

NewsRelease



Public Service Alliance of Canada | Representing 160,000 workers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PSAC to challenge Harper government's attack on workers' and women's rights

VANCOUVER – The Public Service Alliance of Canada announced today that it has filed a case with the Ontario Superior Court, challenging the constitutionality of the *Expenditure Restraint Act* and the *Equitable Compensation Act* for breaking collective agreements and denying women the right to pay equity in the federal public sector.

The 166,000-member union maintains that the Harper government attempted to hide its disrespect for workers' and women's rights by burying the two contentious laws deep in the *Budget Implementation Act*.

According to PSAC, the *Expenditure Restraint Act* violates the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* by denying workers' right to freedom of association and collective bargaining. The Act legislates rates of pay for employees of Treasury Board, federal agencies, and employers in the federally-regulated private sector. In several cases, the legislation overrides previously negotiated wages – breaking open collective agreements that were bargained in good faith.

The union also maintains that the changes to the pay equity system for federal public sector workers contained in the *Equitable Compensation Act* deny women's equality rights under section 15 of the *Charter*.

According to PSAC, the Act removes pay equity's status as a human right by turning it into a bargaining chip in negotiations where the federal government traditionally holds the balance of power. It also prevents women in the federal public sector from addressing pay equity cases at the Canadian Human Rights Commission, threatening to fine unions \$50,000 for representing or even assisting their members in making complaints.

These measures legislatively curtail the union's ability to voice its support for and provide assistance to its members – violating the *Charter's* guarantee of freedom of expression and association.

"The Conservative government bullied Parliament into passing flawed legislation that undermines workers' right to free collective bargaining and women's right to equal pay for work of equal value," says John Gordon, PSAC's National President. "This represents a clear attack on public sector workers and it endangers the rights of all Canadian workers to free collective bargaining."

Gordon made the announcement that PSAC would be challenging these two pieces of legislation in court from the floor of the union's Triennial Convention in Vancouver, British Columbia. Surrounded by more than 1,000 PSAC members, he pledged to continue fighting for quality public services and human rights in the face of repeated attacks from the Harper Conservative government.

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**For more information
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