

April 19, 2023 - No. 22

**Federal Public Servants Set Up Picket Lines Across the Country**  
**Uphold the Dignity of Labour! Support the**  
**Public Service Alliance of Canada Workers!**



Picket in National Capital Region, April 19, 2023.

- **Unions Express Support for Striking Workers**

Video

- **Interview with a Public Service Worker Walking the Line in Windsor, Ontario**

– *Empower Yourself Now* –

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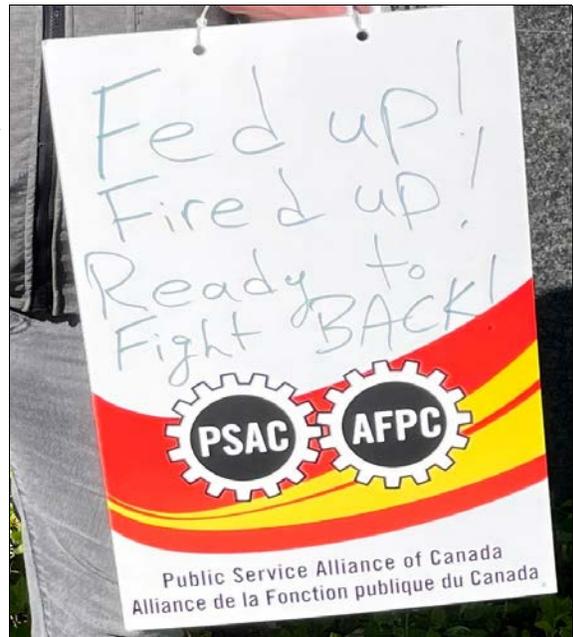
More than 155,000 federal public servants are on strike. The strike began at 12:01 am on April 19. The President of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) Chris Aylward said, "Our members are prepared to fight for a good, decent, fair collective agreement." He said the union will remain on strike until its key issues are addressed.



Picket line on Parliament Hill, April 19, 2023

The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat is in denial saying it has "done everything it can" to reach a deal. "The government has presented a fair, competitive offer to the PSAC and responded to all their demands," it said. It claims PSAC's demands "are unaffordable and would severely impact the government's ability to deliver services to Canadians."

When it makes these statements it quotes statistics and comparisons which do nothing to shed light on the actual conditions of work of the public servants who are affected to the point that they voted overwhelmingly to go on strike. For instance, the latest government mantra is that the rate of inflation is falling and will go down to three per cent this year. The experience of Canadians across the country with rising costs of food and other products is not three per cent and the stress at the place of work is not three per cent!! Repeating that its wage offer is in line with the Public Interest Commission's (PIC) recommendations merely emphasizes that they are not listening to what public servants are telling them about their living and working conditions.



A PIC is established and mandated by the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations and Employment Board "to assist the parties in coming to an agreement." A backgrounder put out by Treasury Board says, "Our offers to all bargaining agents take into consideration current economic conditions, such as other collective agreements for the public service and inflation, as well as our ability to attract and retain highly qualified employees, employment conditions in the federal government relative to other Canadian workplaces, and responsible fiscal management." All such talk does is create an atmosphere which depicts federal public servants as unreasonable, entitled, privileged and so on. Attempts to damage the reputation of public servants who are upholding the dignity of labour deserve to be denounced.

The failure of the federal government to reach a negotiated agreement with its employees to renew collective agreements that expired almost two years ago reveals the reality that the Liberals' talk of supporting the "middle class" is devoid of meaning. When demands are made by supranational corporations and oligopolies for government handouts so that they will 'invest' in mining critical minerals for the U.S. war economy or to build battery storage plants or package Canadian raw materials for export to the U.S. and the like that will make the narrow private interests windfall profits, there is no talk of restraint or affordability. In fact, these schemes to pay the rich are presented as the guarantee of prosperity for workers, notwithstanding the fact that the companies can pick up and move production anytime it suits them and use that as a threat to force concessions from workers.

Treasury Board's façade of concern for the well-being of Canadian workers as a foundation of government policy is exposed by how the government treats its own employees, such as the "offer" that would actually further reduce wages as it does not even match the rate of inflation. Such an attack on the workers' right to negotiate an acceptable contract is then used to establish precedent throughout Canada for workers in all sectors, first and foremost the public sector, non-union, gig workers, etc. As expected, all of this propaganda Treasury Board is spewing out comes hand in hand with talk of back-to-work legislation which confirms how the government is using threats of criminalization as a bargaining tool. Using the weight of the state to coerce workers to "agree" to wage reductions and unacceptable conditions may be legal but it is not acceptable. How to deal with the refusal of government to come to terms on assisting laid off workers, on remote work protections and to respond to the serious charges of racism in federal workplaces, are challenges the workers are taking up.



Picket line in Windsor, April 19, 2023.

*Workers' Forum* calls on Canadians and Quebeckers to show support for the PSAC workers. Without blinking, subsequent governments pay exorbitant amounts of money to private companies which do the jobs of the federal public servants, as well as to temp agencies which provide workers on a contract basis. Still they claim the demands of the public servants are unaffordable. Their anti-worker propaganda and phony high ideals are pathetic and deserve to be denounced from coast to coast to coast.

PSAC represents two groups of workers. The first group, labelled the Treasury Board group by PSAC, includes workers spread across more than 20 departments and agencies. The second group, represented by PSAC and its subcomponent, the Union of Taxation Employees, includes Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) workers. The government has labelled about 47,000 workers represented by PSAC "essential." Although in a legal strike position, they must continue to report to work. The government defines an essential service as a service "necessary for the safety or security of the public, or a segment of the public, at any time." In fact, all the workers are essential to the

functioning of the public service. Blaming them for making wage demands which will "impact the government's ability to deliver services to Canadians" turns truth on its head because it is the ill-treatment of the federal workers subject to the government's anti-social offensive that is impacting "government's ability to deliver services to Canadians."

Picket lines will be set up at more than 250 locations across the country, PSAC said. Eight are planned across Ottawa-Gatineau, where the federal government is the biggest employer and others have been set up across the country where workers from all sectors of the economy are planning on joining the PSAC workers to show their support.

PSAC members and public supporters can find the nearest picket line using PSAC's picket line finder tool [here](#).



On the picket lines in Windsor, April 19, 2023

(Photos: EYN, PSAC, S. Silva, usjc-sesj)

## Unions Express Support for Striking Workers



Ottawa, April 19, 2023

Unions are posting statements in support of the strike of the 155,000 PSAC federal public service workers.

## Canadian Labour Congress

On April 18, Bea Bruske, President of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), released the following statement in support of the PSAC members as they were preparing to go on strike.

"Canada's unions fully support federal public service workers' right to strike. By refusing to provide the working conditions that federal public service workers deserve, the federal government is lowering the bar to rock bottom for every worker in Canada.

"With 155,000 PSAC members on strike there is no doubt that public services will be impacted. These workers play a key role in delivering services Canadians depend on. They are maintenance workers, food inspectors, cleaners, and cooks. They are the people we rely on to get our passports and that guide us through Employment Insurance applications.



**Holding the line in Morden, Manitoba, April 19, 2023**

"PSAC members have been without a contract for nearly two years because the government kept stalling and outright refused to address workers' priorities. Federal public service workers are facing a one-two punch of stagnant wages and the climbing cost of living.

"The government's revenues rose with inflation, and they can afford to treat their employees fairly. Now, it's up to the government to make a reasonable offer to PSAC members, one that sets the bar for all workers in Canada.

"Canada's unions are sending a strong message: We stand in solidarity with PSAC members. We are united and we won't back down. "

## Ontario Federation of Labour

On April 19, the Ontario Federation of Labour wrote:

"The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) offers its full support to the 155,000 members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) who went on strike today and is calling on Ontario unions and workers to show their solidarity.

"These workers are fighting the cost-of-living crisis,' said Patty Coates, OFL President. 'Like all workers, they deserve real wage increases.'



"The union's key demands include wages that keep up with inflation, improved job security, remote work protections, anti-oppression training in the workplace, and protections against contracting out and privatization.

"Workers can show support for PSAC strikers by joining picket lines and by posting solidarity messages on social media.

"Workers everywhere are fed up, and they're saying, 'enough is enough!'" said Coates. 'Wherever they're fighting back for a better life

for themselves and for their communities, we've got their backs.'

"Better wages and job security for PSAC members means better services for the public, which relies on the tens of thousands of workers who provide a wide range of services at the Treasury Board and the Canada Revenue Agency.

"Good working conditions help ensure that we all get the services and support we need, whenever we need it, and wherever we live in Canada,' added Coates. 'This strike is a fight for all of us: for the right to decent work and well-funded public services.'

"The OFL encourages its affiliates to issue their own statements of support and invites the wider public to rally behind PSAC members.

"Together, a united movement of workers can win a better life for everyone. The OFL applauds the courage of PSAC members for taking a lead in this important fight."

(Photos: EYN, PSAC, C.M. Warner)

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### Video

## Interview with a Public Service Worker Walking the Line in Windsor, Ontario

– EmpowerYourself Now –

Laura Chesnik from Empower Yourself Now interviews Barry Lamont of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, in Windsor, Ontario.



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