

# Report on the APS National Council held in Montreal on the weekend of November 4, 2017

The National Council is at the heart of the association's life by gathering for the length of a weekend, the union's most dedicated members to evaluate actions undertaken in the previous year as well as to decide on actions to be implemented in the months ahead. The APS calendar is built around the Members' Annual General Assembly held usually at the start of November. The founding members of APS defined the mandate of this Assembly because of the dispersal factor of the association with core locations spread from Vancouver to Moncton by way of Toronto and Montreal. To ensure an equal voice for everyone, all decisions of the Assembly are limited to resolutions submitted to the total number of voting members. A direct democracy concept that guarantees that the base of the organization decides at all times.

## **National Council Assembly Morning Session**

The weekend program includes three distinctive events: the deliberations of the National Council on Saturday, the Members' Annual General Assembly on Sunday as well as the National Executive Committee meeting also on Sunday. It follows directly after the Members' Assembly.

The National Council provides a forum that brings together the elected officers and the delegates. Although the deliberations are not decision-making, they provide an opportunity to address and discuss the Union's orientation. This year the agenda covered the Regional reports, followed by the Treasurer's annual report, the EAP summary, the Health and Safety in the workplace, the reports from the National President, the National Secretary and the General Manager.

The tour of the regions allows all the participants to understand the respective challenges facing every local region within the APS Union's universe. This year, the spokespersons reporting to the group were: Marcel Arsenault for the Maritimes, Nicolas Ouellet for Quebec, Nathan Farr for Ontario, Daniel Lavigne for Ottawa and David MacFarlane for the Western Region.

The reports from the specialized committees were presented by the APS delegates who sit on these committees, David MacFarlane for the EAP, Dominique Barrette for the Consultative Committee on Staff Benefits as well as Nathan Farr and Marcel Arsenault for the Health and Safety in the Workplace.

Yves Ledoux drafted a broad outline of his first mandate as National Treasurer by presenting an overview of the new investment policy which projects substantial improvement in cash flow in the near future. He also gave a summary of the financial results by informing the participants that a detailed analysis of the results will be presented by the external auditors on Sunday during the National Executive Committee's working session. The overall assessment revealed that the financial situation continues to improve and the year to come seems even better.

## **A Productive Afternoon**

Mario Poudrier launched the afternoon debates, by presenting his activity report summarizing the main concerns of his mandate since his re-election as National President on November 6<sup>th</sup>, last year. He dedicated a great deal of time before the Council in underlining the difficulties encountered in the implementation of the new collective agreement. The deadlock to reach the midpoint reference zone by the start of the eighth year of service and the inaccurate application of the three-hour compensation for employees 'on call' were the most hard-hitting examples proving that the relations with the employer are not at their best these days.

Mario also talked about the numerous grievances and the litigations before the CIRB to demonstrate that APS has a great deal of work lined up ahead.

Later in the afternoon, Claude Beausoleil also tackled the litigation and grievances issues by portraying a realistic picture on the conflicts debated in arbitration and with the CIRB. Several layoff cases are still in arbitration as much in the English as in the French network. Furthermore, the other unions relaunched before the CIRB, claims for APS positions which had emerged last year.

APS is in mediation for three new job claims in the English network from the Canadian Media Guild while in the French network the SCRC turned the clock back 17 years by claiming all positions originally targeted by the CUPE in 2000.

In turn, Dominique Barrette presented a new version of the membership monthly reports she designed after her election as National Secretary of the Association last year. This report contains more thorough analysis in understanding the often complex fluctuations of the variations in the membership within the bargaining unit. The members' union dues are the most important source of income of a bargaining unit and ours does not escape that fact. This new method facilitates the conciliation process, but serves especially to identify easily the trends of the APS structure. It should be noted that a growth in the number of members improves gradually since the wave of job cuts sustained a few years ago. The employer seems headed toward hiring more contractual and temporary employees than in the past. We thank Dominique for her remarkable work in the compilation of the data. Dominique received a warm applause from the attendees.

Dominique pursued with the presentation of results on a study of our Website framework accomplished in partnership with Nicolas Ouellet, one of the members of the Montreal Branch Local Executive Committee. His professional experience allowed him to evaluate possible improvements of the current site. Thus the tandem dashed into the presentation of a sophisticated report. They launched into a detailed analysis report of the operations of the current site. By enumerating the component of options for APS to take into consideration for the improvement of the website, the members quickly understood it was time to act upon this quickly. The National Executive Committee filed the tandem's recommendations the next day during its working session.

Regarding financial matters, the Council also explored new avenues with the new role of the new Investment Committee recently adopted by the APS National Executive. Nathan Farr, Nicolas Ouellet and Jerry Ding were present to provide examples of potential higher return on investments of the Association's assets. The committee had already participated to their very first working session and gave early indications of their involvement and predicting a promising future of the Association's good financial health.

**NOTE:** A more detailed report of this intervention as well as the website discussions are also detailed on APS Website. For further information, consult the *LATEST NEWS* blog.

At the end of this productive day, the Council closed the deliberations through the heartfelt thanks from the National President, Mario Poudrier toward the participants who accepted to dedicate their weekend to APS

## Sunday, November 5<sup>th</sup> Members' Annual General Assembly

This year, the election for the renewal of the Accounting firm's mandate was at stake and the only vote on the agenda at the Members' Annual General Assembly. The electronic vote is disclosed by the transmission of the results from the external firm responsible for the voting process. Marcel Arsenault from Moncton and David MacFarlane from Edmonton acted as Election Officers for the transmission of the results. With a rate of 41 % in members' participation, the voting members chose again to follow the National Executive Committee's recommendation by confirming that the firm *Désormeaux, Patenaude Inc.* will submit APS financial statements for the next fiscal year. The favorable vote was 130 against 4 with 27 abstentions. Big Pulse acted again as the firm responsible for the organization of the electronic vote.

## National Executive Committee

Around 9:00 in the morning that this year's one of the two compulsory National Executive meetings began where the members have to attend in person. As in the past, the National President Mario Poudrier invited all the members present who do not sit on the National Executive to attend as observers. The agenda was quite full and the National Executive quickly proceeded at the start of the session by adopting the resolution for the appointment of the external auditors. This is when Mario tossed the idea to proceed differently in the future regarding the appointment of the external auditors through a vote. The costs of a national vote confirming the choice of the accounting firm, as well as the lack of interest in a matter of technical nature were the main reasons for his intervention. A more expansive discussion was undertaken to result in David MacFarlane's proposal to study the possibility of bringing an amendment to the Association's By-Laws. Indeed to change the appointment of the external auditors through a vote, it is necessary to modify the By-Laws. Consequently, it is necessary to submit a proposal to APS voting members. David suggested that every Officer examines all the clauses of the By-Laws and propose other changes of similar nature if need be. The modifications to the Association's By-Laws require a two-third majority of the participants to be accepted. Therefore, the matter of then appointment of the external auditors and/or any other improvements in the Association's By-Laws will be discussed at the next face-to-face National Executive Meeting.

A detailed presentation of the financial statements for the fiscal years 2016-2017 was also on the agenda of the meeting. Mrs. Désormeaux and Mr. Patenaude, the main partners of the firm which bears their names were present to give an accurate portrait of APS financial situation. The explanations and the comments took place smoothly and ended by the confirmation of their renewed mandate to submit APS financial statements for the next year.

The executive then carried on with the Investment Policy by referring to the latest version of the original document which has been subject to discussions for the past two years. The President finally ruled to submit shortly a final version of the document via e-mail. The members will have a last opportunity to examine the policy's ultimate version before proceeding to a ratification vote.

The preservation of the current policy in financing the Christmas parties was confirmed for the celebrations of this year. Every region of the Association will have the same budget (set on pro rata of the participants) to pay the costs of their respective parties and free to organize the suitable event according to their own region.

## Web Site and Perception Survey

The subject of the reorganization of the Website structure discussed during the National Council resurfaced with the adoption of resolutions to proceed to the improvements suggested in the Barrette-Ouellet report. Dominique Barrette earlier had also suggested adding to the agenda, the prospect of a perception survey with all the members. After a lively discussion on the subject, the Committee decided to proceed as soon as possible to develop an opinion survey with the APS members to validate the perception they have of their Association. This is Dominique's area of expertise that she masters naturally since she works professionally on similar surveys for the Corporation. This challenge will fall upon her and David MacFarlane's collaboration to ensure that this unprecedented initiative is brought to a successful conclusion. Dominique and David will have to consult the National Executive through the various stages of the project. The Committee really perceived in that proposal another commitment to innovate, to favor transparency and to encourage participation within the Association.

The committee closed the meeting by opting for Toronto and Montreal respectively as sites for the next National Council and the National Executive bi annual meeting.