

**President Jennifer Carr Opening Address to the 103<sup>rd</sup> PIPSC Annual General Meeting**  
**Friday, November 18, 2022**  
**Le Centre Sheraton, Montréal, Québec**

My name is Jennifer Carr and my pronouns are elle / she / her.

I acknowledge that our meeting in Tiohtià:ke (**joh-jaw-gay**) / Montréal takes place on the unceded Indigenous lands of the Kanien'kehá:ka (**gah-nyen--geh-hah**) or Mohawk Nation. Tiohtià:ke/Montréal is known as a gathering place for many First Nations, and we recognize the Kanien'kehá:ka as custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today.

Thank you all for being here.

Thank you so much to our host city of Montreal, and all of the staff and members who pulled this fantastic event together.

Great to be in person this year, the energy sharing is better when we aren't interacting behind a computer screen.

The last two virtual AGMs were difficult, but we got through it.

As we were leading up to the last AGM, I found myself considering running for President. I realized it was time I stepped back or stepped up.

So I stepped up, and you took that step with me. [Including the new board].

I'm so thankful.

I'm thankful for my incredible care community which has allowed me to do this work.

I'm thankful to our staff who have leaned into the chaos with me.

And I'm thankful to be collaborating with all of you to create a better union.

And a better Canada.

I'm thankful for this wonderful opportunity for us to come together and take stock of the last year and look ahead to what's next.

I've met many of you face-to-face, which is something I am really proud of.

In the last year I have:

- Visited the Chalk River info line
- Gone on a fact-finding mission for our Northern Nurses
- Met with all five Radiation Therapist groups for the first time [Bill 124 discussion in one shared Zoom room]
- Also met smaller bargaining group CTC (Canadian Tourism Commission) during bargaining, who hasn't met a President before

Those were wonderful experiences, and I'm thrilled for the chance to connect with more of you this weekend.

I'd like to begin by reflecting on and celebrating some of PIPSC's wins of the last year.

Let's take a moment and look at some of the big ones:

- Bargaining: Chalk River (3.5% a year for 3 years) and Northern Nurses (recruitment and retention allowance).
- Continued to fight to protect your pensions (New Brunswick case, educating 14,400 members on their pensions so they understand the value of the pensions and are prepared to fight for them.)
- Ontario Federation of Labour / New Brunswick Federation of Labour
- Meeting with Health Minister (being part of the larger house of labour strengthens our movement)

That said, we know we are in challenging times that could get even more challenging.

We are all about to head into challenging rounds of bargaining. [33 collective agreements].

The Conservative party has also elected a leader who doesn't value the public sector (or unions). [Don't want to see what happened in Ontario to happen at the federal level.]

We are having to fight to retain flexible work.

But even though we are facing so many challenges, I want you to know that each of these challenges brings with it the possibility for positive change:

- They are attacking our article on contracting because it's working.
- There is a huge opportunity for tax fairness. \$30B is up for grabs.
- That \$30B could ensure wages are indexed to inflation.
- The Future Of Work could be more accessible and equitable.
- Also, even though we want our members to never have any conflict at work, we also know that when this does happen, it can end up bringing these members closer to their union.

That certainly reflects my own experience with coming to my union:

- I was in a toxic work environment.
- Going into work every day felt traumatic.
- I contacted my union, this union, and found immediate support.
- [Mention Judith King]
- I was taught the role of collective agreements.
- I filed a grievance and stood up for my rights.

On the surface this is a negative story.

But the reality is, many people don't understand the value of a union until they need it.

And being supported through that process can really activate people, as everyone here has been activated.

I'm very thankful for who is here but also we need to look around the room and ask who isn't here.

And why are they not here?

I think a lot about the fact that if I felt like there wasn't space for me in the union, how might others be feeling?

So we need to ask ourselves hard questions about crucial issues:

- Union's Truth and Reconciliation work
- DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) survey and DEI advisor
- Supporting Black Public Servants Class Action Suit
- Board and advisory council making DEI a pillar. Making sure the people who lead our union reflect the population of people who are in our union.
- Care leave discrimination [modelled after Domestic Violence Leave group]

We might not like the answers to these questions but I am proud of the fact that we are asking them.

Because now is the time to be brave together.

And asking these questions is the only way to create the space we want.

A space where everyone has a voice.

We have a responsibility right now to use that voice.

We will be in an election again before we know it.  
As with every election, the stakes are high.

But we are not powerless to impact the direction this country is taking.

What if when all of you left here, you had five to ten conversations with your friends and loved ones about a union issue impacting all Canadians:

- Bill 124 and beyond [wage restraint legislation, etc.]
- Contracting out [the dangers of: Waste, equity, regional distribution, language rights, etc.]
- Right to organize
- Defending and maintaining public science
- Working from home
- Right to disconnect
- Inflation and wages

Think of the impact that could have.

That list of challenges seems pretty dire.

But across the broader labour movement we are seeing some of the fastest growth in unionisation in over two decades.

So there's a lot of opportunity if we can re-engage the base

How can we do that?

We need to imagine new ways of engaging and deepening connections. That might look like:

- A box of travelling games
- A table of musical instruments and songbooks
- Sharing links to webinars (7473 members have participated)
- Online lunch and learns
- Family events like alcohol-free karaoke

The presence of families in particular gives me so much hope for the future.

Participation in events this weekend will help our children grow up learning about the power of unions, which will inspire them to become active with unions themselves one day.

My own kids grew up in this union. Which was wonderful, but it was also a challenge and a struggle. So many of us are navigating dependent care (sandwich generation).

But younger people want new ways of connecting.

They don't want to sit around and complain [and drink alcohol].

They want to participate in something uplifting.

And frankly so do I.

That doesn't mean not looking at hard truths.

It means creating space for big solutions.

When I look around this room, I'm thrilled to think of all of the big solutions we could come up with if we put our heads together.

So as much as I want you to talk to your friends and family about our issues, I want you to talk to each other as well.

This weekend, try to talk to five people you've never met before. Ask them what brought them here, and what they hope to get out of this weekend.

In this room, I'm sure there are hundreds of visions for what PIPSC could be.

I can't wait to hear yours.