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*Inside - PSAC North convention, P3 public forums, attendees sought for National Unity Conference in Halifax, People, President's message*

## PSAC North gearing up for convention



Delegates from across the North will gather in Whitehorse beginning May 6th for the 3rd Regional Convention of PSAC North. Union activists from the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut will meet at this, the largest assembly of Canadian labour activists ever held north of 60. The convention will run for three days – Friday, May 6 to Sunday, May 8. Friday's sessions will be devoted to the first Pan-Northern Regional Health and Safety Conference.

The founding convention of PSAC North took place in April 2000 in Yellowknife. Twenty-five delegates attended. The second was held in Iqaluit, attracting 35 delegates. This time, organizers expect more than 150 delegates from every corner of the North, as well as dozens of guests and observers.

In a notable departure from the past events, for the first time grassroots delegates will have the

opportunity to elect their regional leadership at their own convention. In the past, the regional executive vice-president and alternate were selected at the PSAC Convention by the Northern Caucus.

PSAC's organizing committee has prepared an ambitious agenda that features thought-provoking workshops and panel discussions. Delegates will vote on a host of resolutions – more than 30 – and a complete rewrite of the PSAC North bylaws.

PSAC North is the northern regional council of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. It represents close to 12,000 working people across the North, a land mass equal to all the western provinces of Canada put together,

plus Ontario! The PSAC North headquarters is in Yellowknife.

Members in the region work for a variety of employers, including federal, territorial and municipal governments, non-profit organizations and in the private sector.



At a public forum in Whitehorse on April 20, Public-Private Partnership (P3) experts Murray Dobbin and Steven Shrybman cautioned Yukoners about the dangers inherent in such privatization schemes. See story on page two for details.

Most members belong to the three northern components of the PSAC: the Yukon Employees' Union, the Nunavut Employees' Union, and the Union of Northern Workers. These three organizations are unique within the PSAC family because they are regionally-based.

## Experts challenge government on P3s

Two experts on Public-Private Partnerships offered their views to Yukoners at public forums in Dawson City and Whitehorse on April 19 and 20. Writer Murray Dobbin and lawyer Steven Shrybman presented compelling accounts of the Canadian and international experience with P3s over the last fifteen years.

According to Dobbin and Shrybman, such “partnerships” are really just a means of privatizing public utilities for the good of corporations – to the detriment of the tax-paying public.

Even proponents of such arrangements, including Yukon Minister Jim Kenyon, have abandoned the argument that P3s save money.



Moderator Lindsay Staples, writer Murray Dobbin and lawyer Steven Shrybman address the Whitehorse forum Wednesday, April 20.

Financial savings are impossible when the cost of corporate borrowing always exceeds the interest rates available to government. Furthermore, corporations have a

fiduciary responsibility to their shareholders – and as such are bound by law to seek a profit. This responsibility to investors *must* either result either in increased cost or a reduction in service delivery quality.

But the most disturbing aspect of the move toward such privatization is the demand for secrecy imposed by the corporate partners. Details of the contract terms are rarely made public, even after extended legal action.

The net result is a significant reduction in accountability.

For more information on this important issue, go to the YEU website at [www.yeu.ca](http://www.yeu.ca).

## YEU people



Jean-François Des Lauriers

Jean-François Des Lauriers has been the Regional Executive Vice President of the PSAC in the North since the union regionalized its political structure in May 1997.

He has been a member of the PSAC for over twenty years, working as a firefighter with Northern Affairs Canada and at the Whitehorse Airport. Before being elected to his current position, he was a Director on the Yukon Employees' Union Executive.

During Jean-François' tenure, the PSAC in the North has emerged as a vibrant, unified social movement, recognized and respected regionally and nationally.

Jean-François is a strong advocate for the rights of those who are facing discrimination

and alienation in our society. He has a special interest in the promotion of aboriginal workers rights. In 2003, he worked with aboriginal members across the country to gain recognition and funding from

*"To me, being a full time elected officer of the union is a great privilege. I can think of few other jobs where one can make such positive difference in so many people's lives."*

Jean-François Des Lauriers

PSAC for the National Aboriginal, Inuit and Métis network.

He has been a major player in promoting the PSAC nationally, recruiting several new bargaining units across the country. In the North, his support was instrumental in organizing in the diamond industry in NWT.

Jean-François has lived in the Yukon for close to twenty five years, raising a family with his wife Sylvie Léonard, also an active YEU member. They have raised two children, a daughter, Angelune and a son, Félix.

# YEU from the President

**Dave Hobbis, President**

## **Y022 JCC Restart**

Congratulations to the members of Local Y022 City of Whitehorse Transit Workers and the employer for restarting Joint Consultation Committee meetings. The JCC meetings are a valuable tool for all locals to foster positive discussion and resolve workplace issues.

## **YEU Triennial Convention**

In October, 2005, YEU will hold its Triennial Convention. The delegate selection process is well under way in most locals.

Once every three years our members have the opportunity to give positive direction to YEU. This is *your* chance to chart the future of *your* union. I urge all members to become actively involved.

## **Government's Investing in Public Service program**

The Yukon government has committed 1.3 million dollars in new money to the *Investing in Public Service (I.P.S.)* initiative. While the Union supports this concept, we have expressed concern that the dollar allocation may be stretched too thin over program components to be effective.

Article 26.05 "Education Leave" of the collective agreement between YTG and PSAC obligates the employer to consult with the union on the training and development areas. YEU should therefore be in position to offer positive input into this aspect of program delivery.

We know from long experience that I.P.S. is a bureaucratic rather than political initiative. We are therefore thankful that Public Service Commission officials were able to convince the current government of their employees' worth, and the appropriateness of investing in its workforce.

Nonetheless, the dollars committed do not come near to equaling the money in 1970s terms that was dedicated department-by-department toward employee education and skill development.

We see this initiative as a recognition of the need for future planning by the employer. As the long-term workforce retires from the public sector, we expect the employer to increase spending on an ongoing basis to achieve a meaningful commitment to training and development.

## **Pension Plans**

The Union is closely following the concerns that have surfaced about both the College and Hospital pension plans. PSAC staff who are very knowledgeable on pensions are involved in the process.

We are currently taking the position that the solvency deficiency that has been identified in both plans ought to be the employer's responsibility. Any modification to the pension arrangements to provide otherwise would require the authorization of PSAC, which would normally be given after a ratification vote amongst the membership.

## **Safe workplaces are a right, not an option**

In the past year, one Yukon worker was killed and 438 workers suffered job-related injuries at their place of employment.

Yukon workplaces are not getting any safer either. Statistics from the Yukon Workers Compensation, Health and Safety Board show that in 1994 there were 1043 claims filed. In 2004, 1108 claims were filed - that's 65 more workplace injuries in the Yukon than a decade ago.

April 28 marked the 21st National Day of Mourning – a day to remember and honour people who have died on the job.

Do your part to ensure your workplace is free from hazards.

## **YEU Observations**

April 21st in the Legislature

Question about the government's plan to sell Emergency Medical Services to Yukon Hospital Corporation

**Mr. McRobb:** To what extent is the minister involving the union in this transfer of EMS to the Hospital Corporation?

**Mr. Jenkins:** Fully, Mr. Chair.

YEU has had *no* contact with Minister Jenkins on this issue *at all*, and none from his senior bureaucrats since May of 2004.

# YEU across Canada

## Delegates sought for 2005 PSAC NATIONAL UNITY CONFERENCE

*"Building the Future: Taking our place in the Union and the world"*

September 23rd – 25th, 2005  
Halifax.

YEU/PSAC members interested in attending the 2005 PSAC National Unity Conference can pick up registration forms at the Union office. On-line registration is also available on the PSAC website at [www.psac.com](http://www.psac.com).

The application deadline is **May 11, 2005**.

### CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the 2005 National Unity Conference are:

- To enhance our understanding and analysis of the challenges facing Racially Visible and Aboriginal, Inuit and Métis communities in our fight against racism;
- To empower, politicize and mobilize to take action to ensure our Union, workplaces and communities are inclusive and racism free; and
- To strengthen our formal and informal networks, communication and to build solidarity between and among Racially Visible and Aboriginal, Inuit and Métis members at all levels within our Union.

All PSAC Racially Visible and Aboriginal, Inuit and Métis members in good standing are eligible

to apply to attend this conference.

There will be a minimum of 80 delegates selected to attend. Delegates will be selected through a process involving their respective Regions and Components.

Delegate costs for attending the PSAC National Unity Conference will be fully covered under terms of the 2003 PSAC Triennial Convention decision and PSAC Travel Directive. Eligible costs include:

- travel costs, including ground transportation;
- hotel accommodation costs at the Westin Nova Scotian Hotel;
- loss of salary;
- per diem for meals;
- incidental costs.

## YEU calendar

**May 6th, 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.**

**PSAC Health & Safety Information Fair**  
High Country Inn, Whitehorse

**May 6th-8th**

**3rd Annual Convention of PSAC North**  
Whitehorse, Yukon.

**May 8th, 7:30 a.m.**

**PSAC Pan-North Women's Breakfast  
Caucus**  
High Country Inn Ballroom, Whitehorse

**2nd Thursday, 6:30 p.m.**

**Monthly YEU Executive Meeting**  
YEU Hall. Members welcome.

**2nd Wednesday, 5:00 p.m.**

**Y010 Monthly Meeting**  
YEU Hall, Whitehorse.

**4th Thursday, 7:30 p.m.**

**Y017 Monthly Meeting**  
YEU Hall, Whitehorse.

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### Office Hours:

**Mon-Thurs** 8:30 am – 5:00 pm

**Fridays** 8:30 am – 12:00 pm

1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Members are reminded to notify the YEU office  
of any change of address or name changes. Call  
Linda Bidrman – Membership Services, email  
[lbidrman@yeu.ca](mailto:lbidrman@yeu.ca) or fax the number above.