

**REPORT
OF THE
NATIONAL PRESIDENT
Todd Panas
May 1 to October 07, 2018**

INTRODUCTON:

I want to express my gratitude to our members, elected representatives, stewards and staff for their efforts and commitment to the best Component within the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

Also, I want to acknowledge the important role of our National Vice-President, Shimen Fayad. We make an excellent team with Shimen managing the office and various other initiatives; we compliment each other on our distinct roles. The transition is still evolving with the writing of new job descriptions, shaping our organization and looking at better ways of providing front line service and representation to our members.

Special thanks to Sister Jayne Powers for her willingness to continue her role as Membership Administrator for the UHEW. Jayne has filled this assignment role during the duration of Julie's assignment as the Administrative Assistant to the National President.

I very proud to announce the appointment of Julie Lavictoire as my Administrative Assistant. This is a new position which partially replaced the role of the Executive Assistant to the National President. Julie is a 20-year UHEW employee who has a broad understanding of our union, the membership and the strong service requirements of our organization. She is an excellent fit for this position and has demonstrated that she can exceed in this very important position and role.

This year has flown by very quickly as files and work load seem to be on the rise with our growing union and the addition of the new department of Indigenous Services Canada. Phoenix continues to plague our union with incorrect pay however the recent announcement of a new pay system will bring hope and stability once it is implemented. The new staffing directive, which was supposed to be more open and transparent, is quite the contrary with departments and agencies not respecting staffing pools, very little expression of interest for acting assignment four months less a day, abusing temporary and casual staffing for cheaper labour costs and not rolling our long-standing term members into indeterminate positions.

I have worked with Michel Lépine, RVP - National Capital Region, on a first ever reverse of a termination of an indeterminate member. This was a very challenging negotiation as I had to escalate it to both the Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister of Health Canada. This is a true success story to intervene before a grievance and save the employment for this member. I also worked with Kevin Lundstrom, RVP – Ontario, to obtain a duty to accommodate and reimbursement of sick leave on a long-standing harassment case for one of our members. Although these cases are huge success stories it's unfortunate that the National President needs to get involved at the local level.

The PSAC National Board of Directors is holding its first retreat which will be held in Montebello Quebec on October 14 to 16, 2018; Board members will be bringing many ideas and suggestions in order to improve efficiency and services have the NBOD more involved with the decision making for our union. As the NBOD is the most senior body of the PSAC, Board members must be at the table for these decisions.

Environment Climate Change Canada will be hosting its first National Occupational Health and Safety Forum in Ottawa in December 11th and 12th. The Regional OHS committees will decide on their participants and UHEW National Office will be allocated two seats. This is a great initiative by ECCC as departments must step up in their role with providing training to all OHS committees as per the Law. Most, if not all, National OHS committees are struggling with accessing training and being true stakeholders on these committees with full participation in developing policies together versus Corporate OHS running these committees.

MINISTER MEETINGS:

I was very proud to meet two Federal Ministers over the spring and summer. Minister Catherine McKenna of Environment Climate Change Canada and Minister Ginette Petitpas-Taylor of Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada. These meetings were very productive in dealing with systemic workplace issues, Phoenix and Mental Health and violence within the workplace. I was very disappointed with the Ministers of NRCan, DFO, and ISC where they refused to meet with me. So much for their Minister's letter and commitment to work with the Unions and to be more open and transparent.

NEW DEPARTMENT OF INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA:

This Department is struggling with its transformation with staffing, setting up its internal services, dealing with the MOU's with Health Canada to provide some common services until it can be self sufficient, to name but a few issues.

Our members are challenged with obtaining equipment, supplies and finding out who the key contact people are to obtain services or procurement. The Department is not doing a very good job in consulting or collaborating on national appointments or announcements for which I have sent many emails to the Deputy Minister expressing my concerns and displeasure. I held my second bi-lateral meeting with the Deputy Minister and Associate DM in August where we held a one-hour meeting to address many concerns. We must keep in mind that this new department was created as a final step to devolution to First Nations operation and governance. We will see a phase-in approach in Ontario and Quebec with services and operations being signed over for self-governance.

I'm very proud to be appointed by the Deputy Minister of Indigenous Services Canada along with the Assistant Deputy Minister, Valerie Gideon as Co-Champion of their National Respectful Workplace Committee. I will also be working with the Assistant Deputy Minister, Valerie Gideon in conducting joint workplace interventions in many ISC regions and sites across Canada. We have plans to go to Sioux Lookout, Winnipeg, Norway House, Edmonton, Montreal, and various work sites in Saskatchewan to meet with all employees and management to develop action plans in order to improve the quality of life for all employees.

PHOENIX:

The Phoenix pay system continues to plague our members and union with various forms of no or incorrect pay and benefits for our members. The Government finally announced a new pay system which will replace this failed system and biggest disaster in the Public Service history. This must be another lesson learned with governments trying to save monies on centralization without proper consultation and testing and where the impacts on employees and costs to taxpayers are huge. This doesn't factor the impacts on mental health and stresses on families and others. November 14th will be the date where Treasury Board will start properly collecting union dues and arrears and hopefully the government and departments will communicate these recoveries with all employees. The PSAC will be communicating on this initiative to collect and repay dues to all their membership. We have stressed that a month before Christmas is not the best time however, I don't think there is ever a good time to collect monies from anyone.

REPRESENTATION:

Representation is our number one priority and mandate as a Component of the PSAC. PSAC has struggled for decades on dealing with the 6,000 grievances in back-log at Adjudication. Components also are faced with our own back-logs where we represent at third level; we have heard from our members, Council and activists on our own challenges with third level hearings.

Both Shimen Fayad and myself are committed with providing the best and most efficient representation of all grievances at final level. Most recently, at our Council meetings and Regional Conferences, this subject has come up where local activists and RVP's have asked about the delays of final level grievances and our plan to deal with them. We need to establish clear objectives and a matrix, as we don't have either in place therefore, no way to measure the number of 3rd levels grievances that are to be presented yearly. The implementation of a performance management system for our Service Officers with a learning or developmental plan would help us identify any targeted training. We need to implement service standards – which have been tasked a Committee to develop these standards and better practices. We also need to look at other ways to deal with these grievances such as: written presentations, better prioritization, seeing where we can pool together common grievances, and looking at a mental health approach versus a right based presentation. From my experience and dealing with resolution of grievances, I found a negotiated approach versus the traditional jurisprudence or precedence strategy more satisfactory. There was a suggestion to hire more service officers or temporary staffing. I do not believe that we have work load issues or require additional staff to deal with our outstanding grievances – more so putting in place the checks and balances. We also need to resume or monthly or bi-weekly Service Officer meetings in order to explore together solutions and strategies. The use of Unionware will help with our reporting and tracking of grievances.

UHEW STRUCTURE COMMITTEE:

As an ex-officio member of this very important Committee, I will be taking on a more active role within it. As per Resolution 36, we need to expedite a new proposed structure in order to consult with the members at AGM's and Regional Conferences during the 2019 cycle. We need to evolve into the Union of Health and Environment Workers and eliminate the dedicated RVPs representing the former organizations. We need to build capacity in order to have RVPs representing all members and obtain full knowledge of the work performed by all our members and use these better practices during representation or at the consultation table. Most will agree that we cannot afford or have 15 RVP's duplicating services across 15 regions. This structure was for transition only and part of the merger agreement. Our organization cannot sustain this current structure. Although the three-year budget adopted at our 2017 Convention had almost a no dues increase, use of monies from the sale of the former UEW building and from investments were used to balance and ensure this no dues increase. With the many existing PSAC Component models, I am confident that the UHEW Structure Committee will provide some innovative ways to best organize our union with the members first philosophy and that the delegates will need to approve for our 2020 Convention in Vancouver.

VIOLENCE IN THE WORK PLACE:

As stated in my last report, this epidemic within the Public Service requires the most urgent attention in all Departments, with all Senior management and unions. Violence, Harassment, Discrimination and Bullying seem to be increasing and departments and agencies do not seem to be taking a proactive approach nor holding employees or managers accountable for their actions or their lack of. UHEW will continue to utilize Regulation XX, Violence Prevention and the Work Place as our dispute mechanism and we are hopeful that the Bill C-65 will bring the necessary amendments to make the Regulation stronger and more responsive. I participated in a PSAC forum with the National Board of Directors to suggest various changes to this Regulation. Also, I wrote the Chief Clerk of the Public Service, Michael Wernick in a response to his report of "Safe Work Spaces" where I provide strong criticism for not consulting the Unions and provided him many recommendations to change the much needed cultural of the Public Service.

Our Union is frustrated with departments and agencies on their zero-tolerance approach with respect to a violence free work place. They seem to put up more barriers, defy the law, and create new processes like internal forms, fact finding investigations, appoint non-competent investigators who are managers, labour relations or OHS advisors who are our members and in a conflict. We will continue to challenge these departments, write to the DM's, raise as a standing item on UMCC's, and push for updates to their Violence prevention in the workplace policies or directives. I have circulated the CRA document on how that agency is working with the union on dealing with violence complaints. This seems to be the best joint document and better practice which I've seen thus far and hopefully we can advocate for similar processes with the DM's and Presidents within the departments and agencies we represent.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS:

We are now in our AGM season from October 1, through March 31st and I encourage all RVP's to start communicating with your Locals for dates and venues. Where the National President is required or where I would like to attend, please coordinate with Julie Lavictoire, Administrative Assistant, as soon as possible in order to take advantage and plan as many AGMs in your region to be cost effective. Things worked very well last cycle with many regions and RVP's where a week or more was blocked off in the calendar to maximise my travel to meet with members, regional management and/or resolve some long-standing issues. I truly enjoy these AGM visits with the RVP's as I learn and understand their challenges, resolve files and Local issues and raise the systemic issues at the Branch or National level. I also get to know the RVP's and help build capacity and mentorship.

UNION/LABOUR MANAGEMENT CONSULTATION COMMITTEES:

We continue to push for changes in culture, improved management, stronger accountability, open and transparent consultation and better consultation at all levels. Saying that, we need to assess and re-evaluate our effectiveness at the Local, Regional, Branch and National levels. Most Departments and Agency decisions and authority are made at the Branch levels except for Department of Fisheries and Oceans where 85 percent of the department is decentralized and decisions rest within the Regional Director General level. I will be blunt here, I see very little decision-making authority at the Regional level with Environment Climate Change Canada as Assistant Deputy Ministers have been very direct and clear that they are the decision makers at the Branch level and there is very little if any authority at the local or regional levels. We must rethink our position and attendance at these LMCCs as I feel it is not cost effective for us to be at some of these tables and we need to re-examine our frameworks and participation. Also, as stated in my training at the RVP training a year ago in Halifax we must have annual review mechanisms within the Terms of Reference to evaluate the effectiveness at these union management consultation committees. If we aren't resolving issues at the local/regional levels because there is no mandate or clear authority – we need to focus our attentions elsewhere.

RESPECT CAMPAIGN:

We continue building on this very successful campaign with the understanding that changing culture sometimes takes a very long time. The Respect Liaison office at ECCC is a true success story where our members and/or management of all levels can use this office as another venue to resolve their issues. The ADM of Indigenous Services Canada has complimented this success story by establishing Respect Liaison positions in Ottawa, soon to be at Sioux Lookout, and within other regions. This is a result of our 4 years Respect Campaign. We must continue to raise awareness and address bad behaviours as everyone has a role to play, including the unions.

FEAR OF REPRISAL:

As National Respectful Work Place Committee Co-Chair of the Health Canada and Public Health Agency of Canada I recommended we create a “Poster” on Fear of Reprisal. I was very proud that within a few weeks of this proposal, the Department and Agency created a draft poster on fear of reprisal. Many remember fear of reprisal was on the first Public Service Employee Survey in 1999 where over 20 percent reported that this fear is present within all departments and agencies. In my travels across this country I asked many members why they don't raise their issues with the union or management and they respond with that ‘fear of reprisal’.

Shame on this government and its departments by not addressing and eliminating this fear within the public service. I've shared this poster and campaign with many other DMs, Presidents' and or Deputy Heads and many have endorsed this "fear of reprisal" campaign as together we must eliminate it. What kind of Public Service or society do we work or live in where employees are afraid to bring up various issues with their management to have a better workplace or quality of life? Together, we need to work together at all levels to address and eliminate these fears in order to have healthy and proactive workplaces from ocean to ocean to ocean. This needs to be a standing item at every UMCC meeting where we can find solutions and hold all accountable.

PSAC COLLECTIVE BARGAINING:

Collective Bargaining will be resuming this Fall with the first set of meetings set for the third week in October. PSAC has a strategic plan to fast track the bargaining process with the anticipated Federal Election in the fall of 2019. We must capitalize on this time-table at the bargaining table. There is hope that we can make some positive progress before the end of 2018 and if not, we will start mobilizing in early 2019 to place pressure on this Government. This round of negotiation will of course have a Phoenix component, strong economic increases with the cost of living at 3.1 percent, dealing with the Wellness package with the MOU which was signed during the last round, and all the other common issues and specific demands for our members. I want to wish the bargaining representatives the best of luck and offer our full support during this round. We are fortunate to have three UHEW members on the bargaining team representing the TC's and EB's. Our PA representative unfortunately left our Component for a new position with National Defense and is now a member of the Union of National Defense Employees.

PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEE 2017 SURVEY:

The results of the triennial 2017 survey have been posted and shared and again, it's disappointing that the departments did not involve the Unions with the analysis or the draft actions plans. After each survey, we demanded to be involved right from the infant stages, receiving the results in order to work together with the draft analysis and action plan. There seems to be very little will to involve the unions from an analysis perspective. Actions plans have failed because of their attempt to recommend broad-bases solutions to address all areas of concerns. I strongly feel we need to take 2 or 3 actions and work in partnership in order to realize improvements. We need to implement pulse surveys with jointly approved questions and establish a review committee to receive the responses.

WORK PLACE INTERVENTIONS/JOINT TOWN HALLS:

I'm very proud to be appointed by the Deputy Minister of Indigenous Services Canada along with the Assistant Deputy Minister, Valerie Gideon, as Co-Champions of the National Respectful Work Place Committee. I will also be working with Valerie to conduct joint workplace interventions at many ISC regions and sites across Canada. We have plans to go to Sioux Lookout, Winnipeg, Norway House, Edmonton, Montreal, and various work sites in Saskatchewan to meet with all employees and management in order to develop action plans to improve the quality of life for all employees. This model has been successful with Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Environment Climate Change Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada. Unions and Senior Management must work in partnership to solve systemic workplace issues and hold all accountable for their actions or lack of.

REGIONAL CONFERENCES:

We have almost completed the first round of Regional Conferences with the Ontario region holding theirs the second week of October. This was a learning experience for all as we combined two former methods of organization with a combined approach in the Atlantic and Western Regions. I will be anxious to hear from the RVPs, Locals and members on their views on where we need to improve and what we can do more to obtain the best developmental and engagement approach for UHEW. I have seen pros and cons with these large conferences and nothing restricts regions from reducing the size of their conference to be more manageable. We will need to decide on the conference style approach for next cycle and secure dates, venues and contracts before the end of 2018.

SERVICE STANDARDS:

UHEW committed to establishing service standards at our 2017 Convention in Toronto. One year has passed and we have yet to put them in place for our staff, Council and Local Executives. My goal is to have these in place during our Fall 2018 Council meeting as I've been hearing complaints from members and elected officials on response times to voice mails and emails. Some have informed me that had no responses to both phone calls and or emails. Service and representation must be the hallmarks of the UHEW and we need to have some basic service standards in place such as acknowledgements and responses to members' concerns in order to effectively deal with them in a timely manner. At our Spring National Council meeting, we established an ad-hoc Committee lead by our Vice President, Shimen Fayad where she will provide a report or proposal during our Fall meeting.

CONCLUSION:

It has been almost two years since we merged as a new Union and one year since our Founding Convention in Toronto. I feel that we still need to grow more into one united union and we must focus more on the operational and service needs of our Component and lesser on the administrative aspects. We need to build capacity at the Local and RVP levels in order to respond and resolve member issues in a timely manner. We also need to deal with the many small and inactive Locals through engagement and consultation as this will make our union stronger. We need to go back to the basics of union principles through strong effective local general and annual meetings. We need to hold management accountable in holding their regular OHS and Union Management Consultation Committee meetings and resolving workplace conflicts. We need to do more with respect to member engagement and promote our successes and the good work unions do from a historic and current day practice. Together we must eliminate that fear of reprisal and that association of getting involved with our local unions as many face that fear and is one of the main reasons why members are not active within their union.

We all need to challenge bad behaviours and together, eradicate harassment, violence, bullying, and discrimination within our workplace, our union and society. This starts with our own self analysis and looking into that mirror and determine how we can be better leaders and hold each other accountable for our actions or lack of. We also need to also give the benefit of doubt to all as nobody is perfect but more so, be that mentor for change and help each other become self aware. We need to create a society of equals and less about positions and titles as these positions divide us as all - people are equal with various levels of responsibility.

As Leaders we need to mentor our successors and share that knowledge, as knowledge should not be power but more about making stronger leaders throughout our Union. Stronger Locals make strong regions and stronger regions makes a stronger union for all members and that will translate into a more informed and mobilized membership. Our membership views their Union through the actions of our leadership as leadership is the key to attracting new activists and making UHEW the best Component within the PSAC.