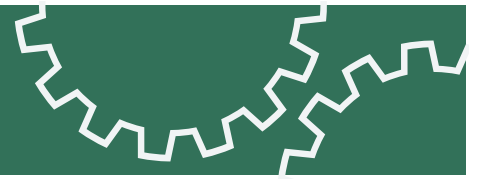




Our Work Counts



PA OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS: CLASSIFICATION REFORM PROCESS BEGINS

Treasury Board has finally outlined its preferred model for new occupational groups for the Program and Administrative Services (PA) group. This model suggests three new occupational groups including a separate group for work done by the Welfare Programs (WP) group.

The model was developed as a result of the review of the PA occupational groups. While not perfect, there are positive elements that can build on previous pay equity gains and finally update classification standards. At the same time, we have some concerns about the implications of this model. We want to hear from members before the model is finalized.

PSAC has been raising the issue of classification reform for decades. After negotiating classification reform in the 2008 collective agreement, PSAC has been and will continue to be involved in consultations with Treasury Board on this process. Eventually, the union will negotiate the salaries for each of the new classifications and levels.

The Occupational Group Structure (OGS) review is the first of five steps in our effort to get the employer to establish new and modern classification standards.

For PA members, all of the current classifications will disappear, regardless of how the final occupational groups look. PSAC members at the Canada Revenue Agency and at Canada Border Services Agency have already been through a similar review of occupational groups and classifications, and many members have benefited from the process.

While the process will take time, we will do as much as we can to ensure that it moves swiftly while protecting your rights and interests. We will continue to fight to ensure that members will benefit from having their work classified and compensated properly.

Following the OGS review of the PA group, a review of the other Treasury Board occupational groups represented by PSAC will follow. The PSAC has pushed for the Technical Services (TC) group to be next in line.

We want to hear from you

- Submit your questions or comments on the process so far by filling in the online form.
- Stay informed. Check our website regularly for updates on the OGS process for the PA group. Sign up for our newsletter.
- Contact your component or Local executive for information on how this will affect work in your department.
- Become a shop steward and assist your fellow members in the workplace.

What the new model might look like

The following is the latest information provided to PSAC by Treasury Board on what the new structure for PA group members could look like:

- One occupational group for administrative support and transactional work which would generally include the CR group, many lower-level PM and AS members and the DA, ST, CM and OE groups.
- One occupational group for program and services management work which would generally include some lower level PM and AS members and most of the higher level PM and AS members. The PSAC also believes that IS work should belong in this group.
- One occupational group which would include the work performed by WPs.
- It is important to note however that an employee's current classification and level would not necessarily dictate where one would end up in the new groups. The group that jobs are moved into will ultimately depend on which group your job fits in best, not your current classification.

What is the OGS review?

This first step toward classification reform was negotiated into the PA Treasury Board collective agreement in November 2008. PSAC agreed to withdraw a long-standing complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Commission about the classification system and also negotiated a \$4,000 payment for the PA group.

The most recent PA collective agreement revised the date to complete the initial stage of the OGS review before December 2011.

In 1999, Treasury Board combined various classifications that perform similar work into a number of occupational groups. For example, the Program and Administration (PA) occupational group consists of nine different classifications (AS, CR, PM, WP, IS, DA, CM, ST, OE) that share one collective agreement.

The classification system, with over 70 different standards, was originally established by the employer in 1967. That was a very different era in terms of the organization of work and the technology used by workers, and the classification standards have not kept up.

If done properly, the Occupational Group Structure (OGS) review will build on our pay equity victory of 1999 by establishing a modern classification system and addressing some long-standing classification issues.

The OGS review is the first of five steps in our effort to get the employer to establish new and modern classification standards that will address long-standing pay inequities. We are also aiming to achieve higher rates of pay for our members.

The five steps of the process toward classification reform for the PA group include:

1. Reviewing the current occupational groups
2. Developing new classification standards
3. Rating jobs using the new standards
4. Conversion to the new groups and negotiation of new salary rates
5. Ensuring a fair process for members to grieve their new classifications through a classification grievance procedure

Pros and cons of this model

PSAC believes this model, if approved, has a number of positive and negative implications for PSAC members in the PA group.

Pros:

- The review gives us an opportunity to address long-standing classification issues.
- The new classification standards should finally reflect the work our members are performing now, which is not as it was 40 years ago

Cons:

- The new model will break up the current PA group as we know it.
- It will mean there will still be multiple classification standards – although fewer of them – instead of a universal standard.

How we've arrived at this review

PSAC has been raising the issue of classification reform for decades. It was clear from the four-year joint pay equity study with Treasury Board in the late 1980s that even then the 20-year-old classifications did not reflect evolving technology and a changing workplace. And few of the classification standards conform to the *Canadian Human Rights Act* by measuring four factors: responsibility, skills, effort and working conditions.

The union was a strong promoter of the Universal Classification Standard (UCS) project that was first launched in 1997. This plan would have seen all jobs in the federal public service measured against one standard, but it was dropped by the government in 2003.

In 2008, the union was successful in getting the employer to commit to classification review for the PSAC when it was included in the PA collective agreement.

PSAC's involvement in the process

The employer is responsible for creating the new occupational groups and developing the new classification standards.

Throughout this process, we expect Treasury Board to consult PSAC in a meaningful way.

Work started in earnest in 2010 with a long process of information gathering. Five large departments with PA group members were consulted, as were the PSAC Components with members in these departments.

Several meetings have taken place, where the union provided feedback on the employer's ideas and proposals for the new groups. We will continue to provide our feedback as the process continues.

Nevertheless, it is Treasury Board that will make the final decisions on the new occupational groups and the new classification standards.

Once these are in place, PSAC will negotiate the salaries for each of the new classifications and levels.

Steps in the process: When will this turn into results that you can see?

Changes to the Occupational Group Structure and classification reform will still take time. PSAC will do everything it can to defend members' rights and interests throughout the process.

Step 1: Occupational Group Structure

OGS reform was included in the collective agreement we negotiated in 2008. It is the first step on the road towards reform of the classification standards so that they will actually reflect the work that PA group members do.

The occupational group structure determines the composition of bargaining units. The new OGS will determine what types of work and what jobs should be grouped together into bargaining units.

Currently, the PA group is the occupational group – it is a combination of 9 different classifications. The new structure will reflect a different combination of jobs. The new structure proposed by Treasury Board would see the PA group transformed into three or possibly four new occupational groups.

We are expecting that the occupational groups will be finalized in late 2012. Once this is finalized, the process will move along to the next step: developing the classification standards.

Step 2: Developing Classification Standards

Classification standards are the tools that the employer uses to rate each job. Usually these standards assign points to different aspects of the work you do. While the employer is responsible for developing these standards, we will ensure that the standards measure your work fairly and include consideration of the four factors required by the *Canadian Human Rights Act*: Skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions.

The employer has indicated that work will begin on the standards before the proposed occupational groups are finalized in late 2012. While PSAC has not seen anything yet, we believe the standards may look similar to the new FB classification standards.

Step 3: Rating Jobs using the new standards

The employer hasn't told us yet how they expect the job rating process to unfold. In recent years they have moved the job description writing and classification processes to individual departments, so we expect that the rating work will be done by human resources staff in each department.

The employer has also been developing many generic job descriptions that include identical and similar jobs under one job description. It is unclear right now whether the employer will use existing job descriptions or develop new ones. Either way this is a very time-consuming process. Our best guess is that it may take 18 months to two years for this process to be finalized.

Step 4: Negotiating the new salary rates

Once we have all positions rated according to the new classification standards, we will enter into negotiations over rates of pay in order to establish the rates of pay for all the new groups and levels of jobs that will come out of the OGS reform process.

This step will take place during a round of collective bargaining.

The negotiations process will involve bargaining the rates of pay for each position, how people will move from the old salary grids to the new salary grids, and any other issues related to compensation.

The current PA collective agreement expires in June 2014. While it is not yet clear that this issue will be at the table for our next round of bargaining, it is certainly hoped that we will be able to negotiate the new pay rates at that time.

Step 5: Classification Grievance Procedure

At the end of this entire process, we intend to negotiate specific classification grievance language that will allow members to challenge their point ratings under the new classification standards. We traditionally negotiate language that allows for an expedited process after a change to a new classification system, to deal with the number of grievances that arise.

We also recognize that a process for dealing fairly with existing classification grievances should be negotiated with the employer. We have raised this with the employer and will keep members updated on this important issue.

What the review will mean for PA group members

Regardless of what the final occupational groups look like, all of the former classifications will disappear. Members will no longer be classified as AS, CR, PM, WP, IS, DA, OE, ST, or CM. A new classification standard will be developed for each occupational group, which will be given a new name.

Before the classification review at the Canada Revenue Agency, PSAC members were classified as CR, PM, GL, etc. The new classification standards that were developed resulted in two new classifications, replacing all the previous classifications: the Service and Program (SP) group and the management (MG-SPS) group. Members are classified as either SP or MG-SPS.

A similar process will occur for members in the PA group.

MESSAGE TO MEMBERS OF THE WP CLASSIFICATION

Despite tough economic times and a less than labour-friendly government, an opportunity for real and positive change is on the horizon for PSAC members in the federal public service, through the occupational group structure/classification reform process.

As a Union, we are seizing the opportunity to build on the gains we made during the last round of bargaining and fix long-standing pay inequities and modernize antiquated classification standards. We aim to ensure that the value of the professional work done by our members is recognized and properly compensated.

Nowhere is this more true than for the WP (Welfare Programs) group. Many WPs have long called for their own bargaining unit for the promise it holds of tighter bargaining focus on WP operational and pay issues.

Now that the process of reform of the occupational group structure for the PA table is crystallizing, the hope for a separate bargaining unit for WPs is closer to being realized.

There is a draft TB plan for three new occupational groups to replace the PA bargaining unit . This plan provides for the WPs to be a separate occupational group, with the work being categorized as that of “rehabilitation” and “reintegration.” Other public service employees whose work fits into that definition could be added to this occupational group, but WPs will be the overwhelming majority in this new bargaining unit.

Because WPs are PSAC members, they will be among the first to have their classification standards reviewed. That is because the MOU to the PA collective agreement that started this process provided for review of the occupational group structure, followed by classification reform, to start with the PA table.

The review of the occupational groups and the classification standards will not affect the deals that were signed in the last round of negotiations. The new increment that the union negotiated for the WP-04 level which is effective on April 1, 2013 will continue to come into effect on that date.

We will be issuing further information bulletins to keep you advised of the progress in the Occupational Group Structure discussions.