



## ORGANIZING UPDATE

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● **SHAWNA LARADE**

President  
Agrologist  
slarade@pea.org

## THANK YOU

Thank you for allowing me to serve as the president of the PEA.

I am proud of the inroads we have made on behalf of our members through collective bargaining and delivering on our strategic priorities. I am so thankful for this experience—it has helped me to evolve as a professional, a friend and a leader. I have learnt so much from all of you and am inspired by the collective focus of our union, and its ability to build a culture of mutual respect and gratitude.

Thank you to the staff and executives of the PEA who are passionate and committed to building a union that values equity, diversity and the delivery of quality services to our membership.

As I step down from this role, I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude and a twinge of solace. It was not an easy decision. I am so thankful for the friendships, the memories and the opportunity to learn and grow as a person and a leader.

We have persevered through some challenging times. We are strong and well positioned with a dedicated group of staff and volunteers committed to expanding our collective rights and benefits.

Although I will no longer be the president, I will always be a proud member of the PEA and will remain with you in solidarity.

Thank you for entrusting me with the privilege of serving as your president.

All life's best,

*Shawna LaRade*  
*PEA President*



Shawna LaRade (right) with fellow range agrologists Todd Larsen (centre) and Hanna McIntyre (right).

Photo: Lucy Hamilton



**SCOTT MCCANNELL**

Executive Director  
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# 50 YEARS STRONG

I can't believe how the last decade has flown by and that we are now celebrating the PEA's 50th anniversary. When we celebrated our 40-year milestone, the PEA was struggling to clarify our identity—grappling with the decision to be an association or a union, and whether to position ourselves as part of the broader labour movement or fight for our members independently.

Over the last ten years our members, elected leaders and dedicated staff have collectively answered these existential questions, forging a clear path forward. Our unwavering commitment to member engagement, labour relations servicing and collective bargaining remains steadfast. Yet we've evolved, placing a heightened emphasis on member education and a commitment to inclusivity, equity and diversity.

Each of our chapters now spearheads specific engagement initiatives that encompass marketing, communication and impactful lobbying campaigns based on members' needs. Our presence in the media is amplified. We've cultivated meaningful relationships both within the broader labour movement and with aligned stakeholder groups. Our commitment to perpetual organizing, both internally by engaging our existing members and externally by bringing new members into the PEA, marks a significant shift from 2014.

Over the years, it has been particularly gratifying to hear other union leaders and other union staff acknowledge that the PEA consistently punches above its weight. Looking ahead, I am optimistic that PEA members will persist in their engagement, continue to share their passions, and show solidarity across our chapters and the broader labour movement.

Together, our continued efforts will further strengthen the union's positive impact on the lives of its members and the province we live in.

*Scott McCannell*  
Executive Director

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Though both are located on Vancouver Island, our two newest chapters—Pearson College and SGS AXYS Analytical Services—seem worlds apart. Learn about the organizing stories of these members who joined the PEA in 2023.



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Since 1998, Teressa Prentice has represented members HESU members in grievances. In 2023, it was her turn to earn a victory for union members.

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The outcome of this grievance will hopefully encourage eligible GLP members to request that the Employer partially cover PPE required for their safety on the job, as outlined in the collective agreement.



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On February 18, 1974, the BC Government Professional Employees Association (BCGPEA) officially came into being at a meeting in Victoria's Empress Hotel. Take a look back at the year the PEA became a union.

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Many thanks to those members who wrote in to share news from their chapter. From retirements, to gatherings and activism, we want to hear what our members are up to. Email [jwhetter@pea.org](mailto:jwhetter@pea.org) with your story.

# STRONGER TOGETHER

INTRODUCING TWO NEW PEA CHAPTERS: EMPLOYEES OF PEARSON COLLEGE AND SGS AXYS

JESSICA NATALE WOOLLARD  
PHOTOS: AARON LUTSCH

**T**he Professional Employee Association's two newest chapters—the employees of Lester B. Pearson United World College of the Pacific and SGS AXYS Analytical Services— are both located on Vancouver Island, but as organizations, they seem worlds apart. One is a not-for-profit post-secondary educational institution, and the other is part of a multinational company that earns billions in yearly revenue through laboratory inspection, testing, verification and certification services.

Despite considerable differences, a long list of similarities led both employee groups to the PEA: Stagnant wages, increasing pressure to perform, scaling back of benefits and rewards lack of transparency from the top and an eroded sense of community and trust.

Employees at Pearson College and SGS AXYS value their work. They care about contributing to their organization's goals and recognize that people power the workplace—and people are stronger together.

After achieving more than the required 55 per cent of signatures to organize, both

workplaces formally applied to join the PEA through the BC Labour Relations Board. This spring, they head to the bargaining table for the first time, supported by a team of dedicated PEA labour relations officers.

In this article, you'll learn about our new chapters, and join us in welcoming them to the union.

#### Pearson College Chapter

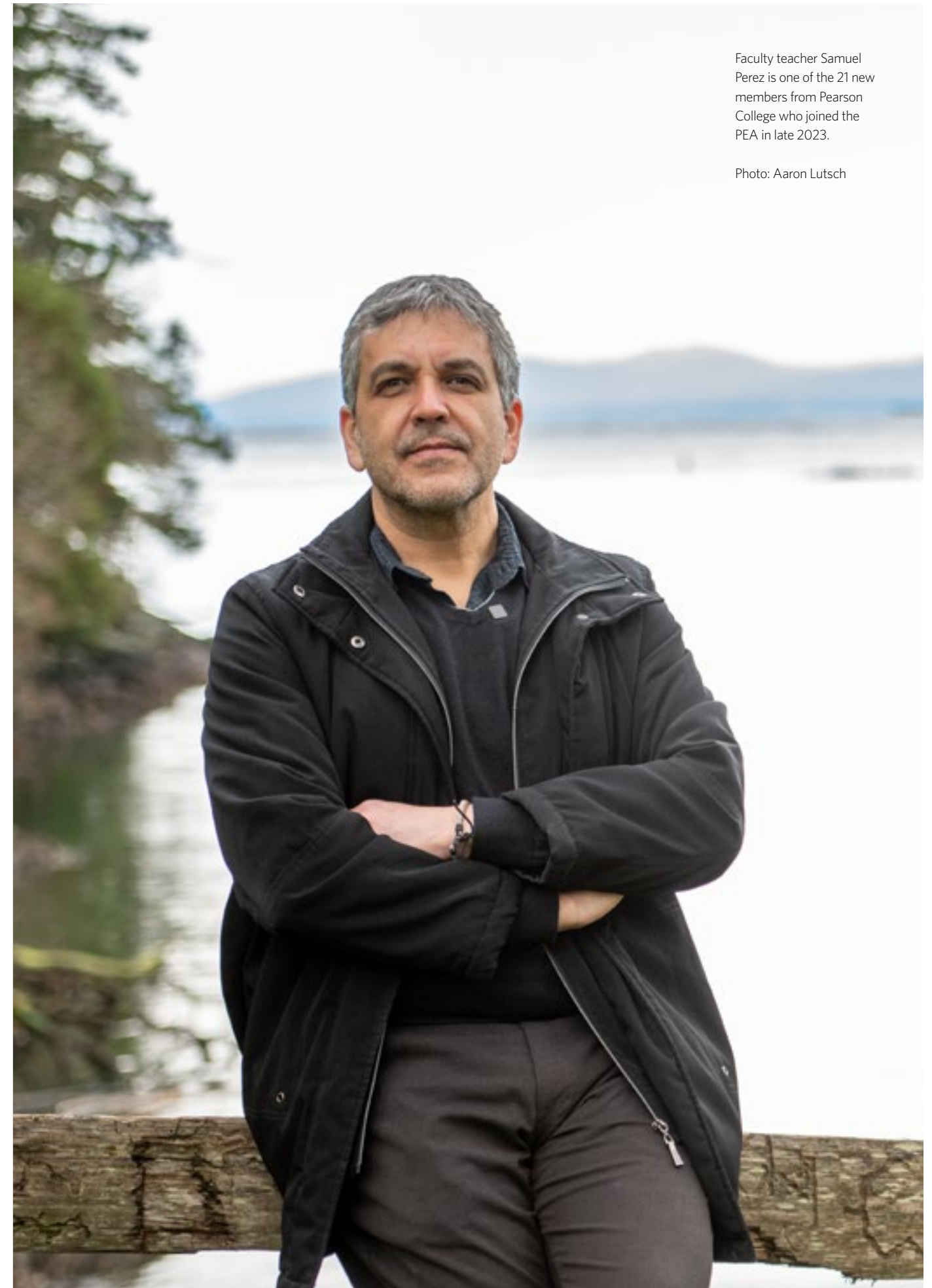
Courageous action. Personal example. Selfless leadership.

Through these guiding principles, Pearson College inspires its students to take bold steps in pursuit of peace and justice.

Part of the United World Colleges (UWC) conglomerate, Pearson College is one of 18 institutions on four continents and the only one in Canada. Educational experiences are designed to prepare students to become peaceful changemakers in communities around the world. This year marks the 50th anniversary for Pearson College. Founded in 1974, the college delivers its two-year, pre-university International Baccalaureate curriculum on a 75-acre seaside campus in Metchosin.

Faculty teacher Samuel Perez is one of the 21 new members from Pearson College who joined the PEA in late 2023.

Photo: Aaron Lutsch



At Pearson, like all UWC schools, students and staff are culturally diverse, from different nationalities, backgrounds, worldviews, and experiences. Samuel Perez, an economist from Guatemala, immigrated to Canada in 2007 to teach at Pearson, drawn to the college's values and approach to education.

"We consider ourselves part of a movement," he says. "Our mission is to foster peace and understanding amongst different cultures, backgrounds, and peoples. We want to create a sustainable world, bringing people together to learn from each other."

Perez, like some of the 22 faculty members, lives on the campus. For many, Pearson College is more than an employer; it's a home.

A few years before the COVID-19 pandemic, the sense of community among the faculty started to erode, Perez recalls. Pearson's faculty asso-

ciation had long represented teachers, but its voice needed to be strengthened. Post-pandemic, workplace concerns expanded. Questions about wages and the rising cost of living were not being suitably addressed by decision makers; faculty were burning out from the extra pressures placed on them during and after COVID. The association was finding it could no longer negotiate effectively.

"We reached a point at which we needed to have more support," Perez explains, noting the college had three different heads of school between 2020 and 2024. "We needed to rebuild trust between employees and the leadership. To become a strong community, there was a need for collective action."

In September 2023, the formal work to join the PEA began. An overwhelming majority of the faculty members signed their union cards.

The employer responded well, Perez notes. "We [the employer and faculty] have the same goal—we want to achieve the college's mission."

"Fostering leadership and speaking up for justice is what we strive to teach to our students by personal example," he says. "Joining the PEA and working together with my colleagues to repair the bridges and rebuild the trust that has deteriorated with our employer is congruent with our ethos."

As the Pearson chapter heads into bargaining for the first time, Perez hopes the organizing process has revealed to the employer what the faculty always knew: that faculty are the most valuable asset of educational institutions like Pearson.

"We are the ones who, every day, try to instill the college's values in the students we bring together," he says.

"My colleagues, they go the extra mile. We are passionate about this school."

#### SGS AXYS Chapter

When a privately owned company is purchased by a multi-national corporation, employees are bound to feel growing pains. But nearly seven years later, persistent pains meant it was time for the employees to band together and affect change. Such is the story of SGS AXYS Analytical Services.

Founded in Sidney, B.C. in 1974, AXYS was a private company specializing in analyzing matter, including aqueous, solids and tissues, for the presence of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and contaminants of emerging concern (CECs). The company grew to be a global leader.

In 2016, AXYS was purchased by SGS, another global leader in inspection and testing services for government, research organizations, regulatory bodies, consultants, and industry. With headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, SGS employs more than 95,000 people and operates more than 2,600 labs and offices around the world.

Diego Manzo joined the Sidney team in 2021, after earning his bachelor's degree in biochemistry from the University of Victoria. A laboratory chemist, he prepares the samples prior to running instrumental analyses. He developed an expertise working with pollutants, such as dioxins and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), chemicals that do not easily break down and may have adverse effects on people and animals.

Early in his tenure, Manzo noticed a high turnover rate among staff at the Sidney laboratory, despite employees enjoying their work and the company culture.

"The high turnover rate meant less experienced hires were making more mistakes, and the sample analyses were taking longer," he says. "It's in everyone's best interest to retain employees. It started to feel like a sinking ship."

**"We reached a point at which we needed to have more support. We needed to rebuild trust between employees and the leadership. To become a strong community, there was need for collective action."**

**-Samuel Perez**



Perez in his classroom where he teaches economics.

After holding meaningful conversations with employees, 40 per cent of whom worked remotely, it became clear to Manzo that colleagues at the Sidney team were indeed dissatisfied—dissatisfied with clawed-back benefits; lack of transparency; general management issues; and insignificant wage increases despite company profits. (Manzo says one-third of lab staff are ineligible for annual raises, due to company policy. They are “kept hostage” at the same pay rate, he adds.) Each of these issues contributed to the high turnover, which, in turn, led to further dissatisfaction.

Manzo researched unions and presented the PEA as an option to his colleagues. Union cards were signed in June 2023. Upon being notified of the application to unionize by the BC Labour Relations Board, the employer filed several objections, all of which were denied by the Labour Board in November 2023. The SGS AXYS chapter is now preparing to bargain a first collective agreement.

Speaking with colleagues, Manzo found that many wholeheartedly believed in the labour movement and were grateful for the work of the organizing team. For others, organizing came with a certain level of fear. On that subject, Manzo was an ideal spokesperson, guided and supported by PEA organizer Duncan Pike.

“I’m an immigrant; I have a closed work permit,” explains the Mexican national. “That means I cannot just quit my job and get another one; I’m not allowed to do that. I told people when talking to them, ‘I’m putting all my chips on the table because this is the right thing to do.’”

Ultimately, the organizing process brought SGS AXYS employees—remote and local—closer together. In unionizing, they created a stronger workplace.

The SGS AXYS bargaining committee in Sidney, BC (from left to right): Sara Meades, Robin Theron, Erik Klaassen, Bruno Guerraz, Diego Manzo, and Lindsey Walker.

Photo: Aaron Lutsch



## WE ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY

### INSIGHT FROM PEA STAFF ORGANIZER, DUNCAN PIKE

Organizing is a process in which workers unite to build the power they need to create positive change in their lives. They build this power by forming solid relationships based on shared values and interests, creating structures to distribute responsibility, and growing their capacity to take collective action. Once they’ve done this and built the majority support needed within their workplace, they can apply for union certification at the Labour Relations Board, which provides formal legal recognition and protection for the union that they’ve built.

This is a process led by the workers themselves. As a union organizer, I help workers develop the skills and leadership necessary to do this work. I do this by gathering information, having one-on-one conversations, identifying leaders, helping to form ‘inside committees’, and offering coaching, mentorship, and support. This approach is designed to empower workers to create and have complete responsibility for their union, ensuring they have the strength to stand up against the inevitable employer counterattack and win an excellent first collective agreement.

I love doing this work and have believed in the importance of unions for as long as I can remember. I vividly recall one of the few times I saw my dad—a gentle, mild-mannered guy—get angry. The Gordon Campbell government had taken a sledgehammer to labour rights

and the public service, slashing thousands of jobs and ripping up union contracts, and he was livid. He was a steward in his union and joined the organized pushback against these attacks. Unions are one of the only ways working people could secure a decent life and fight back, he told me.

I didn’t know much about labour relations or politics back then, but I was moved by my dad’s passion and conviction, and his belief in the importance of solidarity. I carry his lesson with me today: the labour movement is a great force for good in the world, and we all need to act to protect and strengthen it.

As a PEA member, you are a part of this movement, and you have a role to play. The PEA is committed to organizing because all professional workers need the collective power that comes with belonging to a union, and the more members and workplaces that join the PEA, the more power all PEA members have. As a growing union our influence with employers, governments and the labour movement increases, and we also have more resources to provide enhanced services to members. If you know a friend, partner, or non-unionized colleague who could benefit from being in the PEA, or if you just want to talk about labour organizing, get in touch and let’s chat about how we can build up the union together—[dpike@pea.org](mailto:dpike@pea.org) or 250 385 8791 x208.

—Duncan Pike, PEA Organizer

# A TURN AT THE TABLE

SINCE 1998, TERESSA PRENTICE HAS REPRESENTED MEMBERS OF THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES UNION IN GRIEVANCES. IN 2023, IT WAS HER TURN TO GRIEVE—AND EARN A VICTORY FOR UNION MEMBERS EVERYWHERE.

JESSICA NATALE WOOLLARD  
PHOTOS: JEFF TOPHAM

**Working for a union while also being in a union makes for sophisticated members who deeply understand the rights of employees and responsibilities of the employer.**

That's the situation for Teresa Prentice and her colleagues who work for the Hospital Employees Union (HEU). By day, they represent HEU members, helping them understand the collective agreement and supporting them at the table with the Employer. At the same time, 200 HEU employees—including those with roles in administration, accounting, communications, payroll, and servicing—are members of the Hospital Employees' Staff Union (HESU) chapter of the Professional Employees Association (PEA).

Surrey-based Prentice joined HEU in 1998 and moved through various labour relations positions (called service representa-

tives). Today, she's a Director of Membership Services for the region covering from Burnaby to Hope. She served two years on PEA's HESU chapter executive and PEA's provincial executive as a member-at-large, roles that have enabled her to further hone her understanding of unionism and worker rights.

In 2019, after two decades of supporting courageous members at the grievance table, it was her turn to grieve. She had observed the Employer acting in a way she understood to be contrary to the HESU-PEA collective agreement. It was time to "walk the talk. I needed to stand up [and file a grievance]," says Prentice. "If I didn't stand up, what was that saying to the rest of the membership?"

Supported by the PEA—and inspired by hundreds of grievors she had represented over the years—she grieved, and won.

## The Grievance

In February 2019, HEU posted a job for one of five Director of Membership Services positions. Prentice was one of two shortlisted candidates, both of which were current HEU employees, with Prentice being the most senior. She had 21 years at HEU, more than twice the other candidate's seniority.

Despite her years of service, Prentice was not offered the position.

She recognized immediately the job selection process was flawed. It seemed the Employer did not have a process to adjudicate how efficient candidates are as employees, as required in the collective agreement; instead, the Employer gave applicants equal efficiency scores of five out of five.

The Employer had not followed Article 6.02 of the collective agreement, which stated the following:

The promotion, transfer, demotion or release of Directors and Team Leaders shall be based on efficiency and qualifications (including initiative), and where such requirements are considered equal, seniority shall be the defining factor.

**"If I didn't stand up, what was that saying to the rest of the membership?"**

**- Teresa Prentice**

Teresa Prentice, Director of Membership, outside the Hospital Employees Union Headquarters in Burnaby, BC.

Photo: Jeff Topham



## HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' STAFF UNION

### QUICK FACTS

- Currently 192 members
- Joined the PEA in 2017
- Represented members include those in accounting, administration, building services, communications, equity, legal, payroll, organizing, and research and servicing.
- Currently preparing for bargaining.
- Collective agreement expired March 31, 2024

The article also stated:

However where two or more Employees have indicated their interest in the same promotion or transfer, then the Employee with the most seniority shall be given the promotion or transfer, provided they have the ability to perform the job.

Essentially, according to the collective agreement, the Employer must consider both qualifications and efficiency when evaluating candidates, and if all things are equal between candidates, then seniority would be used as a determining factor. But that isn't what happened.

The job was offered to the other candidate, who had half Prentice's seniority. Given her experience, education, and performance record, Prentice believed she should have been considered relatively equal to the other candidate and therefore awarded the position based on seniority.

Now, Prentice is a sophisticated union member. She reviewed the results of the job selection process, as provided by the Employer, and what she saw did not persuade her that the Employer had followed Article 6.02.

"I knew the relevant case law and the decisions that support my position," she explains, noting that she has often represented HEU members at job selection hearings related to the kind of issue she was experiencing.

In September 2019, the PEA filed a grievance, alleging the Employer had acted contrary to Article 6.02 in not awarding Prentice, the more senior and relatively equal candidate, the position of Director of Membership Services.

### Preparing for Arbitration

Due to COVID-19 and various extraordinary circumstances, the arbitration hearing did not take place until May 2023, nearly four years after the grievance was filed.

The delays gave Prentice and her PEA-assigned counsel, Sherry Shir, time to prepare a meticulous argument.

Among her colleagues, Prentice is known to be a detail-oriented person with encyclopedic institutional knowledge. She has binders of records amassed over two decades with the HEU, records that contain her work portfolio and personal career files, including job evaluations.

She is also known as someone who frequently takes on complex grievances, ones that require lengthy arbitration hearings and scrupulous review of statutes and regulations.

Shir was a perfect fit for Prentice. The two combed through countless files and precedent cases with mutual enthusiasm and dedication.

"I've worked with a lot of lawyers," Prentice says, "but I've never had a lawyer that has been as focused on a case as [Shir] was. She was so thorough in all of the details and all of her work; she knew my case inside and out."

Throughout the planning process, the duo learned from each other.

"[Shir] said to me at the end that she so enjoyed working with me because there was so much we taught one another," Prentice remembers. "For her, she learned about our collective agreement, and for me, what I gained

from her is just watching her skill set in action."

### The Decision

After nearly four years, the three-day arbitration took place in May 2023.

After hearing from both sides, the arbitrator found that the HEU job selection process was fundamentally flawed. The award hung on the fact that the collective agreement states the Employer must consider qualifications and efficiency, and the Employer admitted they did not measure efficiency in the job selection process. Prentice and the PEA were granted the arbitration award.

When the grievance was originally filed, the award sought was to place Prentice in the desired position; however, in 2021, she had been awarded another of the five Director of Membership Services positions. Instead, the PEA sought monetary damages for the wages and benefits Prentice would have earned as the successful candidate. The arbiter awarded that the Employer pay 50 per cent of the sum sought.

The award is a win not just for Prentice, HESU, and PEA but also for unions everywhere: it is precedent setting and can be used to support union arbitrations across the country for years to come.

For PEA's HESU chapter, the award ensures that the Employer follows the language in the collective agreement.

### In Solidarity

Always thinking of her HEU members, Prentice recognizes that her experience of grieving has increased her empathy for the HEU members she supports in her work.

"It's the membership that I'm accountable to," she explains. "And I'm part of a membership, too. How could I, as a service representative, tell members they need to find the courage to file a grievance if I can't even do it myself?" she asks.

The answer lies in solidarity. "You have to look at not what's good for me, but what's good for the membership as a whole," she continues.

"The strength of the union comes from the solidarity between one another. You'll have a lot more of that if people stand together."

**"How could I, as a service representative, tell members they need to find the courage to file a grievance, if I can't even do it myself?"**

**- Teresa Prentice**







**THE BOOTS**  
 GARRETT MACKLAM-HARRON AND THE PEA ACHIEVE  
 REIMBURSEMENT FOR SAFETY BOOTS

**JESSICA NATALE WOOLARD**  
 PHOTO: ZOOM BOOTS

**I**n June of 2023, PEA member Garrett Macklam-Harron finally received payment for his safety footwear, a year after he filed a grievance for the denial of this reimbursement. It came after mediation-arbitration, which resulted in a payment for his safety footwear and also a path forward to ensure that members and managers were knowledgeable about the need for safe footwear in the forestry sector.

For years Garrett, a stewardship forester with the Ministry of Forests, has had a portion of his safety boots—required personal protective equipment (PPE) as part of his work—covered by the Employer. He has held positions as a forester in the PEA and BC General Employees’ Union (BCGEU) in different offices around the province.

Significantly, the two collective agreements have identical language about the Employer covering a portion of boots. In both unions, Garrett had successfully claimed the \$150 allowable every two years to receive reimbursement from the Employer for his much-needed safety footwear.

“It was just part of usual business every two years to (submit receipts for new boots),” Garrett says.

In 2021, he moved into a PEA position in 100 Mile House. When, eight months in, his boots began taking on water, Garrett did what he had done for years: he bought new safety boots and submitted his receipt for a partial reimbursement.

This time, the Employer said no; they would not reimburse the boots.

In response, Garrett provided the excerpt from the Government Licensed Professionals (GLP) collective agreement, which supported his position. He also provided a rationale for boots being PPE, citing safe work procedures, WorkSafeBC, and Workers Compensation Board guidance.

The Employer still refused to reimburse the expense.

“It seemed strange to everyone that a safety item would need to be grieved to be able to be reimbursed, especially when there was language in the col-

lective agreement that allowed for this particular PPE to be partially reimbursed," Garrett explains.

With the Employer refusing to change their position, Garrett filed a grievance in May 2022, with the strong support of the PEA.

### Hazardous Stomping Grounds

Foresters like Garrett clock serious mileage on their boots. In rain, snow, sleet, and sun they collectively trek thousands of kilometers a year. Safety boots are an important piece of PPE to protect them from the many hazards they encounter.

As a stewardship forester, Garrett manages reforestation after wildfires

and oversees the planting of millions of trees. He treads all terrains in his work, including ground damaged by fire, which frequently leaves behind "abrasive scree" (trees that have burned down to sharp points), root systems that have burned through to create a tripping hazard and loose gravel among the slippery ash where soils have been burnt away. These conditions quickly degrade even high-quality safety footwear.

"Working in the wildfires and in the woods, boots get beaten up more than just a hike up a mountain," Garrett explains.

His role requires regular fieldwork as he identifies and assesses planting

sites and surveys the planting and growth of trees. Garrett's work requires him to frequently be alone in remote areas, where he would not have an easy exit if he fell and or got injured.

"To be able to encompass areas where millions of trees can be planted, (foresters) hike a lot of kilometers daily," he adds.

### Fill Your Boots

By refusing to back down, Garrett has had a portion of his 2022 safety boots covered.

Meanwhile, at nearly two years old, those boots are quite worn, and they're no longer waterproof, Garrett says. Now a stewardship forester in Williams Lake, Garrett expects he'll need to purchase a new pair come April.

"I'm in a different office, but I'm hopeful that I won't need to grieve it to get them to cover the boots," he adds.

This time, he may have support in numbers. The positive outcome of his grievance process is known among Garrett's colleagues, and he and the PEA have worked to make sure that members know they should request reimbursement for their safety footwear.

The grievance outcome should encourage eligible colleagues to request that the Employer partially cover PPE required for their safety on the job, as outlined in the collective agreement.

The PEA invites more union members to put their best foot forward—and to do so safely.

## UNION'S PERSPECTIVE

### SAFETY IS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY, ESPECIALLY IN FORESTRY

An interesting fact in the PEA's grievance was that in the 2022 round of bargaining, the Employer had expanded the definition of compensable footwear from "safety-toe footwear" to "safety footwear."

This change was retroactive to before the grievance was filed, and arguably broadened the types of footwear that was eligible for reimbursement.

In the grievance, it was the PEA's position that the conditions Garrett was working in clearly necessitated the use of safety footwear

under WorkSafe regulations, and that it was therefore compensable under both the former and current collective agreement language.

The fact that the Employer denied the reimbursement given the hazards Garrett regularly faced in his work was perplexing and frustrating.

As the outcome in Garrett's grievance relates to a single grievor, the PEA advises GLP members to get in touch with their union if their reimbursement requests are denied.

**"It seemed strange to everyone that a safety item would need to be grieved to be able to be reimbursed, especially when there was language in the collective agreement that allowed for this particular PPE to be partially reimbursed."**

**- Garrett Macklam-Harron**

Garrett's old boots worn boots were no longer waterproof, and in need of replacement.

Photo: Garrett Macklam-Harron



# CELEBRATING 50 YEARS AS BC'S UNION FOR PROFESSIONALS

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT FROM DUTY WITH DIGNITY

**BEN ISITT**

**O**n August 1972, the New Democratic Party (NDP) led by social worker Dave Barrett was elected to power in British Columbia, replacing the Social Credit government that governed since 1952. The NDP was directly affiliated with the labour movement, under the aegis of the Canadian Labour Congress, and was therefore more receptive to demands from employee groups for legislative changes after two decades of tension under Social Credit rule.

Alongside a far-reaching reform program that extended from agriculture and taxation to health, education, forestry and energy policy, the Barrett government initiated a review of the provincial Labour Code and formed a commission of inquiry to examine collective bargaining in the public service. The commission was headed by Richard Higgins, the province's chief personnel officer in the Civil Service Commission since

1970. A Victoria Daily Colonist newspaper columnist had earlier suggested that if the government wanted to attract the best people, it had to "pay at least a fair salary and give them basic bargaining rights."

The Higgins Commission received substantial input from engineers, foresters and other professionals employed by the government. The overwhelming message was that licensed professionals should have their own bargaining unit distinct from other government employees, to avoid placing professionals in the difficult position of unwillingly participating in strikes or other labour actions that might conflict with their legislated codes of professional conduct. Higgins included this recommendation in his report to the government, which responded by proposing a distinct bargaining unit for licensed professionals when it tabled the Public Sector Labour Relations Act in the BC Legislature in April 1973.

"LABOUR CODE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA ACT"

LABOUR RELATIONS BOARD

## CERTIFICATION

The LABOUR RELATIONS BOARD, after such enquiry as the Board considers adequate, is satisfied that the employees named herein constitute a unit appropriate for the purpose of collective bargaining and that the other requirements of the Code have been met, and

THEREFORE HEREBY CERTIFIES

the British Columbia Government Professional Employees  
Association

as the bargaining agent for the employees in a unit composed of employees  
in a professional classification in the Public Service  
Classification structure who are members of an association  
that has statutory authority to license a person to  
practise that profession, other than those persons described  
in clause 4(a) of the Public Service Labour Relations Act

and except those excluded by the Act, employed by The Government of the Province  
of British Columbia,  
Parliament Buildings,  
Victoria, B.C.

Given at Vancouver, British Columbia, this 3rd day of May, A.D. 1974.

LABOUR RELATIONS BOARD

By  "E.R. PECK"

Vice - Chairman

icc

# HERE ARE YOUR RIGHTS

AS AN EMPLOYEE  
IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Left: The PEA organized in the context of the more sympathetic policy environment that accompanied the election of the Dave Barrett NDP government to power.

Photo: Box 16, File Y.05 (External Organizations BC Federation of Labour)

Below: Dave Barrett, Premier of British Columbia from 1972-75. Barrett, a former social worker who had been fired from his job at Haney Correction Institute for political activism, combatively told the Legislature during debate on Bill 75, the Public Service Labour Relations Act: "Are you for the civil servants or against them? I'm all for them. It's a pledge we made and we intend to keep it."

Photo: The Canadian Press

The legislation established the two main criterion for membership in the bargaining unit that became PEA: (1) employment in a professional classification in the public service as understood within the terms of the Act; and (2) membership in an association having statutory authority to license a person to practice his or her profession. Rising to speak in favour of Bill 75, the Public Services Labour Relations Act, Premier Dave Barrett reminded members of the legislature that he had been a civil servant prior to his election as an MLA:

"The one single issue that I've been involved in before I was elected to this House, right up to the time we formed a government, was a promise to provide collective bargaining for civil servants. ... Why shouldn't the civil servants have the right to collective bargaining? Why should they be second-class citizens? They were promised it in our four-hour strike of 1958. ... There is going to be a vote on this bill. ... A year ago August we had a vote and we're happy with that result too. So, Mr. Chairman, here it is. The chips are down. Are you for the civil servants or against them? I'm all for them. It's a pledge we made and we intend to keep it."

Members of the legislative assembly voted 42 to 2 to approve Bill 75 at second reading in late October and it passed unanimously on November 7, 1973, receiving royal assent the same day.

## PEA IS BORN

Finally, on February 18, 1974, the BC Government Professional Employees Association (BCGPEA) officially came into being at a meeting in Victoria's Empress Hotel. The association's original name reflected its initial emphasis on professionals employed within the BC public service, which would later expand to in-



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**Why shouldn’t the civil servants have the right to collective bargaining?”**  
**- Premier Dave Barrett**

clude other groups of professionals in the legal services, health and education sectors as the association developed in the decades that followed. As The Professional would later record, “The prime mover in the organization and establishment of the Association” was Department of Highways engineer Derek Parkes, who served on a steering committee that included government architect Ron Waterfield. The committee signed up more than 60% of licensed professionals employed by the BC government and proceeded to hold the founding meeting.

From its inception, the PEA and its membership conceived of themselves as functioning differently from other labour organizations in British Columbia. This mirrored debates among teachers, nurses and other licensed professionals who had an uneasy relationship with the practices of trade unionism and the broader labour movement, viewing their interests as distinct from those of the broader working class. Constitutionally, the PEA recognized the individual right of professionals to decide whether or not to participate in job action, in contrast to other organizations such as the BCGEU that established constitutional provisions to discipline members for failing to respect picket lines.

The PEA also aimed to respect the diversity of professionals in the structuring of its electoral process for executive elections. As an association with a membership drawn predominately from two professions at its inception - foresters and engineers - “the founders feared that there would be a tendency for members to vote only for those candidates they knew, and because familiar colleagues would likely be colleagues in the same profession, the result would be to prevent members from the less populous professions being elected.” The constitution therefore included a provision prohibiting “plumping,” or the practice of voting for fewer candidates than the total number offices to be filled.

At the PEA’s founding meeting, highways engineer Derek Parkes was elected as the association’s first president, leading a six-member executive committee. Offices were established in Victoria and Vancouver and administration and organizing staff were hired, led by executive director Geoff Holter. Buoyed by the mandate from the membership and the newfound legislative right to bargaining collectively, Parkes and the PEA turned their attention to applying for certification from the BC Labour Relations Board and negotiating the PEA’s first collective agreement.

In May 1974, the BC Government Professional Employees’ Association (BCG-PEA) received formal certification from the BC Labour Relations Board for a union comprised of all licensed professionals in the BC public service with the exception of nurses (who by legislation formed their own association). This marked the culmination of nearly two decades of organization and advocacy by professionals in the public service, as the foundation established in previous years was transformed into legally-recognized collective bargaining in the more sympathetic policy environment that accompanied the election of Dave Barrett’s government to power in the 1970s. As first contract negotiations demonstrated, the challenge of balancing duty with dignity continued.

# PEA UPDATES

## HAPPY RETIREMENT

Congratulations to long time GLP local rep Lorna Green on her retirement this past December. Lorna finished her career as a Senior Environmental Protection Officer in the Environmental Protection Division of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy.

Best wishes to Jeff Stone on his retirement in January. Jeff was a Research Scientist Stand Development Modelling with the Ministry of Forests and an active member of GLP bargaining committees who helped support many changes to the collective agreement.



## GLP FAMILY SKATE DAY

Great to see a group of GLP members in the Terrace getting together to enjoy a family skate day. Thanks to the GLP Executive for covering the rink rental cost.

## GLP GRANTS AND DONATIONS

GLP members can submit requests for funding of up to \$200 for an activity or event to the GLP Grants and Donations Committee. Grants and donations are administered by the GLP Executive based on their consistency with the chapter’s strategic plan or promotion of the Association and GLP Chapter.

For the full eligibility considerations and policy visit our chapter webpage. All grant and donation requests must be submitted using the online form at [pea.org/chapters/glp/grant-form](http://pea.org/chapters/glp/grant-form).

Remember to submit your online request early for year-end events!



Thanks to UVic member John Threlfall for sharing a write up of team PEARfect Storm at the annual United Way pub quiz.

Photo: John Threlfall

## GOOD TIMES ON CAMPUS

Always game to support a good cause, a group of PEA members in UVic's Faculty of Fine Arts joined forces to compete in the university's annual United Way pub quiz on November 16.

The team—named PEARfect Storm—was made up of PEA Second Vice President Cliff Haman (Department of Visual Arts), Sarah Riecken (Fine Arts Academic Advisor), Iona Hubner (Art History & Visual Studies) plus Mike Huston and John Threlfall (both Office of the Dean).

## SEND US YOUR PHOTOS

We're always looking for photos, stories or updates about our members. Please send any mentions that should be included to editor Jordana Whetter (jwhetter@pea.org).

Despite not knowing Taylor Swift's favourite food (cheesecake, apparently), how many time zones are in Russia (11, remarkably) or which country rests in all four hemispheres (Kiribati, weirdly), PEARfect Storm came in a respectable third out of 10 teams, although since the first and second place teams actually tied at 49 points, the PEA team's score of 46 points made them technically second.

"Just four points?" notes Threlfall, the team organizer. "We can beat that next year. Although we'll have to brush up on our Taylor Swift trivia."

## FESTIVE HOLIDAY CHEER

On December 21, 2023, the District of Okanagan-Shuswap Natural Resource Ministries and BC Timber Sales Vernon Office, hosted the annual children's holiday party. We had an absolute blast decorating gingerbread houses followed by a pizza party. Over a dozen families participated, with 22 kids in attendance. Having Santa (Kyle Beadman) swing by was the cherry on top. Massive kudos to Kyle for supporting the event and for bringing Santa's visit to life.

When we say this is an annual event, we're not kidding. This party has been an on-going event for over 20 years! Some of the people who now work in this office attended this event as children of employees 20 years ago. It was important for us to continue this tradition.

In the past we have done various activities such as indoor rock climbing, skating, and holiday themed crafts (as well as some after-hours office shenanigans). The activity can be tailored to a range of ages. We have ideas going forward for other family-inclusive events as well as holiday parties, and we hope that staff are excited to participate, to build community and keep events like this going strong. We are extremely grateful to the GLP Executive who have been a long-term supporter of this event and provide a generous donation to make the party happen.



Thanks to GLP member Jennifer Wright for sharing a write up of this event

Photo: Jennifer Wright

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