



**UNION OF GRADUATE STUDENT WORKERS**  
PSAC Directly Chartered Local 60550  
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## **President's Report – Amy Savile**

**November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

It has been just over a year since I became President for our Local; it has been a year of change, both in terms of major progress and challenges. The Executive team devoted much of their time to addressing both individual and systematic issues, investigating concerns, fine-tuning our policies, as well as engaging with the greater Public Service Alliance of Canada structure to learn and share opportunities that will further strengthen the UGSW.

I continued to serve as Co-Chair for the Joint Union-Management Committee where the Executive worked with members of the School of Graduate Studies and from Human Resources in order to work out best practices, consistency in information dissemination, and addressing issues such as delays in pay, the Union not receiving employee's work contracts, employees not receiving the membership information packages and beyond. Issues we continue to work at with the JUMC include addressing the 520 hour/year maximum for all employment (versus 520-limit solely for TA/RA per the Collective Agreement) and the processes, documentation, and filing systems for contracts, disciplinary actions, grievances, and evaluations. UGSW and UNB-HR held another successful training course for Graduate Directors and Secretaries, but there are still some kinks in the current system to smooth out. I was also invited to give thirteen presentations to members in various departments; however, it is important to note that there are more than thirteen departments at UNB, so some members may still not be aware of their Union and their rights. One of the major challenges this year was finding volunteers to sit on a number of our other management-Union committees and not having representation from all departments in our stewards network; we hope that addressing the lack of compensation, through dues allocations, will assist with this issue.

Since I began my position, it was also announced that, with limited exceptions, post-doctoral researchers at UNB are to be viewed as employees and are now connected with the PSAC and our Local as they enter into bargaining for their first Collective Agreement. I am quickly learning how important an opportunity this is, as my interactions with these members emphasized strong issues ranging from access to resources, work-space environment, accessibility of health care coverage, to receiving support in applying for permanent residency. Unlike grad students, who also have the Graduate Student Association, this Union currently serves as the sole organization through which post-docs can meet and interact with their fellow colleagues around campus. It will be important for post-docs to select members to represent them during bargaining, and for grad students to support them in any way we can.

It is important that our Local stays connected with other Unions, Locals, and organizations in order to build each other up. As such, I sit on the United Campus Labour Council, I am trustee for the Fredericton & District Labour Council, and I participate in the PSAC Fredericton and Surrounding Area Young Workers Committee. I have also represented our Union at the UNB Joint Health and Safety Committee, though it is time for two new members to take on this role. It is important to note that, along with the New Brunswick Federation of Labour, all our Local's members are invited to take part in these groups as delegates or observers, as we are affiliated with each. The region is also looking to form PSAC committees such as a women's committee, Indigenous circle, regional committee and more.

Another priority this year has been outreach to the greater Public Service Alliance of Canada. In attending the Triennial National Convention, myself and our treasurer had the opportunity to meet with leaders from Locals all across Canada from the federal sector and beyond. It gave us a major opportunity to describe challenges that those outside of the academic sector may not be as aware of, including the precarious nature of our contract work, the risks and challenges of the dual student/employee role, the frequency of harassment, coercion, and abuse of authority in universities, and the overall mental and physical health strains we experience. There was strong solidarity and support from other Academic Locals and Directly Chartered Locals. The National Executive took our concerns very seriously and myself and our treasurer have just returned from a conference last week that gave both academic and other Directly Chartered Locals the opportunity to again raise these concerns and push for concrete solutions. Myself and our Vice President for Fredericton also attended the Atlantic Region Training School and received certificates in Advanced Union Officer Training – this was another great opportunity to learn from non-academic Locals and to teach them about our own strengths and struggles.

Finally, our Executive team and our PSAC representatives have worked tirelessly in terms of administrative duties. Without them, we could not have determined who wasn't receiving their paycheques on time or address individual and policy grievances efficiently and with rigorous research and preparation. We are also grateful to the President for Unifor on campus, Ernie Caissie, for once again serving as our external financial auditor. Moving forward, I want to emphasize the importance of having many hands 'on deck' to ensure that none of our representatives are taking on tasks that are either so large or so numerous that it begins to impact them academically, financially, or in other ways. Labour unions are strongest when the membership does not rely on a small handful of people to move things forward, but instead discover the diverse ways in which everyone can contribute. The smallest, most important act for everyone is to get to know your Collective Agreement and the resources, rights, and responsibilities it entails. I want to thank again the current Executive team for their hard work and encourage those coming into Executive, Committee and Steward positions to put their heart into what they do; there is nothing more rewarding than lifting members out of stressful situations and being able to offer them pathways to resolution and empowerment. We are strongest together.

In solidarity,  
Amy Savile