

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF
SAGUENAY/LAC-ST-JEAN/CHIBOUGAMAU/CHAPAIS AREA COUNCIL

2019-2020

Could there have been a better time to take the helm of an area council than the year 2017, as we grappled with the Phoenix fiasco? Looking back, I can see that it was a perfect opportunity to get to know several aspects of my new role, particularly media relations and the MP lobbying campaigns.

Political action and mobilization

Saguenay/Lac-St-Jean boasts a number of regional media. Thanks to all the Phoenix-related media coverage I have done, journalists in the region got to know me quite quickly. I think I've been able to establish a good rapport with them and gain a reputation as a credible speaker, because many of them approach me for comment on various issues related to the federal public service.

In addition to Phoenix and collective bargaining, here are the key issues my area council has brought forward in the past three years, whether through media coverage or in our many lobbying meetings with federal MPs and City of Saguenay officials:

- Saving the building at 100 Lafontaine in Chicoutimi and its purpose as federal public service offices;
- Saving jobs at the Jonquière Tax Centre from the impact of the proposed single tax system for Quebec residents;
- Federal government budget watch;
- Fight for \$15 minimum wage campaign;
- 2019 federal election;
- Campaign for universal public pharmacare.

Union life

Since becoming president of the area council, I have introduced new methods for fostering democratic management and transparency. I have grouped all of the Area Council's documents, including by-laws, minutes, the resolutions package adopted by the Area Council and the Area Council's budget and financial statements, in a public Dropbox folder accessible at any time by the members in my region. I also do my best to submit a full report on every activity in which I take part in my capacity as President.

The challenges in store for us over the next three years include setting up the regional Young Workers and Human Rights committees, and boosting participation in the Women's Committee. In fact, this work is underway and is already showing results. We have received AEC approval to strike a regional young workers' committee and are working to meet the application criteria for the creation of a regional human rights

committee. In response to the broad call we issued at our last meeting in 2019, two locals have recruited new members for the regional women's committee.

I have tried to reiterate to the locals in my region the importance of joining and taking part in the FTQ regional council. Last year a new local joined and can now benefit from the services available. I have also participated in several activities organized by the FTQ or its affiliate unions, including the local and regional development tour and the FTQ's national meeting for local and regional development. The work begun at these meetings will doubtless influence the FTQ approach to a Just Transition program for the economy in the future.

I would like to thank Yvon Barrière for asking me to chair both the By-Law Committee for this convention and the PSAC-Quebec Education Committee. The Education Committee will certainly be my priority in the coming year because a great deal of work must still be done. It has proven a slow and challenging process to achieve the committee's objectives for the 2019-2020-2021 cycle, but making changes to practices and policies is never painless. I hope to complete the transition by the end of this three-year education cycle.

Conclusion

I would like to thank all the members of Saguenay/Lac-St-Jean/Chibougamau/ Chapais Area Council who, despite their many other duties, unfailingly attended our meetings and took part in the mobilizations that have been organized since last convention. I would also like to congratulate André Roberge on his induction as a lifetime member of PSAC-Quebec. On behalf of all the members of the Area Council whom you have represented for so long, bravo and thank you!

2020-2021

Although it interrupted the strike votes of UTE members and forced the rescheduling of our regional convention, the COVID-19 pandemic did not spell the end of our union struggles.

Adapting our methods to the new reality, we definitely did not stand idle. Our efforts to lobby the region's MPs on several current issues, including occupational health and safety during COVID-19, Bill C-244(36-1) on a single tax return for Quebec residents and Bill 59 on the modernization of the occupational health and safety regime.

With the Jonquière Tax Centre and Canadian Forces Base Bagotville, the federal government is one of our region's largest employers. Consequently, renewing our collective agreements and obtaining compensation for the problems caused by Phoenix received a great deal of coverage from the regional media.

I wish everyone a quick end to this pandemic. But above all, I hope that it will have taught us to question and review how we do things and to adapt to change.

In solidarity,

Marc-André Gobeil
President of Saguenay/Lac-St-Jean/
Chibougamau/Chapais Area Council