



### THE NATIONAL NEWSLETTER OF THE COMMISSIONAIRES UNION

## A step toward safer working conditions

Guards working for the Corps of Commissionaires in B.C. reached a tentative agreement with their employer on May 5, 2003, that will protect their health and safety rights and their control over their schedules.

Members of the Commissionaires Union of B.C., Mainland Division, were calling for fairness and safer conditions in a dangerous working environment.

They work all over B.C. at RCMP detachments guarding prisoners either on remand or awaiting transport to a correctional facility. They often are the target of verbal abuse and risk being exposed to possible communicable diseases from some detainees.

The union members were so adamant about their demands that they demonstrated in early April in front of the Corps' headquarters in Vancouver.

This protest followed a similar protest in March from Commissionaires in Victoria who were negotiating their wage re-opener at the time.

Highlights of the tentative agreement include:

- ♦ Effective on ratification, Williams Lake and Alexis Creek members wages will be increased from \$11.60 per hour to \$11.90 per hour retroactive to April 1, 2002;

- ♦ Effective the date of ratification, all employees wages will be increased from \$11.90 per hour to \$12.15 per hour retroactive to April 1, 2003;

- ♦ Effective April 1, 2004 all employees wages will be increased from \$12.15 per hour to \$12.30 per hour, or 60 per cent of the Billing Rate increase – whichever is greater;

- ♦ Effective April 1, 2004, all employees wages will be increased from \$12.30 per hour to \$12.45 per hour, or 60 per cent of the Billing Rate increase – whichever is greater;

- ♦ Article 16 provides for a new process on protecting Health & Safety Rights;

- ♦ Article 18 provides for a grievance procedure with rights to union representation up to and including having grievances heard before an independent Arbitrator who can order a binding settlement on the parties;

- ♦ Article 22 provides that the employer will grant leave with pay for all meetings called by management;

- ♦ Article 25 is a process on discipline giving far greater protection and faster resolution to the employees than existed before.

The Union has retained members' ability to control their own scheduling at each individual detachment.

A series of ratification meetings at different locations in B.C. were scheduled to take place in late May. The results will be reported in the next newsletter and perhaps sooner on their Web site.

The agreement, if ratified by the members, will have an expiry date of March 31, 2006.



PSAC photo

Zena Lawrence, a guard from Pemberton, B.C., explains their protest to a CityTV reporter. The Commissionaires held their rally in Vancouver in front of the Corps of Commissionaires headquarters last April.

## Point of View

# 'No more sucking up to management to get what's duly ours'

By Reg Coulridge  
President of Local 05-00801

The word "organized" has many different meanings, but I had never thought of it in terms of the labour movement, in terms of organizing to bargain collectively. Being mature, stable and able to stand up for myself and my rights — thank you very much! — I would never have seen myself as a union activist.

I joined the PSAC in organizing my fellow workers because of what I call the autocratic system of management at the Corps, a style that uses fear and manipulation of employees to have tight control over them. Management often acted in a manner reflecting the attitude that Commissionaires should be happy to have a job. The reality was a lot of talent was untapped. Commissionaires were powerless to do anything as individuals. Redress was a joke. If Commissionaires didn't comply with questionable management decisions, they would be squeezed

out or made to resign through punitive scheduling practices.

Commissionaires needed something to pull them together, to unite them in their frustrations and to gain some power to determine their future. Being in a more secure position than many, I took up the challenge of helping to organize towards this goal.

Organizing was relatively easy. The attitude of local management coupled with bad decisions resulted in union cards being signed quickly. I'd point out to Commissionaires how certain actions of management would be curtailed if there was a collective agreement.

In a couple of months, we were certified, and, soon after, we signed our first collective agreement.

No more fighting as an individual. No more sucking up to management to get what's duly ours. All our gains are now be enshrined in the collective agreement so that the employer cannot unilaterally take them away.

## Commissionaires in Sudbury, Temiskaming ratify first collective agreement

In March, fifty employees of the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires, Ottawa Division, working in the Districts of Sudbury and Temiskaming unanimously voted in favour of ratifying their first collective agreement negotiated by the PSAC.

Highlights of the Agreement include:

- ♦ improved wages
- ♦ a new grievance procedure
- ♦ a no contracting-out clause
- ♦ discipline only with just cause
- ♦ seniority rights
- ♦ improved health & safety rights

- ♦ A staffing clause
- ♦ A new variance clause to give Commissionaires the right to join

"Commissionaires across the Districts of Sudbury and Temiskaming took the step to join PSAC for strong union representation, improved job protection, health and safety rights, consistent application of workplace rules and increased wages," says Gerry Halabecki, PSAC Regional Executive Vice-President – Ontario. "This historic first agreement will ensure that Commissionaires across Northern Ontario will stand together with dignity and respect."

## Toronto airport Commissionaires push for speedy bargaining

For Pearson International Airport and CORE II employees in Toronto, militant action from Commissionaires in B.C. is serving as a cattle prod to a slow-moving management negotiating team.

Frustrated with plodding through their first bargaining session that focused more on wording than on real problems in the workplace, the PSAC bargaining team representing Commissionaires expressed their concern and brought up the protest actions in B.C. as a possible tactic they might fall back on. The employer's side, the Corps of Commissionaires, reacted with concern.

Commissionaires and CORE II employees at Pearson Airport are in the process of negotiating their first collective agreement. They met with the employer for three days in March 2003.

The union agreed to a proposal to reduce the premium structure of workers' benefit package, without prejudice to any position that may be taken at the table.

There was also agreement in principle to a staffing procedure, with some agreement on the mechanics, and there was some movement in the area of seniority, although there are still some concerns.

As well, there was a very good discussion on employment equity and promotional opportunity.

The employer expressed its continued opposition to unionization through its lawyer at the bargaining table, although by the third day the PSAC team believed that there may be the beginnings of a better understanding of why workers need a union and a contract.

Another bargaining session was held in May. Stay tuned for details in our next issue.

# Commissionaire steps up to plate

Like the season, the Ottawa campaign to organize Commissionaires is springing to life. The efforts of a few key activists who have joined the organizing committee are advancing the efforts tremendously. Ernie Hunter has been leading the campaign to date. He's encouraged by the interest of these new activists.

"It shows that more Commissionaires are realizing that to make real change they've got to step up to the plate and make the it happen," he observed.

Claire is one of these activists. Like many working for the Corps of Commissionaires, she never saw herself as much of a unionist – until now. The inequitable treatment in

shift assignments and application of rules made her join the union movement.

"It was clear to me that there are two sets of rules: Those which apply to everyone and those which apply to management's favourites," she stated.

For Claire and others, fairness is the key principle behind supporting the union. "The employer is acting like a bully. I've always hated bullies," she said.

A collective agreement negotiated with the Corps will outline the roles and responsibilities of the employer and the union in areas such as staffing. A grievance procedure will be in place so that Commissionaires can challenge their employer when

they see injustices.

"I know that fellow Commissionaires don't necessarily understand that the union is about us," Claire said. "But through information-sharing, education and empowerment, the union will give us the backbone to stand up to this employer."

She recognizes that many are fearful at this point: They can't risk losing their posts and their paycheques. She has taken on the role of organizing Ottawa Commissionaires, working closely with PSAC staff. Her energy and enthusiasm will inspire others to move from a place of fear to one of hope for how the union can improve their working lives.

## Union wins victories on two fronts

By Les W. Buss  
Regional Organizer

The Commissionaires on Vancouver Island, B.C., ratified the deal on their wage re-opener with the employer on May 7.

Both parties were able to agree on additional language that will enable for wage increases on the renewal of contracts with many clients. This is visionary in that it allows the employer to remain competitive while ensuring steady work for Commissionaires.

The PSAC and the Commissionaires Union across Canada have always maintained that our members' interests were in job security, respect, steady but reasonable wage increases and recognition of seniority.

see *VICTORY* on page 4



PSAC photo

PSAC National President Nycole Turmel and National Executive Vice-President John Gordon sign an application for certification.

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; Mark Power, St. John's, Nfld. at 709-726-6453; and Angèle Cadieux, Ottawa, at 613-560-4261 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.

# PSAC National Convention impresses Commissionnaire

As a first-time delegate to the 2003 PSAC Triennial Convention, Commissionnaire Marvin Akal was a little overwhelmed.

"I'm learning a lot," said the Pearson International Airport traffic officer in the convention hall in Montreal on April 29, "and it's a lot of information to take back to members."

Akal is one of about 150 new PSAC members of Commissionnaires and CORE II employees at the airport and is the vice-president of the directly chartered local. His bargaining unit was certified in July 2002 and is currently negotiating

their first contract.

"I came here to see what PSAC is really about," Akal said. "So far, I've seen that it's like one big family. I also get to see who the president [Nycole Turmel] of the union is."

Akal says he has acquired a huge respect for the union, especially after hearing speakers Maude Barlow of the Council Canadians and Maria Clara Baquero Sarmiento of the Colombian public service union, ASODEFENSA, outline the negative impacts of globalization on workers and all people.

"Seeing that PSAC [has links] to Colombia, that's fantastic," he said.

"It's excellent that PSAC is dealing with issues internationally and not only in North America."

Akal collected as much literature from the convention as he could to take back to his members and planned to call for a membership meeting to report on the convention. "I'll try to relay information to them as best as I can," he said.

The main thing he wants to convey to them is PSAC "is not just another union; it's much bigger than that. As the President said, 'Let's all work together to strive for a better tomorrow, in North America and the world.'"

## Victory: PEI does it a third time

*continued from page 3*

Our brother and sister Commissionnaires in PEI have done it again! They have organized for the third time and have applied for certification for "all Commissionnaires employed by the Canadian Corps of Commissionnaires working in Prince Edward Island."

They have overwhelming support and were able to apply for certification with a huge majority. These Commissionnaires never quit trying for Union representation. The

employer always maintained that they respect their Commissionnaires' right to join a Union, but they continually raised legal roadblocks to prevent them attaining union representation. There are no further hurdles or roadblocks left and the union is predicting that they will begin collective bargaining for a contract before summer.

It only took them three weeks to sign a majority of the 160 Commissionnaires, which speaks well for their dedication and tenacity.

## B.C. Local elects officers

The following brothers and sisters were elected in February 2003 as officers of Local 05-20500 in B.C. (Victoria, the Islands and Yukon):

- ◆ Ches Bennett – President
- ◆ Richard Rennie – 1st Vice-President
- ◆ Mike Dominy – 2nd Vice-President
- ◆ Jim MacMillan-Murphy – Secretary
- ◆ Frank Way – Treasurer
- ◆ Natasha Pierre – Women's Advocate.

### Contributors to this issue:

Les Buss, Reg Coulridge,  
and other PSAC Staff

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