



### The National Newsletter of the Commissionaires Union

## First labour contract a victory

By Jim MacMillan-Murphy

History was made for both the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the union of Commissionaires, when the workers voted 84 per cent in favour of their first collective agreement on Aug. 15, 2002.

"It was a clear vote of support and mandate for the executive. We worked hard to get the vote out," said Ches Bennett, President of the Victoria, the Island and Yukon Division of the B.C. local.

The vote had been postponed a month on an issue of employer language in the agreement. "We felt it was important to the membership to provide them with a sound document," Bennett said.

During the ratification process Nick Humphries, Garry Frazer, and Steve Orcherton acted as Union umpires and scrutineers.

During the two well-attended ratification meetings, PSAC Regional Representative Al Hadvick and Organizer Les Buss fielded questions about PSAC as a bargaining agent.

Negotiating team members Bennett, Mike Churchill, Mike Dominy and Richard Rennie provided the meetings with their view of what the team was against.

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OVER 1,000 STRONG AND GROWING



## Commissionaires Union makes tracks across Canada

The PSAC is organizing nationally a union of Commissionaires for Commissionaires, with activities from coast to coast and growing.

"Commissionaires across Canada seem to share the same areas of concerns and experience the same difficulties," said Les Buss of PSAC, who is co-ordinating the Commissionaires campaign.

PSAC is certified for about 600 members on Vancouver Island and the Yukon, and they have ratified their first collective agreement. PSAC is certified or has applications in for an additional 135 members in B.C. In Alberta, about 1,000 commissionaires are being organized.

"And more leads are coming in

from Saskatchewan and Manitoba," stated Buss.

In Northern Ontario, about 60 Commissionaires have been certified and, recently, about 150 at the Toronto International Airport. A campaign is underway in the Ottawa region for about 1,600 Commissionaires, as well.

"Commissionaires want an unbiased grievance procedure where justice prevails, they want dignity and respect, they want regular yearly pay increases that they can take to the bank, and benefits to allow them and their families to live in the dignity they have earned," said Buss.

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## A solidarity message from the PSAC National President

On behalf of all members, officers and staff of the PSAC, I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate Commissionaires from across Canada on their first national newsletter.

The PSAC campaign to organize Commissionaires has been very rewarding. It is obvious that the Corps of Commissionaires will attempt anything in its power to prevent you from unionizing — but let it be known, the PSAC and Commissionaires are fighters!

Each of you deserves dignity and respect in the workplace, whether you've joined the Corps after a career in the military or as a civilian with an interest in the security sector.

I've met many of you over the past two years, at conventions, conferences and other union events and look forward to meeting many more in the future. I encourage you to keep up the good work, to continue to organize and to develop a strong union presence in each of your regions.

Nycole Turmel,  
PSAC National President

## Point of View

# Commissionaires can learn from B.C. about being happy

*By Ernie Hunter*

Well, summers over, people are not happy. The kids are back to school, the kids are not happy. The Senators want to legalize marijuana, some people are happy. The Commissionaires in British Columbia are a part of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. They have their first collective agreement, they are happy.

Here in the Ottawa Division, we are not happy, so we are organizing. Just the other day a Commissionaire asked another what he thought about the possibility of the Ottawa Division unionizing. His reply was, "I was seriously considering it when I was on the spares list. I was not happy, but now I have a good post so I do not need a union." (Translation: I am paid well, I am looked after and my needs are met — I am happy). Remember as often happens, it's chicken one day, feathers the next. (Translation: Today it's \$15.00 per hour, tomorrow it's \$10.60). No collective agreement, no guarantees.

Commissionaires in the Ottawa

Division are not happy. The hiring practices at Corps HQs that are being used are inadequate and unfair. There is a lot of talent in the field that could be used in better ways. In most cases they are using the senior Commissionaires and their experience to train new Commissionaires, even to train new supervisors. What a sham. You apply for a position through the competition channels, you believe you have a good shot, then you are told that you did not qualify, that you did not have what the client wanted. You appeal, and they tell you, "We do not have to tell you why you did not qualify."

New contracts are acquired that pay better than the starting wage. The contractor is closer to your home, and you have no idea about these contracts until you read about them in the Communiqué. Now try and use your seniority to acquire one of these better paying posts. Good Luck.

We can change all that. Take a look at the Commissionaires Union of B.C.'s collective agreement. You can acquire a copy or look on the Internet at [www.psc-cmre.com](http://www.psc-cmre.com).

## Point of View

# Ex-military and civilians are standing united in our union

*By Rob Mitchell*

I can only see one major chink in our armour as a body of workers organizing ourselves: the "civilian" and "ex-military/police" issue. This is being used by supervisors and managers on various sites here in Alberta as an obvious divide-and-conquer strategy.

"The civilians are the ones that are trying to bring in the union," one ruffled warrant officer told me. That is a lie. Look at organiz-

ers across Canada. We are representational of the Commissionaires. We are a mix of military and civilian backgrounds. We must not be duped into this propaganda and become disunited.

In 1996, the Corps chose to become a national security company with a very aggressive agenda. It was management's decision to hire civilians. All the Corps offices are staffed by a mix of civilian and ex-military, as well. But the civilians are sometimes treated like sec-

ond-class Commissionaires by management and their ex-military co-workers. As someone dealing with different races, genders, religions and backgrounds, I only have one comment: "KNOCK IT OFF." Unity and respect are what we are about. The sooner we roll up our sleeves, sign those union cards and start acting like equal brothers and sisters, the better.

Remember: "They may win some battles, but we will win the war."



photo by Frank Way

Members of the Commissionaires Union from Victoria give moral and practical support to their fellow Commissionaires in St. John's, Newfoundland, during a 12-day organizing drive in July 2002.

## Operation Downhomer builds solidarity

By *Jim MacMillan-Murphy*

From the second they landed in St. John's, Newfoundland, until they left 12 days later, the team of five Commissionaires was hard at work organizing their fellow Commissionaires in the area to join the union. In fact, they made contacts that very night.

Ches Bennett, Frank Way, Jim MacMillan-Murphy, Fred Connors and Carol Lewis flew in on July 9 from Victoria, B.C. Les Buss, the PSAC organizer for the Commissionaires, was also with them. Ches, Frank, Jim and Fred, who now live in Victoria, were originally from Newfoundland. Alain St-Amour, the Atlantic organizer and, later, Chris Wilson, the Ontario organizer, joined the team.

The St. John's Commissionaires had been organized by the Steelworkers, but the Commissionaires decertified from them. From the start, the team had an uphill battle, as most Commissionaires had lost confidence in unions.

But the frankness of the team, their willingness to talk to their comrades one-on-one and their collec-

tive agreement won the majority over to the cause. This involved long hours and a lot of travel. In the end, the Commissionaires Union of Newfoundland and Labrador, PSAC Local 05/91100, was founded.

Mention should also be made of the hard work of PSAC staff members of the St. John's regional office: Ruby Whelan, Mike Stokes and Larry Walsh. They provided support, encouragement and a fantastic sense of humour.

Donald Ouellette was also there from the start to ensure that the Commissionaires of Newfoundland and Labrador were represen-

tative. Almost like a superman, he would finish his shift and then work the long hours to ensure the local was created. It was only fitting that he became the local's first Interim President.

As the team left Newfoundland, they felt a real sense of accomplishment, and for those among them who were originally from Newfoundland, there was a feeling that "we done a proper thing." This organizing drive along with those in B.C., Toronto, N.B. and P.E.I. are proof that a national initiative can assure victory in the national organizing drive for Commissionaires.

We are looking for volunteers, Commissionaires who want to receive training in organizing/representation, and others who wish to share their leadership skills for the benefit of all Commissionaires. We are currently forming National Committees to address our shared concerns and to address future campaigns in a coordinated, orderly fashion. Please contact Les Buss at

604-240-1382, Chris Wilson, Ontario regional Organizer at 416-485-3558, Allan Johnson at 604-430-5631, Jim Macmillan-Murphy at 250-953-1053 for further information on how you can help. We will be publishing a list of all officers, stewards, and volunteers nationwide as soon as possible. Thank you and we look forward to meeting many more Commissionaires in the future.

## Tracks: More interested in unionizing

*Continued from page 1*

In the past few months Commissionaires from B.C. have travelled to P.E.I., New Brunswick, and Newfoundland. Their organizing efforts resulted in the Union applying for certification for all Commissionaires from CFB Gagetown, N.B., and St. John's, Nfld. Commissionaires from other areas in N.B. and Nova Scotia are contacting Commissionaires and

PSAC in hopes of having campaigns start in their areas as soon as possible.

"I want to thank the dozens of Commissionaires from across Canada who have now become elected officers, stewards, committee members and volunteers in our shared goal of unionizing," stated Buss. "Without the dedication of these men and women this campaign would never have gotten off the ground."



photo by Chris Wilson

PSAC Ontario Regional Executive Vice-President Gerry Halabecki (right) congratulates Ian Finnigan, a raffle winner, during the election of new executives at Toronto Airport. Commissionaires and COREII employees elected their executives on Sept. 17, 2002.

## Contract: Fairness, dignity and respect

*Continued from page 1*

"I really appreciate the talent, dedication and commitment of these brothers who worked on our behalf to achieve this historic agreement," commented a Commissionaire upon leaving one of the meetings.

"We missed having PSAC Lead Negotiator Moe Ritchie there," stated Local President Bennett, "but, we know he was there in spirit."

Ritchie, who had prior commitments, was hailed as demonstrating professionalism, commitment, knowledge and a drive to ensure the best deal for the workers.

This first agreement guarantees these Commissionaires the tools to ensure fairness, dignity and respect on their work sites.

"We are grateful to our bargaining agent, the Public Service Alliance of Canada, who not only provided us with the expertise of staff members, negotiators and organizers, but also were there beside us from the start to the finish," enthused Jim MacMillan-Murphy, Secretary for the Victoria division of the local.

### Contributors to this issue:

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