



AJC-AJJ NEWS BULLETIN

Ottawa ... More than 300 federal lawyers crammed into Ottawa's St. Andrew's Church over the lunch hour on April 29 for an Information meeting sponsored by the Association of Justice Counsel (AJC).

Responding to the invitations by AJC President Patrick Jette and the AJC's new team of volunteer organizers, these 300+ lawyers turned out for a report on the AJC's FEDERAL LAWYERS DESERVE JUSTICE campaign, along with details about getting to arbitration for a first collective agreement.

In fact, April 29 was the AJC's first ever STICKER DAY across Canada as federal lawyers in all parts of the country put on the union's new sticker which reads FEDERAL LAWYERS DESERVE JUSTICE.

Jette explained the choice of slogan by reminding everyone at St. Andrew's that federal lawyers' salary and benefit packages used to be one of the top in Canada but have slipped to 6th place in recent years. That's not acceptable, Jette said, and it casts doubt on Treasury Board's commitment to recruiting and retaining the best lawyers they can to serve Canadians.

We know, the room was told, that Canadians want their country's interests represented by experienced, expert counsel. We also know you can't be confident of hiring and retaining the best without being competitive in salary packages. Canadians understand that and they don't want second best.

Patrick Jette reported to AJC members that he is waiting for Treasury Board's response to the AJC proposal whereby the union and the employer find mutual agreement as to who will chair the arbitration panel. We need someone who is impartial and who has great expertise, Jette said.

He urged everyone in the room to read this week's HILL TIMES newspaper story (posted on AJC website at www.ajc-ajj.com) detailing how collective bargaining for all unionized federal employees has stalled since Vic Toews was appointed President of Treasury Board. This is the situation we are facing, Jette explained.

Returning to the union's predominant bargaining theme of obtaining justice and fairness for federal lawyers Jette congratulated his members for wearing the stickers and explained that the importance of this gesture is it demonstrates that TB can no longer pretend that federal lawyers are satisfied with falling behind their counterparts in private practice and with the provinces. Jette cited the example of a federal lawyer lead counsel earning \$60,000 a year less than her assistant counsel, seconded in from a provincial government.

The FEDERAL LAWYERS DESERVE JUSTICE campaign is all about making it clear that the AJC Negotiating Team speaks for you, he told the assembled lawyers.

The highpoint of the gathering was when Jette announced the next step in the AJC's communications campaign "HAVE LUNCH WITH ROB AND VIC!"

Jette said he will, this week, write to Minister of Justice Rob Nicholson and Treasury Board President Vic Toews and ask them to join him and hundreds of federal lawyers in Ottawa for an outdoor spring brown bag lunch, May 13 at the corner of Wellington and Kent.

Promising more details soon to come, Jette said: We'll be asking Rob and Vic to join you and me on May 13 at Noon. Please bring your lunch, bring your colleagues and be there in person so Rob and Vic can see for themselves that federal lawyers really do want justice in a new collective agreement.

During the Question & Answer session, one AJC Governing Council member, Dave Singh, reported that Treasury Board had already responded to Sticker Day by sending a memo to managers explaining that federal lawyers have the right to wear their stickers at work.

Others asked Jette to send out more information on the substance and process of negotiations and arbitration. Jette promised a detailed report would be sent out in the near future.

"In the meantime," Jette said, "please keep wearing your stickers and keep demonstrating the enthusiastic support you have shown here today, Thank you so much!"