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Yukon Employees' Union
2285-2nd Ave.
Whitehorse, Yukon
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Yukon Employees' Union

NEWS

June-July 2011

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2011 PSAC North Convention takes place in Nunavut Union members journey to Iqaluit

PSAC North held their triennial convention the weekend of June 17 in Iqaluit. A charter aircraft from Whitehorse carried 77 convention delegates and observers to Yellowknife, where 70 more delegates from the Northwest Territories boarded for the flight to Nunavut. The 2011 convention was the largest in PSAC North's history. Nearly 200 delegates and observers attended.

The Yukon Employees' Union is one of three northern components of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC). The others are the Union of Northern Workers and the Nunavut Employees Union.

PSAC North is a regional council representing about 12,000 working people in northern Canada. It presents a northern perspective to the parent union, provides an organized system to help those working in the north be heard within the larger PSAC family, and allows northern workers to share ideas, experiences and concerns.

Many of the campaigns and communication initiatives seen in the Yukon have been supported by PSAC North. Some examples in the last three years include:

- Defending Quality Public Services
- Think Public
- Support for a Coalition Government
- Campaign Against Bill C-10, *Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act*
- Hands Off Our Pensions
- Campaign against prorogation of Parliament.

Docherty elected PSAC North REVP

Delegates to the PSAC North Convention elected Julie Docherty to the position of Regional Executive Vice-President for the North.



Julie has been a prominent YEU member and activist for many years. She managed the Workers' Advocate Office, and worked as Union Advisor with YEU. At the time of her election, she was a Director on the YEU Executive and Chair of the Education Committee; she was President of the Yukon Area Council, a Director of Local Y010, and an Executive Council Member of the Yukon Federation of Labour.

Julie also found time to be a certified Facilitator for the return to work education program at YFL. Congratulations Julie. PSAC North is once again in good hands.

Although the head office of PSAC North is located in Yellowknife, NWT, for the last 14 years a Yukoner, Jean-François Des Lauriers, has served Regional Executive Vice-President. This triennial convention was the last for Jean-François. His retirement will challenge PSAC North to continue its record of activism and achievement.

We're pleased that a YEU member was again elected REVP. Former YEU Executive Member Julie Docherty succeeds Brother Des Lauriers.

Labour news

CUPW's fight—a sign of things to come?

The passage of the Harper government's back-to-work legislation that ended the lockout of Canadian postal workers hangs like an ominous cloud over the future of collective bargaining.

The government was not content to legislate postal workers back to work—itself a dubious response to a labour action of less than two weeks. They completely derailed the collective bargaining process by imposing a four-year “contract” worth even less than the employer offered.

The Harper government's use of the word “contract” is itself disingenuous. A contract is an agreement between two parties. The employment arrangement dictated to Canada Post workers is not a contract, collective agreement, nor even an arbitrated decision.

Canada Post is a crown corporation owned by the federal government. What we witnessed is an employer legislating restrictive terms of employment under the pretense of protecting an essential service. The cloud overhead is a genie that won't easily be stuffed back in the bottle. Emboldened

by union-busting success, we can expect the Harper government to initiate further attacks on public service unions.



YEU members and staff support the local CUPW members on the picket line.

The Canadian and US economies are wobbling from the weight at the top, not the bottom or the middle. Yet the gap between the elite who benefit grotesquely from an unequal economy, and those who would like to make the system more balanced, continues to grow.

Hopefully our members watched this battle with attention. At some

point the precedent set by the federal government could be dropped on the doorstep of Yukon public service employees.

It is ironic and troubling that so much of the public comment on the government's heavy-handed legislation appears favourable. One would think those without such employment benefits would look to CUPW as a model. “Good work, guys! How do I get those benefits too?”.

Instead we see many people trying to pull postal workers down an economic peg or two. Such counter-productive attitudes play into the hands of Harper and the like-minded elite.

Deadly hypocrisy

The Harper government has won an international battle it should be embarrassed to have fought.

The Rotterdam Convention wrapped up proceedings in Geneva without agreement to add chrysotile asbestos to the international list of hazardous chemicals. The world can thank Canada for our shameful refusal to recognize the product's danger ... at least in poorer countries.

Canada is the only G8 member that objected to the listing, and one of only four countries in the world. Our enlightened partners in this morally bankrupt action are Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Ukraine.

Listing chrysotile asbestos as a hazardous chemical is not a ban and would not seriously affect Canadian exports of the stuff (in itself a disturbing practice). The listing would merely allow importing countries to deny entry if officials believe they are incapable of properly handling it. How dare those countries make decisions on their own!

While Canada was fighting international protections against one of the most deadly industrial materials known, Prime Minister Harper was underlining the hypocrisy by enjoying a barbecue in Thetford Mines, Quebec, home to a chrysotile asbestos mine.



President's message

The retirement of Jean François Des Lauriers as REVP of PSAC North, followed a week later by the resignation of Alex Furlong as YFL President, left Yukon organized labour with large shoes to fill.

Fortunately, Julie Docherty's election as Regional Executive Vice-President of PSAC North, leaves that organization in good hands. I have no doubt that YFL will also choose their new President well. I wish both Alex and Jean François all the best in their future challenges, and extend my thanks for their years of service.

Harper government shows its colours

Prime Minister Harper's government wasted little time demonstrating how they will use majority status in Parliament. Harper's quick move to crush postal worker's legitimate labour action left no doubt what workers can expect in the next four years. Further cut-backs to federal systems, programs and the public service are sure to follow.

Public sector employees go to work each day and labour with dedication behind the scenes for Canadians. Yet they face relentless attacks by certain politicians and members of the private sector who are emboldened by Harper's actions.

Public Service workers now see their pensions threatened by a government that saw fit to pilfer their plans of more

than \$90 million to pay down the deficit. Worker pensions are self-funded with contributions from both the employer and the employees. That money was not Harper's to take.

Right wing business organizations like the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) chaired by Catherine Swift continue their attacks on public sector wages and pension packages. Swift ignores the fact that the average public sector pension is only \$38,000. CFIB wants to see pensions and benefits *lowered* to private sector levels. Workers can expect many challenges until the next election.

Convention news

The PSAC North Convention in Iqaluit was a productive event and an excellent learning experience. My thanks to all our members and delegates who took part. The YEU Triennial Convention rapidly approaches. I ask our members to please keep an eye on our newsletters, website and bulletin boards for convention updates and critical deadlines.

Steve Cardiff

It's hard to find words to express my sadness at the untimely death of Steve Cardiff, a friend to working people and a friend of mine. Steve's zeal, work ethic and commitment will remain the standard for all elected representatives who follow. I offer my condolences to Steve's family and to the many others who loved him.

Convention update

The countdown to the 2011 YEU Triennial Convention in October continues. Delegate selection is complete and credentials have been submitted.

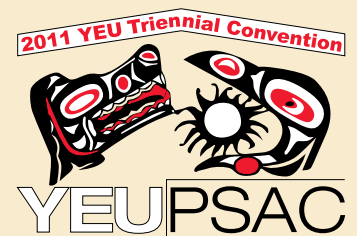
The next deadline is July 28 for the submission of resolutions. However, all parties are urged to forward their resolutions at the earliest possible date in order to expedite processing and sorting.

Resolutions may be submitted by Locals, Regional Committees and Area Councils, and must be certified by these authorities.

In an effort to be more inclusive and accessible to all Union members, YEU/PSAC prefers clear, straightforward language for resolutions submitted to the convention. A *sample resolution* is available from the YEU office.

Basic formatting guidelines ask that resolutions:

- be formatted in 14 point Arial font;
- be limited to 150 words; and
- not include any special formatting such as boxes or drawings.



Please submit all resolutions to the attention of YEU President Laurie Butterworth by e-mail at adminsec@yeu.ca, and in print to 201-2285-2nd Avenue, Whitehorse Yukon Y1A 1C9.

If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact Yukon Employees' Union at 867-667-2331 or 1-888-YEU-2331.

Changes

YFL president moves on

Alex Furlong, President of the Yukon Federation of Labour, stepped down as president on July 8. Furlong served in the position for the last 10 years. Prior to his election, he worked as a Union Advisor with the Yukon Employees' Union.

Alex is moving on to the position of Canadian Labour Congress Regional Director for the prairie region that includes Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nunavut and the NWT.

While Furlong says his new position will be less political than his work at YFL, the need for activism in the political arena remains.

“The labour movement must continue to advocate for those in our society who are marginalized”, he said in his resignation announcement. Labour must also continue to advocate for

those, “who do not have a voice and for those who are continually under attack in the area of wages and benefits for our members”, he continued.



Alex Furlong (left) and Jean-François Des Lauriers joined the demonstration in support of a fair wage settlement for workers employed by Parks Canada.

Alex is the second high-profile YEU member to recently pass the torch after years of service.

Jean-François Des Lauriers retired from his position as Regional Executive Vice-President of PSAC North Triennial Convention in Iqaluit last month.

Former YEU Component Director Julie Docherty was elected to carry on as PSAC North's REVP.

The photograph included with this article was taken at a demonstration in front of the Elijah Smith Building in 2004.

Meetings & Events

YEU Monthly Executive Meeting—2nd Thurs., 6:30-9:00 p.m., YEU Hall

Y010 Monthly Meeting—2nd Wed., 5:00-7:00 p.m., YEU Hall

Y017 Monthly Meeting—4th Wed., 7:30 p.m., YEU Hall

Y023 Monthly Meeting—1st Thurs., Noon

Y025 Monthly Meeting—3rd Wed., 7:30 p.m., YEU Hall

Y026 Monthly Meeting—3rd Thurs., 7:00 p.m., Dawson City

PSAC Regional Access Committee—3rd Thurs., 5:15 p.m., YEU Hall

PSAC Aboriginal Peoples Committee—1st Tues., 5:15 p.m.

PSAC Racially Visible Committee—1st Wed., 5:00 p.m.

PSAC Regional Women's Committee—2nd Tues., 5:15 p.m.

PSAC Health & Safety Committee—1st Thurs., 6:00 p.m.

Dawson Regional Women's Committee—1st Wed., 5:15 p.m., Legion Hall

PSAC Regional Youth Committee—4th Thurs., 7:00 p.m., Lucy Jackson Training Room, YEU Hall

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