

Developing the Members' Plan PSAC Convention 2012

Questions and Answers

Why are we presenting a Members' Plan to Convention?

Convention is the supreme governing body of the Union, and it's an opportunity for members to set the broad direction they want their Union to take.

Crafting a Members' Plan gives us the opportunity to consult with the broader PSAC membership and get input into priorities. It's a chance to engage the broader membership in the Convention process with a bottom-up approach, and take direction from what the members are telling us a) what they want from their Union and b) what they are willing to do for their Union;

The Members' Plan will also be a concrete tool to measure our progress. It will provide a framework for the National Board of Directors to measure their progress and report back to the broader membership on priorities.

In the past, how has the PSAC made decisions about priorities?

Setting priorities for the PSAC happens in many ways and in many places throughout the Union.

At Convention, delegates make decisions on resolutions that set out specific actions members want their Union to take on a wide range of issues. Delegates debate the merits of a resolution, vote yes or no, and move on to the next one. Hundreds of resolutions are received, but very few actually make it to the Convention floor. Resolutions are sometimes grouped into policy papers that provide some analysis and set out specific actions the Union will undertake in a given area.

Convention delegates also debate and approve the Union budget, which defines our Union's priorities by identifying the areas in which resources will be allocated over the three-year cycle.

In between Conventions, the National Board of Directors generally puts forward a limited number of priority areas for action on the part of the Union as a whole. From time to time, the NBoD passes resolutions and policy papers that define our position or course of action on a specific issue. Events – like elections or collective bargaining -- sometimes become a key priority on the Union agenda.

Who will present the Members' Plan to Convention? Where will it come from?

The Members' Plan will be presented to the Convention floor by the National Board of Directors. The first draft of the Plan will be presented to the Special Meeting of the Board scheduled for February 2012.

To make the consultation and drafting exercise as efficient as possible, a small sub-committee of the National Board of Directors has been appointed to oversee the input-gathering from the membership and drafting of the Plan. The members of this sub-committee are Sister Robyn Benson, PSAC Regional Executive Vice-President for the Prairies (Chair), Brother Larry Rousseau, Regional Executive Vice-President for the National Capital Region, Brother Bob Campbell, National President of the Union of Taxation Employees Component, and Brother Yvan Thauvette, National President of the Union of Veterans' Affairs Employees Component. A fifth member will be appointed at the end of October after all the Component Conventions are over and we know who is on the National Board of Directors.

What will the debate on the Plan look like on the floor?

The Plan will come to the floor from the National Board of Directors as a *draft* for consideration by the delegates.

The proposed Convention Agenda includes four time slots for the Plan – an hour and half each on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of Convention. To date, the thinking is that the Plan will have three main parts; we'll debate part 1 on Tuesday; part 2 on Wednesday; and part three on Thursday.

Throughout the debate on the Plan, the Sub-Committee of the NBoD will listen carefully and make changes to the draft Plan that will incorporate the comments we are hearing.

On Friday, the final day of Convention, a revised Plan that incorporates the delegates' comments will be debated, and hopefully adopted as a whole.

Keep in mind that it's the first time we do this at Convention, and that the process may change a bit, but the plan is that the delegates will have the final say on the Plan.

How much time will the Members' Plan take up on the Convention Agenda?

We have slated 90 minutes on the Draft Agenda during the mornings starting on Tuesday for delegates to debate a Draft Strategic Plan and adopt it on the last day of Convention. That's a total of 6 hours dedicated to the Members' Plan.

Convention is the time to debate resolutions, yet so few of them actually hit the floor for debate. Why would we take time away on the Convention agenda for resolutions?

That time for resolutions is critical, and the Members' Plan will not replace the debate on resolutions. The proposed Convention agenda approved by the National Board of Directors provides for 17.5 hours of debate on resolutions and the budget, with a bit more time on Thursday morning during and after the election of officers. There's 6 hours on the Convention Agenda for the Members' Plan. Also keep in mind that the Members' Plan might cover or include some of the Convention resolutions, which would enable us to maximize the number of resolutions that are actually dealt with on the Convention floor.

How much time is being allocated to speakers and forums?

The proposed Convention Agenda allows for 1.5 hours for a Human Rights and Social Justice Forum. We have a resolution of record that mandates us to hold this forum during official Convention business. We've allocated 30 minutes to hear keynote speaker Stephen Lewis on using our union power, defending quality public services and fighting back against the political choices of the Harper majority to cut back on public services and jobs.

What will the Members' Plan focus on?

The Plan will be inspired by and based on the Convention theme: *Our Union, Our Power*. To date, three main priorities are emerging from this theme:

- Our Bargaining Power, or our power to negotiate wages and working conditions for our members
- Our Union Power, or our power in the workplace and within our Union
- Our Political Power – using our power beyond our Union to effect change for all workers.

These may very well change as we analyse the input from the membership.

What's the theme of the 2012 PSAC Convention?

The theme is *Our Union, Our Power*. To quote singer-songwriter Billy Bragg, *There is power in a factory, power in the land, power in the hands of a worker, but it all amounts to nothing if together we don't stand, there is power in a union.*

Our power lies in our workplaces, where we defend our members' rights and interests and resist the abuse of power that some employers try and exercise over our members. Our power lies at the bargaining tables, where we fight for decent job, wages and working conditions for our members. We have power when we campaign for quality public services for Canadians and for decent work for those who deliver them. We have power when we organize new members – it makes our union stronger. The diversity of our membership is also our strength and our power. And our structure is a “power tool” – a means for us to fulfill our mission to further the interests of our members and working people in general.

We can no longer protect our members, and working people in general, within our Union, at the workplace or at the bargaining table alone, or even here in Canada alone. As a Union, our power lies in having a voice when and where debates about our rights and our future take place, and where our shared struggles are being fought. That means building our political action power to speak out and effect the change we want – locally, regionally, nationally and even internationally.

What input will be used to draft the Members' Plan? How are you planning to get membership input?

We've developed the *Our Union, Our Power Survey*. The survey was administered at most Regional Conventions and at other meetings, and will be “live” online on the PSAC website throughout the month of October. We will also be making printed copies available for distribution. The survey asks members what's important to them and what they think the Union should focus on. It's the main direct tool we have to reach out to as many members as possible.

We'll also be talking to members at planned gatherings and meetings, and asking them what they want to see in a Members' Plan. These might include, but aren't limited to, Regional Councils, other Regional opportunities, Component Conventions, meetings with Local Presidents, other Component events, meetings with Directly Chartered Locals, and Steward Assemblies.

We'll be taking a close look at the the resolutions coming in to the PSAC Convention, for trends and patterns in what our members are asking us to debate.

We'll be reviewing the findings from the comprehensive PSAC Membership Survey we did in 2010.

There are also other membership surveys and consultations we have done or that are under way that will provide us with some direction for the Plan: they include the Education Survey, the Steward Survey, the consultations on Bargaining Regulation 15A, and others.

What's the timeline for the Members' Plan?

Consultation – Membership input:	now until end of October 2011
Analysis of Input	now until end of October
Focus Groups on outline of the plan	end of October – first days in November
Drafting of the Plan	first and second week of November
First draft of the Plan	second or third of November (in time for translation)
Adoption of first draft of Plan by the NBoD	December 1 st , 2011 (same time as the 2013-2015 Budget)
Presentation of the Plan to the Convention Committees	second week of February
Possible modifications to the draft Plan (tbc)	Spring 2012
Debate on the Plan at Convention	May 1-3, 2012
Final debate and adoption	May 4, 2012

What's the point of presenting the Plan to the Convention Committees?

The process to develop the Plan includes presenting the draft Plan to the pre-Convention Committees – i.e. the Committees charged with reviewing all Convention resolutions and making recommendations on them to expedite the debate on the floor.

It's an important step because knowing what's in the Draft Members' Plan may assist the Convention Committees in making recommendations on resolutions. Some resolutions may be covered in the Plan, and they may want to use this information in drafting their rationales. Knowing what's in the Plan may also help Committees determine their priority resolutions.