



*PSAC members tell G20 to protect public services*

## Calls to cut deficits will damage the economy and harm communities

The Public Service Alliance of Canada refutes the final statement from the G20 summit in June and calls on the Harper government to protect public services.

The G20 leaders agreed to refrain from further stimulus spending and to cut deficits. This is the same justification used by the British government to slash public spending by more than 25 per cent. It's also the rationale being used by the Harper government to cut public sector jobs – harming rather than helping the economy in the process.

“This is having a harmful effect on small communities such as Antigonish and in areas that rely on public sector employment, such as the Ottawa/Gatineau region. Communities rely on people with decent jobs to support local businesses and contribute to the tax base,” said PSAC National President John Gordon. “The G20 and the Harper government are headed in the wrong direction.”

According to a recent study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, middle-income Canadian families benefit from public services that are worth about \$41,000 per year – or 63 per cent of their income. The study, titled *A Quiet Bargain*, thoroughly debunks the notion that tax cuts put money in people's pockets.

In fact, authors Hugh Mackenzie and Richard Shillington prove that tax cuts actually take money away from most workers and would be better spent by investing in public services for Canadians.

PSAC represents more than 172,000 members across Canada, including 130,000 federal public sector workers. In uncertain economic times, Canadians look

to PSAC members, who are on the front lines, helping people access Employment Insurance and making sure that seniors receive their pension cheques.

“We call on the Harper government to stop its assault on public services and invest in the programs that help people and communities,” said Gordon.



Photo: Hassan Hussein

# PSAC condemns police brutality at G20 summits

**M**ass arrests, detentions and abuses of power are an affront to democracy

The Public Service Alliance of Canada condemns the mass arrests of peaceful protestors in Toronto at the G20 demonstrations and joins the growing cry for a public inquiry into police actions.

PSAC members were among 25,000 people who protested against the G20 on Saturday, June 26. The march started in the midst of a torrential downpour, but union members stood their ground, calling on the Harper government to put people first. They wore t-shirts that said, “Protect public services at home and around the world.” For several hours, they marched among a diverse and peaceful crowd, led by women’s rights activists, carrying a giant coat hanger to represent the Harper government’s position against abortion in maternal health initiatives.

But despite a largely peaceful convergence, more than 1,000 people were arrested in an alleged attempt to apprehend the small group of people responsible for acts of vandalism. While PSAC remains committed to non-violent, peaceful protest, the union is joining the thousands of Canadians who are critically concerned about the vicious and disproportionate nature of the police presence in Toronto.

As reports from both mainstream and citizen journalists have revealed, police officers caged in peaceful protestors, charged at them with horses and shot rubber bullets in their direction. This includes people who gathered at the makeshift jail on Eastern Avenue the following

morning to find out where their loved ones had been taken.

As people were released from prison, the stories they told were chilling. This includes young people who were arrested for merely crossing the street, and journalists whose credentials were not respected. First-hand accounts describe inhumane conditions in prison – including alleged strip searches, threats of violence, sexual assaults, denial of food and water and limited access to medication and medical care.

Media commentators and respected activists such as Judy Rebick and Naomi Klein are questioning why the police stood by while vandals trashed stores and burned police cars. With thousands of officers combing the streets, why was this property destruction allowed to continue? And why were hundreds of peaceful protestors detained, arrested and then released without charges?

In the days leading up to the summit, newspapers reported that the Ontario government had

secretly passed a law, expanding police powers to search and arrest people who stood within five metres of the security fence. In the days following the mass arrests, Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair admitted that he had lied and that no such law had actually been enacted.

“As union members, we are seriously concerned about the erosion of civil liberties during the G20 meetings,” said John Gordon, PSAC National President. “Freedom of expression and the right to gather peacefully are guaranteed in the *Charter of Rights*. People should not have to fear the police officers who were supposed to protect them,” he said.

The PSAC has signed an open letter with many organizations such as Amnesty International, the Canadian federation of Students and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association calling for a public inquiry into the allegations of police brutality during the protests surrounding the G20 Summit.



Photo: Hassan Hussein

# Conference focuses on accessibility, accommodation and inspiration

Approximately 120 PSAC activists attended the 2010 National Access Conference in Ottawa from June 4 to 6th which was based on the theme, "Let's focus on our abilities."

## Celebrating victories

John Gordon, National President of PSAC, was a guest speaker. He talked about a recent union victory that has delayed the immediate implementation of a federal policy on parking, which would have adversely impacted workers with disabilities.

Gordon urged delegates to mobilize to force the federal

## Mental illnesses rise sharply

The number of claims for disability benefits due to mental illness has been increasing faster than all other disabilities in Canada.

In the public sector, this increase has been influenced by job losses and attrition while the demand increases for public services in the midst of a financial crisis.

For Miriam Edelson, a trade unionist with OPSEU and social activist, the fight for the rights of people with mental illnesses is part of the broader human rights and social justice struggle.

In her view, representing a worker with a mental illness is sometimes the most difficult task confronting a union representative like a shop steward.



*Delegates to the 2010 PSAC Access Conference elected their representatives to the PSAC Equal Opportunity Committee.*

*Back row: Anne Fagan-Wood (1<sup>st</sup> Alternate), Peter Barr (2<sup>nd</sup> Alternate), John Couture (1<sup>st</sup> Alternate). Middle Row: Paul E. Jones (EOC Representative), Shirley Ryan (EOC Representative). In front: Souad (Sue) Soubra (2<sup>nd</sup> Alternate).*

government to abolish this policy in its entirety. He pointed to the many victories won by people with disabilities on various political stages.

For Gordon, these victories only marked the beginning of a long path leading to full participation by people with disabilities in society.

## Accommodation: a right, not a privilege

Specialists on the duty to accommodate spoke at the PSAC Access Conference, explaining the many facets of this process.

Craig Spencer, a lawyer for PSAC's Government Services Union, said that although the battle to obtain the duty to accommodate has been won before the courts, much still has to be done to turn this legal decision into practical measures to help persons with disabilities in the work place.

According to Alexander Waddell of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, the duty to accommodate must comply with people's specific needs and provide a guarantee that opportunities open to Canadians are not limited based on discriminatory grounds.

The Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) Program team at Environment Canada was highlighted by Mike Arnold who shared his experience with accommodation and technology in the federal public service. His team helps federal departments to accommodate workers using adaptive technology.

# PSAC campaign against privatization at Canada Post

**PSAC** members across the country continue to express their opposition to Canada Post's decision to privatize its call centres in Edmonton, Ottawa, Winnipeg and Fredericton as well as the National Philatelic Centre in Antigonish

They organized several events to let Canadians know that this decision will eliminate more than 300 jobs and hurt the economy of the communities where the centres are located. This privatization will also deprive Canadians of quality services they are entitled to and on which they rely.

In Fredericton, UPCE members organized a barbecue on June 25 at the Canada Post call centre in Fredericton, NB to protest Canada Post's decision to close the centre.

The BBQ was a great success despite the fact that the employer refused to allow the event to be held on Canada Post's parking lot. The organizers had to set it up on the adjoining Credit Union's parking lot.

Members of UPCE Local 80823 of the National Philatelic Centre in Antigonish held a solidarity BBQ during the Antigonish Highland Games. They donated the proceeds to two local families whose children are being treated at the Izaak Walton Killam (IWK) Children's Hospital,



in Halifax. One child is battling leukemia while the other is fighting a serious virus. A total of \$1506.00 was raised.

In addition to the BBQ, over 200 signatures were collected for the fightback petition. Members distributed the "Stop

the Privatization of Canada Post" leaflet while the announcer consistently encouraged visitors to sign the petition to keep jobs in the community. It was a very successful day and the spirits of the members of UPCE Local 80823 were very high.

