

## THE WATER COOLER



## Making the workplace work

Michael Bach, who works on diversity issues for KPMG, was recently honoured by the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council. Bach, a gay man, has worked on workplace issues as they affect both gays and new Canadians. He won the Canadian HR Reporter Individual Achievement Award. COURTESY OF MANSA PHOTOGRAPHY

## NATIONAL NEWS

# UNION MAKES PRO-GAY PITCH

Online petition calls on Harper to protect trans people, queer refugees

Rob Salerno

THE PUBLIC SERVICE ALLIANCE OF Canada (PSAC), the union representing federal civil servants, unveiled a letter-writing campaign calling on the Harper government to take action on lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans rights at its National Pride conference in Toronto on March 28.

PSAC is a union representing more than 166,000 workers, mostly in the federal public service but also including workers in the private sector, shelters and universities.

"Since taking power in 2006, the Harper government has attempted to undermine the lesbian, gay, bi and trans community's hard-fought struggle for equality and human rights," reads the preamble to the PSAC letter.

The letter can be found on the PSAC website and makes a five-point pitch for queer rights in Canada.

It demands that the Harper government restore funding for the Court Challenges Program, which, until it was cancelled in 2006, provided grants to minority groups to pay for Charter challenges to protect equality rights.

It demands that the citizenship guide be rewritten to make mention of gays in Canada.



Sharleen Patterson attended the PSAC National Pride conference in March. PHOTO BY ROB SALERNO

The letter calls on the government to include gender identity and expression as protected grounds under the Canadian Human Rights Act.

It also criticizes the government for appointing gay-rights opponents to key government positions.

"It's timely," says Terry Fanning, a PSAC regional vice-president. "There are ramifications down the road for these policies."

Find the PSAC letter at [petition.web.net/psac/node/37](http://petition.web.net/psac/node/37)

## Gay feds in small towns

Kelly Collard, who works for Revenue Canada in Borden, PEI — population 860 — started transitioning from male to female two years ago.

"I've had zero troubles at work," she says. "When I spoke to my manager, I said 'This was what I needed.' Their attitude was 'How can we make this work?'"

"Sometimes you make assumptions about what it'll be like in a small town, but I've had no negative incidents in Borden."

But others say that being out in Canada's bureaucracy has been difficult. Sharleen Patterson, PSAC's Yukon representative, says she's seen and experienced discrimination in her workplace.

"We have no whistleblowing legislation federally. I can't use this information to lobby for change at work. We don't have a venue to say, 'I would like to have diversity training.'"

Patterson says discrimination happens all over Canada, but in remote regions it's more noticeable.

Anneka Westergreen from Yellowknife, NWT, says the most difficult part of being out in the North is the lack of resources for queer people. Queer groups start up but frequently fall apart.

"Yellowknife is very transient; people come and go," Westergreen says. "It's the same group always volunteering, and they get burnt out." —Rob Salerno

## TUBS

## Club Toronto closes

Scott Dagostino

"CLOSED FOREVER!" READ THE sign scrawled in red marker on a plain sheet of paper taped to the door of Club Toronto on Mutual St.

Famous for its outdoor pool, infamous as a site of the 1981 Toronto bathhouse raids and the 2000 Pussy Palace police raid, the venerable bathhouse closed abruptly on the morning of April 1.

Calls to the club went unanswered, and emails bounced back as workmen tore out the insides of the place.

"It's being gutted," one of them told *Xtra*, hauling planks of wood past the pool.

Spa Excess proprietor Peter Bochove got his start in the bathhouse business at Club Toronto in 1973. He says he sent former owner and boss Peter Moloney an email recently that read, "I finally put you guys out of business!"

If business has been tough on everyone, Bochove says, it was especially difficult for Rick Armstrong, who bought Club Toronto in 2005 but, according to Bochove, "had no money to fix it up."

Still, says Goodhandy's nightclub co-owner Todd Klinck, "It was pretty cool having an outdoor pool where you could be naked and have sex.... It was an icon of Toronto."

What's in store for the building? The workman said it will reopen in two months as a swingers' club.

Check out the next issue for more reminiscences of Club Toronto.

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