional Women's Committee are integrated into the work of the area council and vice versa.

Networking and coalition-building

Regional Women's Committees do not operate in isolation of the rest of the union or of the women's movement inside and outside the labour movement. It is important to build ties with groups, both inside and outside PSAC, who share the goals of the RWC. This creates opportunities to cooperate on strategy, share information, provide mutual support and pool resources.

Within PSAC

Regional Women's Committees will want to work together with these bodies:

- PSAC National Human Rights Committee (NHRC)
- PSAC National Indigenous People's Circle (NIPC)
- PSAC Regional Human Rights/Equity Committees
- Area Councils
- Other Regional Women's Committees in the region

Within the broader labour movement

Regional Women's Committees will want to outreach and mobilize on issues of concern to working women with:

- Regional women's committees of local sister unions
- Women's committees of district labour councils
- Women's committees of provincial federations of labour

COALITION-BUILDING

Regional Women's Committees are part of a larger women's rights movement. At the national, regional, and local levels there are many organizations and groups actively seeking social, economic, and political justice for women. By making links with these organizations, Regional Women's Committees become part of a broader, stronger power base and mutual support network.

What's a coalition?

A coalition is a group of organizations that agree to adopt a common strategy and work together in order to further their shared vision, values and goals. The individual groups feel it is in their best interest to join a coalition because they recognize either an opportunity to gain or a threat to lose something they each value (e.g., programs and services, legislation). The coalition may be organized around a single issue or for long-term objectives.

Some examples of coalitions that PSAC women have joined or women's organizations that we have worked with closely in the past are:

- The National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL)
- The Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres (CASAC)
- The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC)
- Child Care Now
- The Canadian Committee of the World March of Women
- local and regional advocacy organizations

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is any effort to influence, shape or change a particular issue in society. This can include lobbying politicians, writing letters to businesses or elected officials, running social media campaigns, developing public awareness materials, organizing rallies and a host of other actions.

As part of the broader women's movement, RWCs can and should undertake advocacy and political action. In identifying priority issues to address, the committee should consider who is most affected by the issue and where the committee has the greatest potential to influence.

Often the issues that we are tackling affect marginalized communities. It is important that our advocacy is supportive and that we are advocating with instead of for. Frequently, marginalized people are spoken over or their voices and perspectives are dismissed. So, in all of our efforts, labour women should be taking the lead from those who are most affected by an issue and doing what we can to support their positions. When we hold more power and are not part of the group(s) that are most affected, then it is important to listen and amplify marginalized voices rather than making the mistake of putting ourselves front and centre.

National and Regional Women's Conferences

The PSAC National Women's Conference is held every three years. The Conference brings together PSAC women from across the country to, among other things, discuss and adopt resolutions on issues and policies that affect them. These resolutions reflect the direction and action that women want to take to further the status of women in the union, at the workplace and in society.

Two women delegates to the PSAC Triennial Convention are elected at the PSAC National Women's Conference.

The National Women's Conference is also an opportunity for PSAC women to share with and learn from each other, to create networks and to feel empowered through workshops and speakers. It brings the union closer to women and women closer to their union. It is a time for learning, for decision-making and for celebration.

Active Regional Women's Committees are each entitled to send ONE delegate to the National Women's Conference.

Regional Women's Conferences

Once every three years, each region organizes a regional women's conference in which Regional Women's Committees play a crucial role. These conferences have traditionally served as introductory union events to newer women activists and have more of an educational focus to them.

They can also submit resolutions to the National Women's Conference. When organizing Regional Women's Conferences, it is important to ensure that they are scheduled with sufficient time to submit resolutions to the National Women's Conference.

Contact your REVP and Regional Council representative responsible for women for more information on Regional Women's Conferences.



Excerpts from the PSAC Constitution

SECTION 15

REGIONAL COMMITTEES

Sub-Section (1)

The organization and operation of Regional Women's, Indigenous Peoples, Racially Visible Persons, Pride (LGBTQ2+ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Persons, Queer, Two-Spirited, +), Access (Persons with Disabilities) and Young Worker (persons 35 years of age and under) Committees should be encouraged by the PSAC as a matter of policy, provided that not more than one Regional Women's, Indigenous Peoples, Racially Visible Persons, Pride, Access and Young Worker Committee may be organized in any area that can be reasonably encompassed by one Regional Women's, Indigenous Peoples, Racially Visible Persons, Pride, Access and Young Worker Committees.

Sub-Section (2)

- a) Women's, Indigenous Peoples, Racially Visible Persons, Pride, Access and Young Worker Committees of the PSAC may be organized where there are at least three (3) components and/or DCLs willing to participate and upon application to the AEC.
- b) Notwithstanding Sub-Section (2) (a), the AEC may approve the organization of Regional Indigenous Peoples, Racially Visible Persons, Pride, Access and Young Worker Committees where less than three (3) components and/or DCLs are willing to participate when it is satisfied that the Committee can be viable.
- c) Notwithstanding Sub-Section (2) (a) and (b), Regional Human Rights Committees consisting of members of the Indigenous Peoples, Racially Visible Persons, Pride and Access Equity Groups may be organized where there are at least three (3) components and/or DCLs willing to participate, and upon application to the AEC.

- d) Notwithstanding Sub-Section (2) (a), (b) and (c), the AEC may approve, in exceptional cases, the organization of Regional Indigenous Peoples, Racially Visible Persons, Pride and Access Committees jointly as a Human Rights Committee when it is satisfied that the members are willing to participate and the Committee can be viable.

Sub-Section (3)

- a) Regional Women's, Indigenous Peoples, Racially Visible Persons, Pride, Access and Young Worker Committees or Regional Human Rights Committees shall consist of representatives who should come from each component with members in the jurisdiction of the Women's, Indigenous Peoples, Racially Visible Persons, Pride, Access and Young Worker Committees.
- b) Only one member per local or Branch may be a voting member of each Committee. For any Committee that does not utilize voting, only one member per local or Branch may engage in the process by which decisions of the Committee are made.

Sub-Section (4)

Regional Human Rights Committees or Regional Women's, Indigenous Peoples, Racially Visible Persons, Pride, Access and Young Worker Committee meetings shall be held at least four (4) times a year.

Sub-Section (5)

Regional Human Rights Committees or Regional Women's, Indigenous Peoples, Racially Visible Persons, Pride, Access and Young Worker Committees shall be fully funded by the PSAC.

Sub-Section (6)

The seven (7) PSAC Regional Health and Safety Committees shall have the authority to submit resolutions directly to the National Health and Safety Conference.



PSAC HERSTORY

The seventies

- 1976** First woman National Director elected to PSAC National Board of Directors, Eleanor Ryan
- 1976** 24 per cent of delegates to PSAC Triennial Convention are women
- 1976** First woman elected to the Alliance Executive Committee, Aileen Manion
- 1976** Establishment of PSAC Equal Opportunities Committee
- 1979** 20 per cent of delegates at PSAC Triennial Convention are women

The eighties

- 1980** Clerical and Regulatory (CR) group members go on strike
- 1980** Leave negotiated for care and nurturing of pre-school children
- 1980** Adoption leave negotiated
- 1980** Maternity leave allowance negotiated for CR group
- 1980** Leave for relocation of spouse negotiated
- 1980** First pay equity settlement – Library Science (LS) group
- 1981** Establishment of the PSAC weekend course “Fighting Discrimination: The Local’s Role”
- 1982** Establishment of PSAC family care allowance for participation in union activities
- 1982** Pay equity increases won for the Food Services, Laundry Services and miscellaneous personal service members within the General Services (GS) group
- 1982** Discrimination within the Hospital Services (HS) classification standard recognized and corrected with a reclassification of 250 Registered Nursing Assistants
- 1983** PSAC files pay equity complaint on behalf of CR group (Canada Post) with the Canadian Human Rights Commission
- 1984** First woman component president elected, Sandra Messer, Union of Veterans Affairs Employees
- 1984** Establishment of PSAC in-residence course, “Women at Work”

- 1984** Adoption of PSAC Sexual Harassment Policy
- 1984** PSAC files pay equity complaint on behalf of the CR group (Treasury Board) with the Canadian Human Rights Commission
- 1985** First National Women's Conference (500 participants)
"Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: The Changing Role of Women"
- 1985** 24 per cent of delegates to PSAC Triennial Convention are women
- 1985** Constitutional recognition of Triennial National Women's Conferences to report to the PSAC Triennial National Conventions and to have their recommendations voted on
- 1985** Funding at six cents per member per month established for Regional and National Women's Conferences
- 1986** Sexual harassment protection clause negotiated
- 1986** No discrimination clause negotiated
- 1986** Maternity leave provisions negotiated for all other PSAC Treasury Board units
- 1986** Alliance International Women's Day (IWD) activities – "Getting Organized: Bargaining for Equality"
- 1986** Establishment of PSAC weekend course on technological change
- 1986/87** First Regional Women's Conferences, "Equality for a Change"
- 1987** Establishment of PSAC weekend course, "Men and Women Talking: A Vision of Equality"
- 1987** Second woman component president elected, Lynn Ray, Union of Solicitor General Employees (USGE)
- 1987** Supreme Court decision (Robichaud case): employer responsible for maintaining a harassment-free work environment
- 1987** Alliance IWD theme "Blueprint for the future: Our future is our children"
- 1987** Second National Women's Conference, "Women's Action: The Power of Change"
- 1987** HS members receive pay equity adjustments retroactive to 1980
- 1988** Union of Postal Communications Employees (UPCE) strike
- 1988** 27 per cent of delegates at PSAC Triennial Convention are women

- 1988** Constitutional recognition and funding of Regional Women’s Committees by PSAC Triennial National Convention
- 1988** PSAC Human Rights Policy adopted at Convention
- 1988** Two women elected to the Alliance Executive Committee (AEC), Susan Giampietri and Joane Hurens
- 1988** Funding for Regional and National Women’s Conferences increased to 21 cents per member per month
- 1988** Alliance IWD theme “Quality Child Care”
- 1988/89** Second series of Regional Women’s Conferences, “Women’s Action: The Power of Change”
- 1989** Letter of Understanding between PSAC and Treasury Board on Workplace Child Care negotiated
- 1989** Hospital Services (HS) strike over pay equity
- 1989** Joint union-management pay equity study begins for members at the Government of Northwest Territories
- 1989** Alliance IWD theme “Pay Equity: Putting it Together”
- 1989** PSAC Lesbian and Gay Support Group is formed

The nineties

- 1990** Third woman component president elected, Bernice Wilson, Union of Energy, Mines and Resources
- 1990** Third National Women’s Conference, “Women’s Action: The Power of Change”
- 1990** Treasury Board makes partial payments to Clerical and Regulatory (CR), Stenographic and Typing (ST), and Educational Support (EU) members as a result of Joint Union Management Initiative (JUMI) pay equity study
- 1990** Federal separate employers such as Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), Communications Security Establishment (CSE), Auditor General (AG), follow suit and make partial pay equity payments to same groups
- 1990** Canadian Human Rights Commission appoints a Tribunal to hear the largest pay equity complaint filed in Canadian history for the CR, ST, HS, LS, EU groups
- 1990** 35 Regional Women’s Committees established
- 1990** PSAC Equality Action Group is formed by racially visible members to work on race relations issues

- 1990** Alliance IWD theme “Women’s Action for Economic Equality”
- 1991** PSAC video “Harassment at Work” produced
- 1991** 34 per cent of delegates at PSAC Triennial Convention are women
- 1991** Three women, out of five AEC positions, are elected at PSAC Convention, Nycole Turmel, Susan Giampietri, and Joane Hurens
- 1991** Hospital Services (HS) Pay Equity Tribunal decision
- 1991** Alliance IWD theme “Tech Change Under Control”
- 1991** PSAC national strike of Treasury Board units, regarded as the largest strike in Canadian history/herstory
- 1991** An additional three Regional Women’s Committees established
- 1991** Treasury Board recognizes need for major overhaul of public service classification system to remove gender bias
- 1992** PSAC Equal Opportunities Committee expanded by eight seats in order to ensure the representation of groups covered by Human Rights Policy
- 1992** Alliance IWD theme “In Diversity is Unity”
- 1992** PSAC woman member, Lynn Jones, elected to Canadian Labour Congress Executive Council – racially visible affirmative action position
- 1992** NBOD adopts resolution to commemorate the United Nations Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (March 21)
- 1992** Third series of Regional Women’s Conferences, “After the Strike: Women, Power and Politics”
- 1992** First contract negotiated for Yukon Women’s Transition Home (PSAC members), using a “consensus bargaining” approach
- 1992** A tribunal is finally appointed, ten years after the filing of a pay equity complaint by PSAC on behalf of the CR group at Canada Post
- 1992** On behalf of our members, PSAC negotiates travel insurance policy that recognizes same-sex spouses
- 1992** PSAC produces December 10, Human Rights Day poster (members with arms linked representing various concerns)
- 1993** Fourth woman component president elected, Valerie Denesiuk, Supply and Services Union

- 1993** PSAC Harassment Policy and Complaint Procedure is adopted by the National Board of Directors. This policy undertakes to maintain a harassment free environment at all PSAC functions and, unlike the Sexual and Personal Harassment Policy, pertains to harassment on all prohibited grounds cited in the PSAC Human Rights Policy (e.g., race, disability and so on).
- 1993** Racially visible and Indigenous members, as well as LGBTQ2+ members begin to form their Regional Committees across the country
- 1993** Funding is provided for pilot project weekend education seminars for racially visible members (Halifax and Toronto). Racially visible members play an active role in planning, developing, organizing and delivering the seminars.
- 1993** Workshop, "Anti-Racist Facilitator Training" is conducted at the annual conference for education staff
- 1993** The policy on Sexual Orientation is drafted by the PSAC Lesbian and Gay Support Group and presented to the Equal Opportunities Committee for discussion
- 1993** Members with disabilities in the Montreal region form Members with Disabilities Action Committee (MDAC)
- 1993** PSAC produces March 8 International Women's Day poster, conceptualized by an Indigenous members of the Equal Opportunities Committee, around the graphic depiction of an Indigenous "medicine wheel", under the theme "Voices of Power"
- 1993** Systems Review of Alliance Centre employment policies and practices completed as part of the Employment Equity Plan for PSAC staff. This plan is jointly developed by PSAC and the two staff unions, the Canadian Union of Labour Employees (CULE) and the Alliance Employees' Union (AEU) for designated groups including women
- 1993** Fourth National Women's Conference held, "Women, Power and Politics"
- 1994** 38 per cent of delegates at PSAC Triennial Convention are women
- 1994** 28 per cent of members of the National Board of Directors (NBOD) are women
- 1994** PSAC participates in the first joint Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and affiliate International Women's Day campaign under the theme "Weavers of World Rights"
- 1994** Federal Court orders the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal to re-examine their rulings on the Mary Pitawanakwat case. A settlement is later reached giving Mary Pitawanakwat \$200,000 to cover damages and credits for all annual leave and sick leave.
- 1994** PSAC completes the representation of its case before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal in the pay equity complaint for the CR, ST, HS, LS, EU Treasury Board units

- 1994** During collective bargaining, female dominated groups at Canada Post receive gains as a result of pay grid re-structuring that cuts the wage gap for women significantly in some cases
- 1994** PSAC Convention addresses a broad range of human rights issues:
- Women’s Policy Paper
 - Sexual Orientation Policy
 - Policy on Aboriginal Workers
 - Policy on the Provision of Alternate Media
 - PSAC Action Plan Regarding Employer Initiatives
 - Employment Equity for Persons with Disabilities
 - Establishment of a local Accessibility Fund
 - Mandate to hold the first National Conference for Racially visible and Indigenous members
- 1994** PSAC wins arbitration with Canada Post establishing that the employer must include same-sex spouses in its benefit plans. The employer, predictably, appeals this ruling.
- 1995** The founding convention of the PSAC Quebec Council is held in St. Hyacinthe on May 6 – 7. The 150 delegates elected 10 officers to the Council, including a vice-president for women’s issues.
- 1995** The second Access Conference is held in August for members with disabilities following an NBoD resolution to provide funding. Entitled “Access 95: Taking Our Place”, the conference focuses on the impact of cuts to social programs and to employment on persons with disabilities.
- 1995** August 30 marks the opening of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China. Sister Nycole Turmel, PSAC First Executive Vice-President, is part of the Canadian NGO delegation. Canadian delegates propose an International Women’s March against poverty for the year 2000, which captures the imagination of many. Support for the march is gaining momentum.
- 1995** United Nations Survey known as the “Human Development Index” reports Canada rates as the #1 country in which to live – unless, as the Canadian Press put it, you’re a woman. The rating then drops to #9.
- 1995** In an effort to put pressure on the Quebec government to negotiate on nine demands to fight women’s poverty, hundreds of women in the province march 20 kms a day for 10 days as part of the Quebec March Against Women’s Poverty. The march begins May 26 from Montreal, Longueuil and Rivière-du-Loup and ends June 4 in Quebec City with thousands joining them, to demand an end to women’s poverty.
- 1995** Full day of National Board of Directors meeting dedicated to training on systemic discrimination, harassment and human rights concepts

- 1995** The PSAC National Women's Conferences Organizing Committee, mandated to plan the PSAC Women's Conferences, is struck and includes direct representation of equity group members
- 1995** On July 10, Sister Mary Pitawanakwat dies after a long battle with cancer
- 1995** The PSAC Employment Equity Plan is signed by representatives of PSAC and the two staff unions
- 1995** Pay Equity Tribunal, to decide equal pay owed to 3,000 clerical workers at Canada Post, continues to meet. The tribunal hearings began in 1993.
- 1995** PSAC appeals to the Federal Court to reverse a pay equity tribunal decision which did not provide full retroactivity to employees of Non-Public Funds Headquarters
- 1995** PSAC members at Bryony House, a women's shelter, successfully negotiate their first contract after organizing community support to elect a new board of directors
- 1995** PSAC teams up with the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) to provide training to activists and staff across the country, on incorporating coalitions in the fightback campaign against poverty
- 1995** PSAC woman member Marianne Mackinnon elected as President of the Yukon Federation of Labour
- 1995** PSAC members at Purolator Courier, a female dominated bargaining unit, maintain a solid picket line during 57 days of lock-out and achieve their first collective agreement
- 1996** PSAC establishes and pilots its advanced course in human rights
- 1996** Fifth woman Component President elected, Jackie Simpson, Union of Northern Workers (UNW)
- 1996** Fourth series of Regional Women's Conferences "From the Margins to the Mainstream". This is the first series of regional conferences that are completely decentralized to the regions.
- 1996** The first National Conference for members of PSAC who belong to racially visible groups and Indigenous groups is held. The theme of the conference is "Unity, Strength, Power: Together Against Racism".
- 1996** On February 15, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal rules that data assembled over four years during the course of the joint employer-union equal pay study are valid. This decision provides hope that pay equity will become a reality in the federal public service. Arguments with respect to retroactivity and amounts owing continue before the Tribunal.
- 1996** Women's Across-Canada March Against Poverty, organized by the NAC and the CLC, begins May 15 in Vancouver, British Columbia, May 19 in St. John's, Newfoundland, and culminates June 15 in Ottawa where some 25,000 people gather in LeBreton Flats and march to Parliament Hill.

- 1996** Women in Quebec hold a 24-hour vigil in Quebec City, at the National Assembly, organized by the Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ) to commemorate the anniversary of the Quebec Bread and Roses March. They are joined by the Women's March Against Poverty eastern caravan.
- 1996** PSAC member Lois Moorcroft re-elected as MLA for the Yukon New Democratic Party in the Yukon legislature as Minister responsible for Education, Justice and Women's Directorate
- 1996** There are 10 workplace child care centres established, including a centre located near the Laval Penitentiary Complex which can accommodate 60 children
- 1996** There are 47 Regional Women's Committees established, and a request pending for the establishment of the 48th committee in Newfoundland
- 1996** The Canadian Human Rights Commission orders Treasury Board to provide same-sex couples with the same benefits as opposite-sex couples
- 1996** The Federal Court of Appeal rules that the pay equity complainants of the Non-Public Funds should receive the full retroactivity sought by PSAC, i.e. one year prior to the date of the complaint
- 1996** Fifth National Women's Conference held, "From the Margins to the Mainstream"
- 1997** 40.5 per cent of the delegates to the Triennial Convention are women, double the number at the 1979 convention (20 per cent)
- 1997** 34.6 per cent of the National Board of Directors (NBoD) are women, an increase of 6 per cent over 1994
- 1997** In the new regionalized structure of PSAC, almost 50 per cent of the AEC are women (4 of 9)
- 1997** Two PSAC members are elected in the federal election held in June: Louise Hardy from the Yukon Employees Union, representing the riding of Yukon; and Angela Vautour, from National component, representing the riding of Beauséjour-Petitcodiac, both for the New Democratic Party.
- 1998** The first PSAC course on harassment is piloted in February
- 1998** In the Nova Scotia election held in March, the efforts of PSAC members help to elect the first black woman to the legislature. Yvonne Atwell, well-known community activist, represents the riding of Preston for the New Democratic Party
- 1998** Women around the world begin preparations for the World Women's March Against Poverty, to be held in the year 2000. By July 1998, 617 women's groups in 86 countries have indicated their interest
- 1998** At the common issues bargaining table during negotiations with Treasury Board, PSAC negotiates a top-up of parental benefit leave, in addition to the benefits for maternity leave, to a total of 25 weeks

1998 PSAC undertakes an internal pay equity initiative with two of its staff unions

1998 There are now 14 PSAC workplace childcare centres

1998 On June 29, PSAC wins a landmark decision in its 14-year battle for pay equity on behalf of federal public service workers in female-dominated groups. The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal decision includes:

- retroactivity to March 8, 1985 (the date the joint pay equity study was announced);
- simple interest, based on the Canada Savings Bond interest rate;
- interest will continue to accumulate until the payments are made;
- calculation of the wage gap to be based on the Canadian Human Rights Commission methodology, which is close to that of PSAC;
- integration of the pay equity adjustment into the wage rate as of July 29, 1998.

In the wake of the decision, PSAC members sound the rallying cry from coast to coast: "Don't delay – just pay!"

1998 On August 14, the Federal Court dismisses Treasury Board's appeal of the Akerstrom and Moore Human Rights Tribunal decision. At issue in this case is the heterosexual specific definition of 'spouse' in the federal government's collective agreements with its bargaining agents.

1998 On August 27, the Federal government announces it will appeal the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal decision in the global pay equity complaint. PSAC immediately embarks on a national campaign of protest.

1998 In September, PSAC officially endorses the World March of Women 2000 and contributes \$2,000 to enable a delegate from the South to attend the first international planning meeting held in Montreal in October

1998 On December 29, following many months of intense bargaining, the first negotiated collective agreements in over 10 years are signed by PSAC and Treasury Board covering workers at five tables.

Improvements include:

- a new definition of common-law spouse to include same-sex couples and equivalent access to the provisions of the collective agreement;
- family-related leave is expanded to provide for care of an elderly member of the employee's family; the clause now also provides that employees can use Family-Related Leave in order to make alternate care arrangements for a family member's longer illness;
- Maternity-Related Reassignment or Leave: the employer must modify an employee's job functions or reassign her for the period from the beginning of pregnancy to the end of the 24th week following pregnancy; if such modifications are not reasonably practicable, the employee is entitled to leave without pay;

- Pay Equity: For LS workers, all equal pay adjustments paid since 1990, in addition to special pay adjustments offered by the employer when pay equity conciliation talks broke down in September 1998, are rolled into base salary before the application of the economic increase. Other workers involved in the pay equity complaint (CRs, DAs, EUs, and STs) also receive special pay adjustments which are rolled into base salary before the economic increase is applied; however, the previous pay equity adjustment made unilaterally by the employer is not part of base salary.

1998/99 Regional Women's conferences and seminars are held in every region

1999 May marks the 300th day of hearings in the PSAC's pay equity complaint against Canada Post. The complaint on behalf of CRs at Canada Post was filed on August 24, 1983.

1999 On May 31, the Federal Court (Trial Division) begins hearing the government's appeal of the Pay Equity Tribunal decision. PSAC members in the NCR organize daily events in front of the Federal Court building for the entire two-week period, including guest speakers, an appearance by the political satire group the Raging Grannies, and hot dog lunches. A decision is anticipated before the end of 1999.

1999 On July 7, Canadian Human Rights Tribunal hearings begin in the pay equity complaint filed in 1989 on behalf of the workers employed by the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). Hearings are scheduled through to June 2000.

1999 On June 9, the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) sign a partnership agreement aimed at finding solutions to the under-representation of Indigenous Peoples in the labour force.

1999 On July 13, in the face of continued stalling tactics by Treasury Board since the pay equity decision was issued July 29, 1998, PSAC asks that the Tribunal be reconvened to deal with outstanding issues, which include: methodology, interest, equal treatment for the HS group, and how the total amount of money owed will be divided up among the various levels. On October 29, an agreement is signed on how to implement the Tribunal's order.

1999 Sixth National Women's Conference

1999 Negotiated Child Care Fund for our members at Canada Post

1999 Betty Bannon elected first woman National President of the Union of Taxation Employees

1999 Evans decision comes down regarding the government's appeal on pay equity and rules for the union, saying "Justice delayed was justice denied"

The new millenium

- 2000** PSAC 12th Triennial Convention elects first Woman National President: Nycole Turmel
- 2000** 40 per cent of delegates to the 12th Triennial Convention are women
- 2000** Three out of nine members of the Alliance Executive Committee are women: Nycole Turmel, Patty Ducharme and Robyn Benson
- 2000** Five out of 18 component Presidents are women
- 2000** Triennial Convention grants delegate status to PSAC Equal Opportunities Committee representatives to Convention
- 2000** World March of Women in the Year 2000 is launched on March 8 (International Women's Day) and culminates with 50,000 women on Parliament Hill on October 15 (International Day for the Elimination of Poverty)
- 2000/01** Negotiated protective reassignment for pregnant workers with CXs at Corrections Canada and the Technical Table at Treasury Board
- 2001/02** Pay Equity Task Force is established and mandated to organize public consultations on the *Pay Equity Act* and make recommendations by spring of 2003
- 2002** Seventh PSAC National Women's Conference in Ottawa under the theme, "Act Now! Build Our Future!"
- 2003** Triennial Convention re-elects Sister Nycole Turmel as National President
- 2003** 43 per cent of delegates to the 13th Triennial Convention are women
- 2003** 37 per cent of the National Board of Directors elected are women and the three women AEC members are re-elected
- 2003/04** Pay Equity government Taskforce releases its recommendations for a new proactive pay equity law
- 2005** Eighth National Women's Conference in Vancouver under the theme, "Changing the Face of Power"
- 2005** REVPs elected in their respective regions and three out of seven are women: Jeannie Baldwin, Robyn Benson and Patty Ducharme
- 2005** Four women elected to President position at component conventions and one as VP for international members: Betty Bannon, Heather Brooker, Jeanette Meunier-Mackay, Claudia Thompson and Andrée Massicotte

- 2005** Tribunal issues decision in favour of Canada Post pay equity complaint. Employer appeals right away.
- 2008** Christine Collins elected first woman National President of Union of Canadian Transportation Employees (UCTE).
- 2010** A Canadian Human Rights Tribunal decision rules that Canada Border Services Agency's policy requiring employees with childcare obligations to become part-time employees and lose their full-time status and pension entitlements to be able to meet their child care needs is discriminatory.
- 2011** The Supreme Court hears PSAC's appeal of the decision in the pay equity case for Clerical and Regulatory workers at Canada Post. In a rare move, Chief Justice Beverly McLaughlin issues the Court's unanimous decision directly from the bench that same day, ruling in PSAC's favour and ending a 30-year battle for pay equity at Canada Post.
- 2011** Sharon DeSousa is the first racialized woman elected as Regional Executive Vice-President (Ontario)
- 2012** PSAC joins a coalition calling for a national action plan on violence against women and an inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women
- 2012** PSAC Triennial Convention unanimously moves to support a campaign for a universal national child care program
- 2012** Magali Picard becomes the first Indigenous woman Regional Executive Vice-President (Quebec)
- 2013** PSAC women working with sisters from Australia and elsewhere at the UN Commission on the Status of Women obtain strong language on violence in the workplace that prohibits sexual harassment, recognizes the importance of unions and acknowledges that the effects of domestic violence have an impact in the workplace.
- 2016** Government launches National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- 2017** June Winger elected first woman National President of UNDE
- 2017** Treasury Board announces coverage for all forms of contraception under the Public Service Health Care Plan – a longstanding demand of women PSAC members
- 2018** Third Report of the TBS Joint Union-Management Taskforce on Mental Health is released
- 2018** Federal government announces five days of paid leave for workers experiencing domestic violence and dedicated parental leave for second parents.

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THE STRUCTURE OF PSAC





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