

Saturday, June 7, 2008 - PM Edition



Spirit of Leadership Award recipients Aida Cononigo and Deanna Okun-Nachoff from the West Coast Domestic Workers' Association, with BCGEU president George Heyman, and fellow award winners Lorina Serafico and Cenen Bagon of the Vancouver Committee for Domestic Workers and Caregivers' Rights.

Finances in good shape

BCGEU's finances and defence fund remain in sound shape according to the review of the union's books conducted by auditors Deloitte Touche.

Total dues revenue for fiscal year 2007 topped \$42 million. From this overall amount mandated transfers of \$2.6 million to the defence fund and \$2.5 million to component activities were made. Combined with interest income, that left \$38.2 million to fund operating activities like servicing members, staff, bargaining, campaigns, education, and administrative costs.

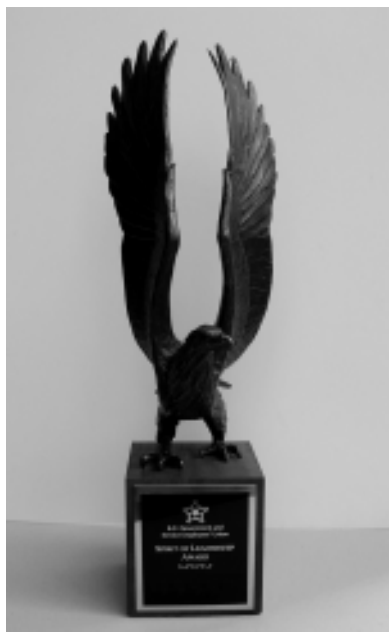
At December 31 year end, operating revenue exceeded expenditures by \$3 million.

The union's defence fund continued to grow last year. Overall defence fund revenue topped \$4.7 million which included the \$2.6 million from members dues plus \$2.2 million generated through investment income. Strike expenses for the year—mostly to support job action by highways maintenance workers—totalled \$2.5 million.

That means the defence fund balance grew to \$25.4 million by year end.

Spirit of Leadership awarded

The BCGEU's highest honour recognizing the outstanding social advocacy work of groups or individuals outside of our union, the Spirit of Leadership Award, has been given to two groups dedicated to supporting the rights of migrant domestic workers and caregivers. The award is shared by the West Coast Domestic Workers' Association and the Vancouver Committee for Domestic Workers and Caregivers' Rights.



Domestic workers and caregivers, 98-percent of whom are women, face numerous injustices both as workers and immigration applicants. Their initial contracts require them to live with their employers. This exposes many to sexual and personal abuse, and exploitive working conditions. Many of these workers struggle with language barriers and are often not aware of their rights or how to access support services. Many are

also trapped in abusive situations because it is so difficult to change employers while trying to maintain immigration work requirements.

Aida Cononigo, board chair for the West Coast Domestic Workers' Association, explained that, "The vast majority of our clients are university-educated. They include nurses, teachers, and midwives who are typically separated from their own families for five or more years."

She noted that these workers are used to fill in the gaps for underfunded public services such as child care. Cononigo also asked BCGEU members to speak out against the federal government's efforts to push Bill C-50 through which opens the door to more arbitrary decision-making by the minister on immigration applications.

In accepting the award, Cononigo said, "We look forward to developing a stronger working relationship with the BCGEU. It is our sincere hope that we will be able to unite with the BCGEU around our common goals of justice and solidarity for domestic workers and caregivers."

The West Coast Domestic Workers' Association, founded in 1986, is a non-profit group that provides free legal assistance in the form of advocacy, support and counselling to live-in caregivers in BC. The organization offers free drop-in services, including five days-a-week skills training and career planning.

Lorina Serafico accepted the award on behalf of the Vancouver Committee for Domestic Workers and Caregivers' Rights.

She paid tribute to the BCGEU for our union's ongoing support and noted that the work of her organization "would not be possible without the support of the labour movement and others."

Serafico said that the award "is truly an inspiration to continue our work for

social justice for all." Serafico and colleague Cenen Bagon dedicated their award to the memory of the late Fely Villasin (a long-time national advocate for domestic workers and caregivers).

The Vancouver Committee for Domestic Workers and Caregivers' Rights, a non-profit group started in 1992, works to change federal and provincial policies to improve the lives of domestic workers. The organization provides information and orientation, referral and outreach services, and support to domestic workers. The committee also coordinates a variety of social and cultural events for

domestic workers and caregivers.

Convention delegates unanimously passed Resolution C-48 which calls on the BCGEU to lobby federal and provincial governments to standardize employment contracts for domestic workers, maintain contact, secure permission from workers to provide their contact information to advocacy groups, and ensure domestic workers are fully aware of their employment standard rights. Further, that the union continue to work with domestic worker associations and support campaigns for better wages and working conditions.



Family child care providers who have joined the BCGEU as special associate members attend the BCGEU convention. In the photo (l-r): Annie Pourtaghi (Port Coquitlam), Shahzad Ahmadi (Port Coquitlam), Leonor Canlas (Burnaby), and Barb McWilliams (Langley).

Summary of resolutions - Saturday, June 7, 2008 - Morning

Finance Committee

RESOLUTIONA-20 Amended: Delegates passed a resolution changing union policy for members travelling on headquarters-sponsored union business to allow for single accommodation where possible and requested by the member.

COMPOSITE RESOLUTION 1 FINANCE: Delegates passed a resolution increasing the transportation allowance and encouraging the use of public transit and other environmentally sustainable choices in transportation.

COMPOSITE RESOLUTION 2 FINANCE: Delegates passed a resolution eliminating the reference to in-province and out-of-province meals rates as well as increasing the rates.

RESOLUTION A-7: Delegates supported the recommendation of non-concurrence in the resolution to increase various expense allowances.

RESOLUTIONA-14AMENDED: Delegates passed a resolution to increase the good and welfare maximum allowance to \$60 per expenditure, with an annual review by the provincial executive.

RESOLUTIONA-16AMENDED: Delegates passed a resolution that the hourly gratuity compensation paid to hospitality workers who are on a leave of absence and that there be an annual review by the provincial executive in consultation with the component 17 Hospitality Bargaining Council.

RESOLUTION A-3: Delegates opposed a recommendation of non-concurrence that an additional day of paid leave be provided to activists who have been on union business for a period of seven days without rest. The issue is referred back to the committee.

RESOLUTIONA-15AMENDED: Delegates supported the committee's

recommendation of non-concurrence on a resolution to have the union look into having a mobile office.

RESOLUTIONA-13AMENDED: Delegates supported a resolution to look into the feasibility of purchasing buildings and/or land that will house area offices or in the future allow the BCGEU to build area offices.

RESOLUTION A-10: Delegates supported a resolution of non-concurrence in a resolution to increase from 6% to 6.5% that portion of dues revenue that is allocated to components so that components can provide more leave time to Locals to promote the union, educate members and increase contact with members.

MOTION: Delegates passed a motion to increase the honorarium for provincial executive members except for the full time officers.

Resolutions Committee

COMPOSITE RESOLUTION 1: Delegates unanimously passed a resolution calling on the union to continue to lobby governments to implement a quality, non-profit, universal and accessible child care system and that the union aggressively pursue wages and working conditions for childhood educators and that the union continue to organize childhood educators into the union through both traditional and special associate membership.

RESOLUTION C-48: Delegates unanimously passed a resolution calling on the BCGEU to lobby the provincial and federal governments to standardize employment contracts for domestic workers; to maintain contact with domestic workers; secure authorization from individual workers to provide their contact names and numbers to advocacy groups; and to ensure domestic workers are fully aware of their rights under employment standards.



Solidarity Notes Choir warmed delegates up with their singing before the convention got underway.



BCGEU members participate in a "Stand" to put pressure on the government to solve homelessness.

How your dues dollar works for you in 2008

Negotiations, job classifications and evaluations, appeals and benefits, pensions
8.6 cents

Fighting grievances, arbitrations, compensation appeals and exclusions
9.6 cents

Provincial membership services (Departments - Exec/Admin, Finance, Administration)
22.1 cents

Membership education programs
2.4 cents

Strike expenses - **2.4 cents**

Campaigns, coalitions, political action, communications, diversity, OH&S, and research
8.8 cents

Local membership services, area offices, stewards recognition
23.6 cents

Building maintenance and utilities - **3.3 cents**

Affiliation fees (CLC, NUPGE, B.C. Fed, Labour Councils)
4.6 cents

Organizing programs
3.9 cents

Joint employer - Union committees, executive and policy and advisory committees, conventions and conferences
4.3 cents

Component and Cross-Component Committee education programs and services
6.4 cents