



The Provincial

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CELEBRATING 100 YEARS: International Women's Day

March 8

"Our lives shall not be sweated
from birth until life closes.
Hearts starve as well as bodies.
Give us bread, but give us roses!"

From a 1912 poem, 'Bread and Roses' by
James Oppenheim. Music by Martha Coleman



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The Provincial

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Contributing Editors: Brian Gardiner, Oliver Rohlf, Erin Sikora, Chris Bradshaw, Lynn Bueckert.
Design & Layout: Chris Bradshaw.

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4911 Canada Way, Burnaby, B.C. V5G 3W3
Phone: 604-291-9611
Fax: 604-291-6030
1-800-663-1674 (toll free)
www.bcgeu.ca

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FROM THE TREASURER

Judi Filion

Celebrating Women: Past, Present and Future

On March 8, 2011, millions of women around the world will celebrate the 100th anniversary of International Women’s Day (IWD). They will celebrate the victories women have won, will look back and examine how past struggles turned into wins, and look forward to ensure equality, justice and peace become an everyday reality for all women around the world.

One hundred years ago women were demanding to have their voices heard, fighting for better working conditions, improved health and safety, better pay and the right to vote. It was not until 1917 that women in Canada gained the right to vote. And, it wasn’t until 1929, that women in Canada were legally declared “persons”.

Clearly, our demand and action for women’s equality must continue. As our sisters showed us so well, courage, collective action, and solidarity are critical to moving our issues forward.

Over the past one hundred years women’s collective action in the community, at the bargaining table, at the ballot box, on the picket line, and marching in the streets, took on many demands, including: equal pay for work of equal value, publicly funded child care, reproductive rights, paid maternity leave, protection against sexual harassment, access to post secondary education, the right to work in male dominated jobs, the right to hold office and the fight against violence against women.

Women’s collective action meant sisters in the union, in the workplace and in the community were able to participate on more equal footing.

Without question women have made many gains over the last one hundred years and there’s much to celebrate.

However, conservative governments’ cuts worldwide to public programs and services and discriminatory government policies and budget priorities are a direct attack on women’s equality and have eroded many of the gains women have made.

For women in British Columbia, women’s services have been under attack by both the provincial Liberal government from the minute they were elected in 2001 and the Harper Conservative government since they came into power in 2006.

These cuts have had a devastating impact on women and their communities as they widen the gap between the rich and poor, and push more women into poverty and despair.

Clearly, our demand and action for women’s equality must continue. As our sisters showed us so well, courage, collective action, and solidarity are critical to moving our issues forward.

So, on this International Women’s Day let’s celebrate the phenomenal accomplishments women have made over the last 100 years and recommit to continuing the fight until all women have achieved equality, justice and peace. Happy International Women’s Day!

International Women's Day



Acknowledging Our History

For trade union women, International Women's Day is steeped in a proud history of working women's fight for better working conditions, improved health and safety, better pay and the right to vote. International Women's Day, observed on March 8 since the early 1900s in America and Europe, has grown to be

celebrated by women in most countries around the world. Women's demands have changed over the century, but the need for solidarity and action are very much alive today. For us to move forward, it's necessary to know our past. Let's celebrate women's history of struggle, solidarity and accomplishment on International Women's Day!

1908

Women's oppression and inequality was spurring women to become more vocal and active in campaigning for change. In 1908, 15,000 women marched through New York City demanding shorter hours, better pay and voting rights.

1909

A declaration by the Socialist Party of America, the first National Woman's Day (NWD) was observed across the United States on February 28 and continued to be celebrated in February until 1913.

1910

A second International Conference of Working Women held in Copenhagen was attended by 100 women from 17 countries. Clara Zetkin, Leader of the 'Women's Office' for the Social Democratic Party in Germany proposed that an annual Women's Day be celebrated on the same day every year in every country. Zetkin's proposal was unanimously approved and International Women's Day was born.

1911

International Women's Day (IWD) was honoured the first time in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland on March 19. More than one million women and men attended IWD rallies campaigning for women's rights to work, to vote, to be trained, to hold public office and end discrimination.

1911

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911 and the garment workers' strike in Lowell, Massachusetts in 1912 exemplify the plight of working women during American industrialization, and reveal the urgency behind the call for a special day to recognize women.

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York City on March 25, 1911, was the deadliest industrial disaster in the history of the city of New York. 146 garment workers, mostly women, were trapped and died in the fire. Managers had kept the stairwell and exit doors locked to stop workers from leaving early. The fire led to legislation that improved factory safety standards and spurred the growth of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.

1912

In the great textile center of Lawrence, Massachusetts, 20,000 workers walked out of the mills in spontaneous protest against a cut to their weekly pay. A state law reduced the maximum hours of work for women and minors from 56 to 54 hours a week. Companies reduced the hours but refused to raise wages to make up for the reduced hours. Under the leadership of the Industrial Workers of the World the strike became front-page news throughout the country.

During a parade through Law-

rence, a group of women workers carried banners proclaiming "Bread and Roses." Women workers' demands for equal pay for equal work echoed across the nation.

Bread and Roses, written by American poet, James Oppenheim and put to song by Martha Coleman, became a part of the singing tradition of the American working-class and later became known as the anthem for International Women's Day.

1913-1914

Campaigning for peace on the eve of World War I, Russian women observed their first International Women's Day on the last Sunday in February 1913. That year, International Women's Day was transferred to March 8 and this day has remained the global date for International Women's Day ever since. In 1914 women across Europe held rallies to campaign against the war and to express women's solidarity.

1917

On the last Sunday of February, Russian women began a strike for "bread and peace" in response to the death of over two million Russian soldiers in war. Opposed by political leaders, the women continued to strike until, four days later, the Czar was forced to abdicate and the provisional government granted women the right to vote.



Women's demands have changed over the century but the need for solidarity and action are very much alive today.



Celebrating 100 Years:

“ From its inception the BCGEU was committed to fight for women’s rights. Our demands have been wide-ranging at the bargaining table.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of International Women’s Day and millions of women around the world will be celebrating the victories women have won over the past century. In hundreds of thousands of communities, women will gather to march, sing, and dance - to shine a light on our sisters’ collective achievements that have made the world a better place for women.

BCGEU women will be a central part of the celebrations throughout the province and have been active for months in committees with their sisters in the community and labour movement, planning and organizing events to celebrate this special anniversary.

The BCGEU is a strong union made up of strong union women. We are strong in numbers, strong in leadership and strong in our commitment to fight for women’s equality in the workplace, the union, and the community.

From commitment to action

Our commitment to fight for women’s rights has made a real difference. First, the BCGEU has changed its structure to become a trade union whose membership is now dominated by women. In 1976, women made up 36 per cent of BCGEU’s membership. By focusing organizing efforts on female-dominated occupations like health and community social

services, thousands of women realized the benefits of joining our union and the number of women members grew considerably.

Today, women make up 67 per cent of the BCGEU’s total membership. The majority of BCGEU women work directly in government, health care and community social services sectors. BCGEU women also work in a wide range of other occupations, including libraries, colleges and institutions, legal services, municipal governments, credit unions, casinos, hotels and resource centres.

Another important priority for the union is to encourage women’s participation in the union. In 1976, approximately 20 per cent of union leadership positions were held by women. In 2010, 61 per cent of the BCGEU’s elected officers and stewards are women.

Also, in 1993, the BCGEU Convention amended the constitution to ensure that two vice president positions are held by women. Currently, nine of 20 members of the provincial executive are women.

The composition of BCGEU staff also changed dramatically and mirrored the same vision for women’s participation. In 1978, the BCGEU employed 33 technical and servicing staff, of which 9 were women. Only one department head was a woman. Today the BCGEU employs 107 servi-

cing staff – 66 are women and 7 are directors or coordinators.

Fighting for women’s rights

From its inception the BCGEU was committed to fight for women’s rights. Our demands have been wide-ranging at the bargaining table, including a call for equal pay for work of equal value, improved wages and benefits, maternity leave, employment security, and a halt to privatization and contracting out.

The union’s collective actions have resulted in a number of significant gains for women. In 1991, the BCGEU won a pay equity settlement for 12,000 mainly women workers in health, administration and community social services. Winning the Tawny Meiorin Supreme Court gender discrimination case in 1999 was also significant, for BCGEU members and for all working women.

Continuing the fight: BCGEU Women’s Committee

While we have much to celebrate this International Women’s Day, our fight must continue.

“We are reminded daily that the fight is not over,” says Judi Filion, chair of the committee. “The Liberal government’s cuts to women’s programs and services are a direct attack on women and have had a devastating impact on women’s families and communities. Clearly, the BCGEU Women’s Committee’s work is more



International Women's Day

important now than ever.”

The BCGEU Women's Committee plays a major role in the fight for women's rights and ensuring that women's issues are at the forefront of the union's work. The Committee's priority is to encourage women's participation at all levels of the union and to promote awareness of and taking action on women's issues within the union and in the community.

Regional women's conferences are one of the ways the Women's Committee has engaged women members in their own communities. In 2008/2009 the BCGEU Women's Committee held conferences in Region 1 (Parksville), 3 (Kelowna) and 4 (Fort St. John) focusing on the theme, *We Want Our Piece of the Pie*. Women took part in discussions on economic security, women's role in the economy, women and politics, financial planning, health, violence against women, poverty, and green initiatives.

In October, 2010, a record 100 members attended a Region 2 (Richmond) women's conference titled, *Double Duty: Finding Life/Work Harmony*. The conference gave BCGEU women members an opportunity to develop strategies concerning ways to cope with the stress working women face as they juggle their many varied responsibilities of motherhood, union activism, and caring for senior parents. A similar Region 3 women's conference will be held in Castlegar in April, 2011.

The BCGEU Women's Committee work also extends beyond the union, to support women locally, nationally and internationally in their fight for justice and equality.

The committee has worked with many community groups, including the Committee for Domestic Workers and Caregivers Rights, First Call, Coalition for Child Care Advocates of BC, Walk4Justice, and the Canadian Women's Foundation.

The BCGEU also supports women's organizations in other countries through the International Solidarity Committee, which is funded by the Diane L. Wood International Solidarity and Humanity Fund. Projects include:

- **El Salvador Rural Health Initiatives (APSIES)** offers a variety of programs including health promotion, community development and prevention of domestic violence.
- **Association for Investigation and Social Action, Colombia** provides human rights training for public sector trade union members and community activists in Colombia's second biggest city, Cali.
- **Partners in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia** provides reusable sanitary pads to keep young girls in school and allow them to attend classes during their periods.
- **Stephen Lewis Foundation**

focuses on funding programs that care for women who are ill, helps orphans and AIDS-affected children, and supports grandmothers who care for their orphan grandchildren.

- **Burma Labour Solidarity Organization** provides support for Burmese workers to protect their rights and living standards in a country ruled by a ruthless military dictatorship for more than 40 years; BCGEU helps fund a workers' safe house for organizing and training initiatives

Today, the Women's Committee is focused on the impact of cuts to women's services, poverty, protecting women from violence and abuse, publicly-funded child care and quality seniors' care.

“We will continue the fight for women's rights both at the bargaining table and at the ballot box,” says Filion. “2011 could be the year of elections – federal, provincial, and municipal. 100 years ago women did not have the right to vote.

Thanks to the suffragettes, women now have a voice on the issues that affect their lives. Women's voice and action make a difference!”

“The BCGEU Women's Committee plays a major role in the fight for women's rights and ensuring that women's issues are at the forefront of the union's work.”

International Women's Day events
Please check the BCGEU events calendar at www.bcegu.ca for events in your community. Happy International Women's Day!



Power of Women: A hand up, not a hand out

Last year the BCGEU became aware of an amazing group of women with a mandate to help other women move out of poverty and into self-sustaining, family supporting careers. The union jumped on board to help.

Canadian Women's Foundation (CWF) is Canada's only national public foundation dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls. They don't ask for government funding and are totally funded through donations from individuals, foundations, companies and now unions.

CWF started as a conversation between two women in a backyard in the late 1980's, trying to figure out how to stamp out workplace sexism. One of these women was Rosemary Brown, who was elected to the B.C. legislature in 1972, becoming the first black woman elected to a Canadian parliamentary body. The conversation led to Brown becoming a founder of the CWF.

Since 1991, CWF has become one of the top ten women's foundations in the world, funding over 1,000 initiatives in every province and territory.

CWF raises money to fund initiatives in three areas:

1. Ending violence against women
2. Empowering girls ages 9–13 with confidence, courage, and

critical thinking skills

3. Moving low-income women out of poverty

CWF firmly believes, as the BCGEU does, that when you help a woman you help her family, her community and help create a better society for us all. We call this the ripple effect. For example:

A few years ago a woman named Rina came through a CWF-funded program. Rina worked in the sex industry and was trapped in the world of prostitution and drugs. Then she got pregnant. But leaving the sex trade wasn't easy – she didn't have any skills or contacts.

Rina learned about a CWF-funded program that gives women skills and resources to open their own businesses. Rina completed the program and launched her plus-sized clothing business, Maximum Woman — now an online store, with 2 retail locations.

She's very proud to have achieved \$1 million in sales by her third year and is creating her own clothing line. You may have seen Rina on CBC's *Dragon's Den*, turning down the deal they offered her, because it wasn't good enough.

Since then, Rina has hired a few friends who were working in the sex trade, and is now a CWF spokesperson. She sponsored another woman, who is now self-supporting, running an arts program for at-risk youth.

How does CWF do it?

Their groundbreaking *Women Moving Women* campaign raises funds to help women living in poverty in Canada. The campaign's goal is to move 2500 women on their journeys out of poverty in the next 5 years.

CWF funds organizations that adopt holistic approaches to engage women in their economic futures. Every \$2500 raised

allows another woman to enrol in a program to gain the skills, resources and confidence to achieve economic independence – providing a hand up, not a handout.

Companies are also coming together to sponsor women. The BCGEU wants the trade union movement to do the same.

CWF provides women with skills to work through life's challenges, and support in other crucial areas like building confidence, networking and child care.

The BCGEU is adding to the ripple effect by helping the Canadian Women's Foundation continue the legacy of sister Rosemary Brown. We ask you to join *Women Moving Women* with a pledge of your own. Go to www.cdnwomen.org for information or to make a pledge.



"Until all of us have made it, none of us have made it." **Rosemary Brown**

Photo: Order of BC archive



Since 1991, CWF has become one of the top ten women's foundations in the world, funding over 1,000 initiatives in every province and territory.



Remembering the missing

20th anniversary memorial march for murdered and missing women

A woman was murdered on Powell Street in Vancouver in January 1991. Her name is not spoken today, to respect the wishes of her family. But her death was the catalyst that moved women to take action – leading to this special 20th anniversary Valentine’s Day Memorial March for Murdered and Missing Women on February 14, 2011

BCGEU members and hundreds of women and supporters met at the Carnegie Community Centre on Main Street, where families shared personal stories.

The march began at 1:00 pm. Family members and aboriginal elders led the sea of walkers throughout the downtown eastside, where women were last seen or found. A smudge and cedar ceremony took place at each stop.

Community activists gave speeches at the Vancouver police station, and a healing circle and candlelight vigil was held at Oppenheimer Park. The day ended with a community feast at the Japanese Language Hall.

The Women’s Memorial March gives families, friends and community members an opportunity to come together to grieve and remember these sisters, and to remind those with power that the community has not forgotten the missing.

This event is organized by women in Vancouver’s downtown east side because women, especially Indigenous women, continue to face physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual violence in their daily lives.

BCGEU members at the Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre assist and participated in the march.



END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN - By some estimates, more than 2,000 friends, family members and supporters marched through the Downtown Eastside in Vancouver to commemorate the thousands of missing and murdered women in Canada since the 1970’s.

Photos: Murray Bush, Flux Design

Profile

Castlegar and District Community Services Society

In the women's washroom of the Castlegar Greyhound terminal is a sign providing the toll-free number for a program that helps women fleeing abusive situations. On the poster, a few simple, heartfelt words were scribbled: "Thank you. I am alive because of you." And just below is written, "Thanks so much. You saved my life. I owe you." Clearly, the Castlegar Women's Outreach Program is making a difference.

"We are here to support women who are thinking about leaving, or have already left an abusive situation at home," says community social worker Kris Taks. Women's Outreach is one of several programs run by the Castlegar and District Community Service Society (CDCSS), a non-profit, charitable society. Their programs are tailored to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, including aboriginal persons, children and women.

CDCSS offers a wide range of women's services, including counselling, short-term volunteer homes and even driving services.

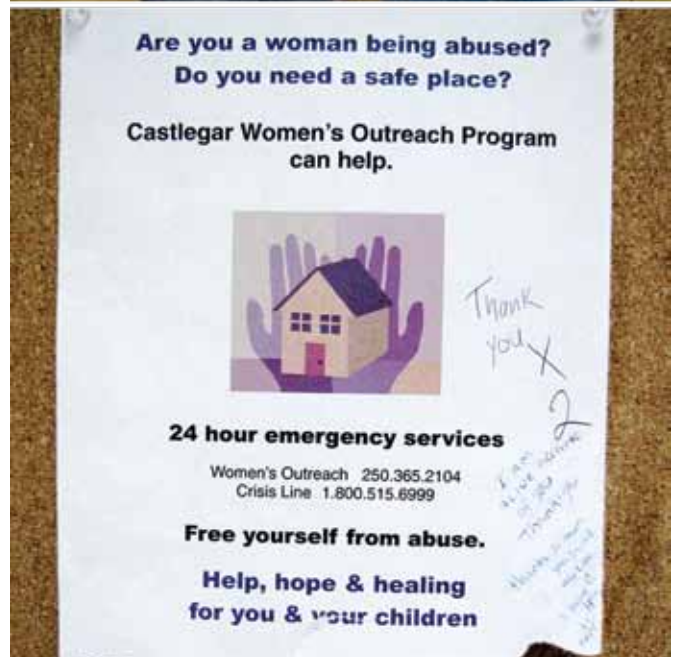
"Working with women experiencing violence and abuse is not easy work," says Patty Harmston, who located the poster. Harmston is chair of BCGEU Local 309 and a community social service worker in Castlegar. "You see incredible hurt and suffering, but incredible strength and courage also."

Although the Society has a long-standing track record of helping women and others in need, Taks is quick to point out a long-standing problem: there are no transition housing services in Castlegar. "Even if they are fleeing abuse, women do not want to leave their community, and particularly so in the Aboriginal community," she says.

The Society is the main community service organization in the region, in operation since 1979. Fifteen BCGEU members, many part-time, work at CDCSS. Kris Taks works as a family support counsellor, but also runs the Aboriginal Family Services program.

"There is no typical day at work," Taks explains. "Yesterday I visited a local alternate school, and helped make First Nation drums. Today, I will be making a home support visit to a struggling family."

Taks emphasizes the importance of offering well-adjusted support services, particularly in the Aboriginal community. She provides cultural sensitivity training to third party service providers as part of her work. Taks has Aboriginal ancestry, and draws her strength in part from being connected to her heritage: "the cultural parts of my job feed me," Taks says.



WOMEN HELPING WOMEN — Top: CDCSS workers Joyce Rhodda (left) and Kris Taks. Bottom: Appreciative comments written on a women's outreach poster in Castlegar.

Community social service workers do not always get the recognition their demanding jobs deserve. "Kris and her co-workers are very dedicated, not just to the women they work with, but to all women in the community," Harmston says, "I am positive they have done more to end violence against women than they are even aware. Those posters touched me. This is the best kind of recognition: sincere and from the heart."



Take a stand, lend a hand, stop bullying now!

That's the message being delivered to members of Component 17 by the component's anti-bullying campaign.

The campaign, launched in February 2011, includes outreach to every shop steward with posters, notepads, lanyards, scarves and info cards to raise awareness how workers can address bullying at their workplace.

"You don't have to suffer bullying or harassment in silence," says General Services Component 17 chair Dave MacDonald.

"The union can help and we want to work with other components to join us in this campaign.

"Members of the component committee, Bev Beaurone, Gayle Furgula, Mike Schmidt, and past member James Swank have worked tirelessly to get this campaign off the ground," says MacDonald.

The campaign comes after 2008 BCGEU convention delegates unanimously passed a resolution directing the BCGEU to raise awareness and work to prevent bullying in the workplace.

A committee was struck to develop educational opportunities, policies, and collective agreement language around stopping bullying at the workplace.

As a result of the committee's work, Component 17 implemented an anti bullying campaign for their members.

The BCGEU Education department has also prepared a stewards' workshop to deal with issues of harassment and bullying.

Locals interested in taking the workshop are urged to contact their area office.

Check out more information by going to the BCGEU web site (www.bcg.eu.ca) and click on the Component 17 pages.



BUILDING BETTER WORKPLACES — Component 17 Anti-Bullying Committee members (l-r): Mike Schmidt, Bev Beaurone, and Gayle Frugula.

Systemic changes needed at Children and Families Ministry

The death of 21 infants as recounted in the recent report by Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth, can only be described as a tragedy.

Released at the end of January, Turpel-Lafond's report identifies the factors that played a role in the deaths of 21 infants over a two-year period.

The report identifies extreme poverty and inadequate housing as significant factors that negatively affected the infants' well-being. Each family had some involvement with the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

The report also identifies a lack of inter-agency co-ordination and inconsistent standards applied across the province.

"No family should have to face the death of their child because of poverty," says BCGEU president Darryl Walker. "It's unbelievable that a province as rich as B.C. continues to have the worst child poverty rate in the country.

"The BCGEU supports the Representative's call for a legislated poverty reduction plan," said Walker. "We need a plan that tackles child poverty and can be measured to ensure it is having a positive impact."

Doug Kinna, chair of the union's Social, Information and Health Component 6, which includes social workers, says that Turpel-Lafond's report clearly identifies concerns over the lack of central monitoring.

"The lack of a central provincial body means there are too many regional differences in the way policies are applied," says Kinna. "Inter-agency problems have also developed.

"We have told the Ministry there is a need for improved, consistent standards across the province. We have raised these concerns with the government many times, and have yet to see a proper response.

"Caseloads for social workers range from 30 to 50 families, where a client list in the low 20's is the standard that should be followed," said Kinna.

"The government has not allocated the necessary resources to do a proper job of responding to serious social problems. We cannot do child protection on the cheap."

According to the ministry's service plan, there are 8,677 children in the ministry's care.

Walker and Kinna both say the union will continue to advocate on behalf of families and the social workers in the ministry.



Component 6 chair Doug Kinna (top) speaks to news media following the release of Children and Youth Representative's report on the death of 21 infants in care.



The government has not allocated the necessary resources to do a proper job of responding to serious social problems. We cannot do child protection on the cheap.



"A provincial director is necessary and the ministry needs to re-establish this position to provide that leadership. Currently there is no single, consistent provincial accountability for case reviews."

**Rep. for Children and Youth
Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond**



2011 BCGEU CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

(For full-time Officer and provincial Vice-President positions)

In accordance with the Election Campaign Guidelines, declared candidates will have an opportunity to have a picture and a personal statement of no more than 1,000 words in a special issue of The Provincial magazine and on the union's web site.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: March 25, 2011

H-1- Convention Policy Summary

The following is a summary of the guidelines for Full-time Officer and Provincial Vice-Presidential Candidates election campaigns. You can read the full policy at www.bcgau.ca/convention2011

- No funds or assistance in kind will be contributed from the Union, Components, Locals or Cross Component Committees other than that specified in the guidelines.
- Declared candidates can have a picture and a personal statement of no more than 1,000 words in a special election issue of The Provincial which will be distributed to members before the convention. Candidates will also be able to have a statement of 1,000 words on the BCGEU web site.
- Following the Provincial deadline notice will be sent to the Provincial Executive and Cross Component Chairs. An all-candidates webcast will be scheduled ten days after the deadline.
- Leave of absence and travel expenses for declared candidates only will be paid by union headquarters. Administrative assistance for the scheduling and conduct of the all-candidates webcast will be provided by the union.
- If Components wish to invite declared candidates for full-time Officer and provincial Vice-President positions to address a Component Executive meeting, or a Component caucus at Convention, they must invite all candidates who have declared their candidacy for the same position in the Provincial candidate statement issue and pay related expenses.
- Local Executive and convention delegates address and telephone lists, (and e-mail addresses for convention delegates when available) will be given to candidates for the exclusive purpose of the election campaign and candidates will be asked to sign a statement to that effect.
- The union will provide some photo-copying & mailing support.
- Campaign expenditures must not exceed \$1,500 in cash or kind. There are other rules regarding telephone and other expenses.
- No money is to be solicited or accepted from outside organizations or any sources external to the union.
- Within sixty (60) days after the Convention, a statement of campaign expenditures will be submitted by each candidate to the Provincial Executive.
- There shall be no staff involvement in the political process.
- No candidate shall produce or make statements that will bring disrepute on the Union, other candidates or its members.
- Rules have also been set on promotional materials at convention and on the different committees that will be appointed, etc.
- Campaigns will be kept internal and candidates will not seek out the media as a means of communicating with the membership or have the media present at all-candidate meetings.
- Any campaign materials that are accessible by the general public (e.g. websites) or produced for distribution at Convention, must include the following statement:
"This is a publication of (name), candidate for office at the BCGEU convention. It is not an official publication of the BCGEU. Views expressed are those of the candidate".

Lack of security shuts down Victoria court trials

A shortage of sheriffs in the Victoria Court House resulted in three trials being cancelled on Friday, January 21. Three separate judges refused to run their courts because there were not enough Deputy Sheriffs to cover the number of courts scheduled that day. Sheriffs provide security in court rooms.

“Sheriffs have been warning about the need to hire more staff due to impending work load and staffing issues, and nothing has been done,” says Dean Purdy, chair of the union’s Correctional and Sheriff Services Component 1.

On January 21, seven courts running – five provincial and two supreme courts. Three of these court sessions were cancelled.

“I understand this has happened at least six times over the last year and a half and it’s not right,” said Purdy. “It’s ironic that the government was able to hire 32 staff in 2010, yet they wouldn’t let the Sheriff Services division hire a single sheriff in 2009 and only ten in 2010 even though they lost more than that number through attrition.

“I am concerned that more court proceedings will be halted. Any delays in our already overcrowded courts is a problem,” says Purdy.

Cuts to staff in the court system have also caused problems. A report issued in September 2010, “Justice Delayed: A Report of the Provincial Court of British Columbia Concerning Judicial Resources”, found that a shortage of judges was holding up trials and that a shortage of staff in the Attorney General’s ministry has led to 37,000 traffic tickets going unprocessed.

“We have raised these issues with the government many times,” said Sandi Mclean, chair of the union’s Administrative Services Component 12. “Our justice system is struggling because the government will not hire the staff they need.”



BC
forum
British Columbia Federation
of Retired Union Members

Serving the needs of retired union members and active members age 50 and over throughout British Columbia.

BC FORUM is a registered non-profit society, dedicated to representing the interests of members and their families. Supported and endorsed by the BC Federation of Labour, BC FORUM represents thousands of retired union members, giving us the political power to spotlight important issues for retirees, and negotiate the best deals for members.

#200 - 5118 Joyce Street, Vancouver, BC V5R 4H1
604-688-4565 or Toll-Free: 1-800-896-5678
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Because Life Really Does Begin at 50



Stand-Alone Bargaining



First Credit Union Bargaining Committee members (l-r): Laurel Healey, Wendy Larkin, Maggie Poole.

Agreement reached at First Credit Union

A new, collective agreement has been reached between members of the BCGEU and the First Credit Union, which has branches in a number of locations on northern Vancouver Island.

There are 42 members at the credit union. Highlights of the agreement includes a 2.8 per cent annual wage increase for each year, improvements to short and long-term sick leave and layoff protection.

Tentative agreement at the Land Title and Survey Authority

The BCGEU is pleased to announce a tentative agreement for workers at the Land Title and Survey Authority of British Columbia. The new collective agreement includes improved access to vacation during prime time, substantial improvements to health benefits, and a wage increase every year. The three-year deal expires in October 2013, and follows a strong strike vote and mediation process.

The Land Title and Survey Authority (LTSA) is a statutory corporation responsible for managing the land title and survey systems throughout the province. LTSA is the backbone of the real estate and property business in British Columbia.

One hundred and sixteen BCGEU members work at LTSA in three offices located in New Westminster, Kamloops, and Victoria.

A ratification vote was scheduled for February 23

First collective agreement for Scho's Line Painting members

The new BCGEU members at Scho's Line Painting have ratified their first collective agreement by 87 per cent. The three-year agreement foresees wage increases of 4 per cent in the first year, guarantees health and welfare benefits for all regular employees, and establishes an occupational health and safety committee.

Scho's Line Painting provides road line and parking lot line painting services. The unit was certified in December 2010, and is based in Langford, near Victoria.

Three-year agreement for Interior Savings Credit Union members

BCGEU members working at Interior Savings Credit Union have ratified their new collective agreement. The three-year agreement foresees 2.25 per cent wage increases every year, improved sick leave, and improved compensation for time spent studying and writing required course examinations.

Twenty-four BCGEU members work at the Okanagan Falls, Osoyoos and Oliver branches of the Credit Union.

BC Oil and Gas Commission members ratify agreement

The 160 BCGEU members at the BC Oil and Gas Commission have ratified a new agreement, which adds an extra vacation day for employees in remote locations. The two-year agreement expires in June 2012.

The BC Oil and Gas Commission is the regulatory agency overseeing oil and gas operations in the province, including exploration, development, pipeline transportation and reclamation.

West Kootenay leaders discuss forestry crisis

Community poll shows deep concern over state of BC forests

More than 30 West Kootenay community leaders gathered in Castlegar in January for a community dialogue session seeking solutions to the forestry crisis in their region, amid deepening public concern over the state of B.C. forests.

The working session, titled *BC Forests. Our Future.* was organized by the BCGEU and included local MLAs Katrine Conroy and Michelle Mungall, representation from local governments and MP's office, forest sector unions and non-profit community groups.

BCGEU president Darryl Walker set the stage for the dialogue by outlining the challenges facing BC's forest sector – noting that unemployment in the Kootenay region has almost doubled in the last three years, while direct and indirect forestry jobs have been cut almost in half.

"More than 70 mills have closed and over 40,000 forest sector jobs have been lost since the BC Liberal government came to office," said Walker. "Over 1000 forest ministry jobs have been eliminated. Compliance and enforcement has been dramatically scaled back, while changes to legislation allow forest companies to effectively regulate themselves.

"We came to Castlegar to consult with local leaders, identify key issues, and work towards positive solutions to help revitalize the forest sector for local communities."



COMMUNITY ACTION — A diverse group of elected officials, forestry employees and non-profit groups gathered in Castlegar in January to discuss solutions to the forestry crisis in resource communities.

The BCGEU also shared results from a recent poll of local residents showing a community deeply concerned about the effect of forest policy on their lives.

Of the 200 Castlegar area residents polled, 96 per cent said that the forest industry was critically or somewhat important to them personally, and fully 50 percent said they have suffered a recent job loss in their family.

A staggering 91 per cent of respondents said that forest ministry layoffs were a bad idea. Tellingly, 79 per cent agreed that the Ministry of Forests is not currently fulfilling its public mandate to

protect and enhance BC's forests.

"There is a clear disconnect between the B.C. government's sunny forestry rhetoric and the real experience of people of the West Kootenays," said Walker. "People who live in resource communities have to live with the results of government neglect every day."

The BCGEU is holding community dialogue sessions in Campbell River, Kamloops and Prince George in coming weeks.

“There is a clear disconnect between the B.C. government's sunny forestry rhetoric and the real experience of the people of the West Kootenays.”

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PUBLIC SERVICE PENSION PLAN UPDATE: **Post-retirement group benefit changes coming in 2012**

The Public Service Pension Board of Trustees — which includes trustees appointed by the Government of British Columbia and the B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union — is making changes to ensure the Public Service Pension Plan (PSPP) meets its obligations under the federal Income Tax Act (ITA), and to strengthen the sustainability of inflation protection.

There is no reduction in funding to the PSPP, but some funding which is diverted to Post Retirement Group Benefits (PRGB) will go to the Inflation Adjustment Account (IAA).

Protecting the IAA for current and future retired members is a priority for the plan partners and the board.

Unlike basic pension benefits, future inflation adjustments are not guaranteed.

Some of the employer contributions that are currently being used to subsidize PRGB will be re-directed to strengthen the funding available for inflation adjustments as per the partners' agreement.

Limiting the funding of PRGB to one per cent of salary means changes will have to be made to PRGB programs. Effective April 1, 2012, changes to the plan will include:

- Extended health benefits for spouses/dependents will be available on a voluntary paid, unsubsidized basis only,
- Medical Services Plan subsidies will be discontinued for all members, and a direct payment method will be established,
- Group life subsidies will be discontinued for all members who have access to the benefit. However the benefit will be available on a voluntary, unsubsidized basis.

The trustees have worked to ensure every member receives the same value of coverage for extended health care, and believe the changes are an equitable approach to addressing this challenge.

Similar action has been taken by other major pension plans in BC.

To learn more about the Public Service Pension Plan, visit the BCGEU web site for links to more information: www.bcgeu.ca/pension_benefits

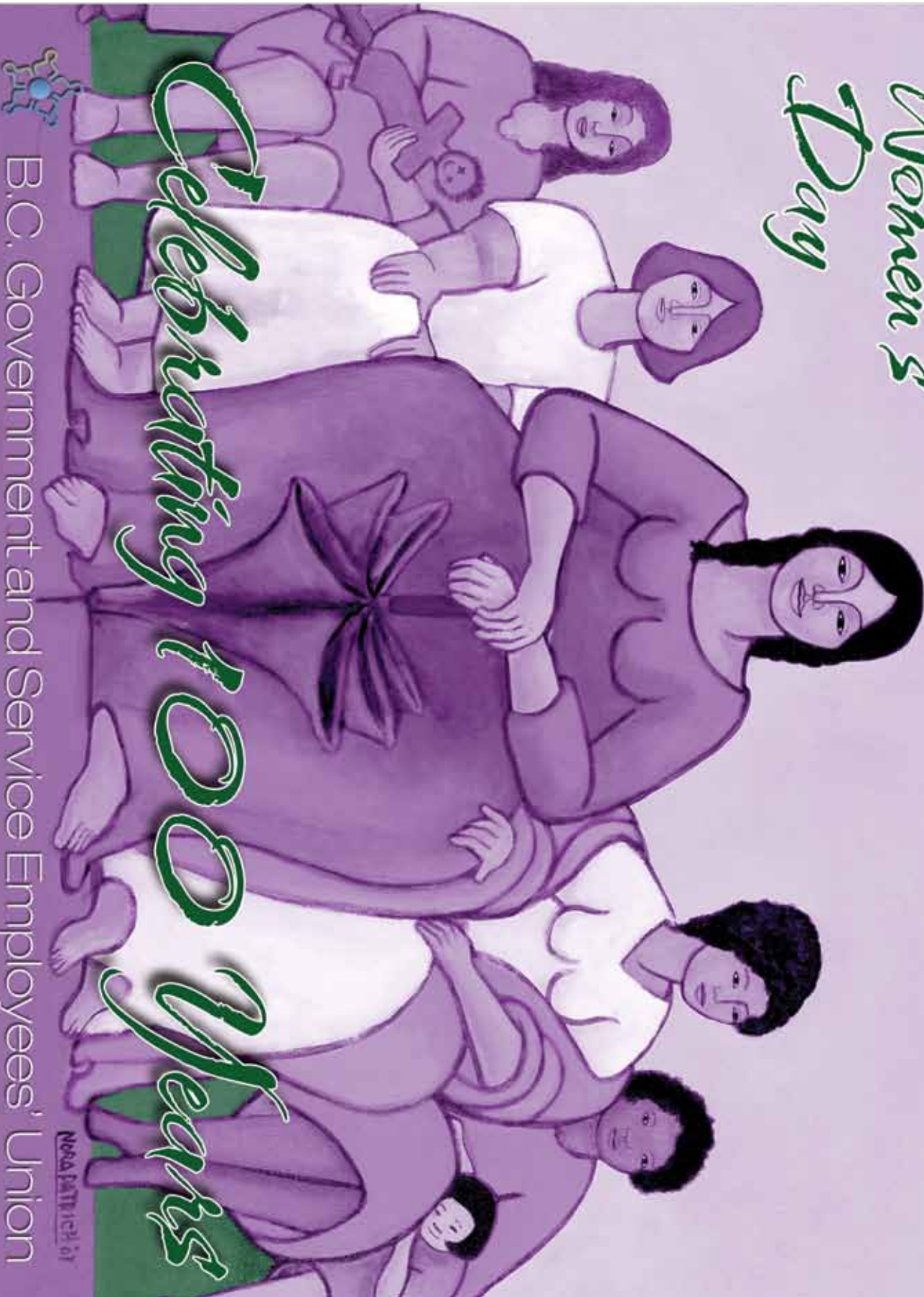
“Changes to the post-retirement group benefits are required for ITA compliance, and will help ensure the long-term health of inflation protection for the plan.”



International Women's Day

March 8, 2011

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B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union

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