

PSAC federal budget fightback plan



The Harper Conservatives have decided to make the public sector pay for the financial crisis.

The spending freeze announced in the 2010 federal budget will result in job and service cuts if we do not mobilize powerful and effective opposition on the ground. PSAC is moving quickly to equip our local unions and activists with tools, strategies and resources to stop the attack on public services. We are organizing to galvanize public and political support.

We're going to fight back.

Our plan is designed to:

- Prevent layoffs. We will ensure the collective agreement protections we have are enforced.
- Protect against job loss through attrition. Vacant jobs are vulnerable, as are term positions. We must push to have jobs filled. Otherwise, workloads will increase dramatically and the quality of service to Canadians will suffer.
- Convince the public that job cuts have a detrimental impact on the quality and level of service to the public.
- Strengthen the connection between members and the PSAC. We need to fightback in ways that engage members directly.
- Get ready for bargaining. Our good collective agreements are worth fighting for and protecting.
- Build the credibility of the PSAC with members and the public as a champion defender of public services.
- Politicize our members. The federal budget has a direct impact on our members, as does the threat to pensions and benefits. Building on an effective fightback in the workplace, we will work to give our members hope that change elsewhere is also possible; and they have a role to play in effecting this change – at the municipal, territorial, provincial and federal levels.

Our fightback plan will get our activists ready for the fightback

Managers are already announcing job cuts and other measures to cope with the spending freeze. We can expect a swift and wide-spread attack. We are taking immediate steps to help our Components, local unions, branches, shop stewards and other activists respond.

The first step is to organize meetings of local/branch executives and shop stewards, Regional Executive Vice-Presidents and other activists. These meetings, which are being organized by the PSAC Regional Offices will:

- outline our fightback plan;
- provide concrete tools for monitoring and reporting in on what is happening in the workplace;
- provide information on the budget and what it will mean;
- explain the job security protections in the collective agreement and stress the importance of enforcing these protections as a first line of defence;
- distribute our first fightback information kit.

Through personal contact, PSAC regional offices will distribute the materials to all local unions/branches unable to attend a meeting.

Our fightback campaign will include campaigns and actions

Local/workplace campaigns:

We need to organize an effective response when services are cut, jobs are eliminated or any other measure that is taken that harms members or the public. Local unions/branches can expect the assistance of the REVP, the Regional Office and the Component.

We are asking locals/branches to monitor their workplaces and report any actions that would impact the delivery of quality public services, such as release of casuals and terms and not filling vacant positions. PSAC Regional Representatives will help local/branches organize this work.

Regional campaigns:

Some cuts will require region-wide campaigns and initiatives. This work will be led by the REVPs and coordinated by the PSAC Regional Co-coordinator, and involve Components at the regional level. It will include any ongoing regional campaigns, such as the campaigns against the elimination of the gun registry and the closure of federal prison farms.

National campaigns:

National campaigns also will be organized around specific cuts and other issues related to the federal government's cost-cutting program. In many cases, these national campaigns will be joint PSAC-Component initiatives.

Our fightback campaign will get our message out to the broader membership and to the public

We need to fightback in the workplace but we also have to win the support of the public.

We will continue and expand town hall meetings:

What began as our pension campaign is now being expanded. We will continue signing the pension petition. And, we'll expand our conversation about retirement security to talk about mobilizing to fight cuts to programs and services. We need to make sure as many people as possible are hearing our message of quality public services and the impact budget freezes and cuts will have on communities across the country.

We will participate in public consultations on financial literacy and pensions:

We will use the current **public consultations on financial literacy**, organized by the Harper government to provide input on a national strategy to strengthen the financial literacy of Canadians, to promote our retirement security message. We continue to push our message that defending and enhancing the public pension system (Q/CPP OAS and GIS) and defined benefit pension plans is the right approach and the only viable solution.

More information on the Task Force can be found at:

<http://www.financialliteracyincanada.com>. Along with public forums, members can also submit comments via the website or use the online forum.

Finance Minister Jim Flaherty has also announced a **national consultation on pensions**. Consultations will be carried out in town hall meetings in Charlottetown, Québec City and Richmond, B.C. and by invitation only round tables in St. John's (NL), Winnipeg and London. The Finance Ministers will be meeting again in May and this will be a key topic on the agenda.

Input can also be provided online by April 30th, 2010. Further information is available at: <http://www.fin.gc.ca/activty/consult/retirement-eng.asp>. We are working with the CLC on these consultations.

We will develop a broad public relations campaign and media strategy:

The PSAC fightback will be supported by public relations initiatives in support of public services and a media strategy developed aimed at getting our message out through the media.

We will continue to build the union

Our fightback campaign will be integrated into our overall union building and membership engagement campaign.

We will build a network of allies

In order to help build popular opposition to Stephen Harper's version of Canada, including the dismantling of quality public services, we need to expand our network of allies and get our message out to more and more communities.

Each region is being asked to forge a relationship with five new allies to help build a broader coalition to oppose the Harper Conservative vision and strengthen the movement for change in Canada.

Building this coalition will also include those groups that are already working to oppose Harper's attacks on human rights, equality, and arts and culture, including groups that are opposed to the current situation at Rights and Democracy, the cuts to the Status of Women and Canadian Human Rights Commission, and all of the other actions of this government that undermine democracy and equality.

Our fightback plan will have the tools

A **PSAC Local Fightback Kit** that includes

- A message to Local Union Presidents and Officers from John Gordon
- A handout on enforcing job security protections in collective agreements and employer policies
- Information on what was in the 2010 federal budget
- Know your rights about union activity in the workplace handout
- Card for members to report workplace changes to their Local/Branch
- Report form for locals/branches to report workplace changes to PSAC and their Component.
- Suggested union questions to raise at union management consultation meetings.
- *Take Action! Everything you need to know to mobilize workers to win positive change* booklet



Accessible tools and information on our website: The PSAC web site will include a specific campaign section to provide news, stories, on-line tools, videos, links to current campaigns and other support to this campaign.

Publications and other materials such as:

- Information on the campaign will appear in both the Union Update and Our Union Voice.
- Flyers and handouts will be produced for membership distribution.
- Letters to the editor and other draft materials to be used in local media

- Standardized speakers notes.
- Stickers, buttons, etc.
- PSAC education courses, such as the upcoming leadership training courses and webinars, will be used to build skills to make our fightback effective.

Our fightback campaign is being funded to get the job done

The 2010 Harper budget presents a significant threat to PSAC members employed in the federal public sector and to all Canadians who need and deserve quality public services. Funds are being allocated to this campaign to ensure that our regions, Components and locals/branches have the resources to get the job done.

Regions will be preparing plans that will cover the work involved in this campaign between now and the end of 2010. These plans will include provisions for supporting local and regional fightback campaigns, related campaigns (such as gun registry, prison farms, etc), and for the necessary resources to oversee this work.