



# The Provincial

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## CONVENTION 2011

Your guide to the 48th BCGEU Constitutional  
Convention, coming June 15 -18  
in Vancouver



**Inside:** We Are Wisconsin • Mental Health Roundtable • Int'l Labour Rights

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## The Provincial

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Darryl Walker

# WHY UNIONS MATTER

The theme *Unions Matter* will guide us through our convention in June. Over the last few months it has become increasingly clear how important this theme is. Unions and union members around the world are

facing unprecedented challenges from right wing governments and employers who are looking for someone to blame for the most recent economic crisis.

Governments are wrongly pointing the finger at public sector workers, and in response, are cutting public services and public sector jobs, deregulating and privatizing services, attacking workers' pensions and benefits and severely limiting workers' rights, such as the right to free collective bargaining. This along with corporate tax cuts and corporate bail outs is the road map directing right wing governments to economic recovery.

The truth is, workers have done their part during these difficult economic times. Members of the BCGEU who work for the provincial government settled for an agreement with a net zero-and-zero increase. Over the past decade wage increases hovered around 0.15 per cent when you take inflation into account. Also, members in community social services are still without an agreement and having a difficult fight to get the employer to agree to even the most modest improvements.

Yet despite these sacrifices public sector workers are still being blamed and workers and the public punished with severe cuts to public and community services.

Workers, communities, and unions are fighting back around the world. The summer of 2010 saw hundreds of thousands of people all over Europe – Greece, Spain, France and Italy – demonstrating, demanding the economic recovery not be on the backs of ordinary people. Also, in February and March, 2011 a number of demonstrations bringing out more than 100,000 workers, families, seniors, and community groups marched in Wisconsin in response to the draconian measures Governor Scott Walker rammed through the legislature to curtail the power and strength of unions.

People in cities in 50 states across the U.S. protested in solidarity, fearing the attack on unions in their community was merely a matter of time. In London 400,000 people marched in the street on March 26th, protesting deep government budget cuts and cuts to public services such as health care and education. And, at the start of April, British Columbia, Washington State and Oregon labour movements organized a protest at the Peace Arch, at the Canada–U.S. border in solidarity with workers in Wisconsin and around the world demanding an end to the attack on workers' rights.

The collective actions of the labour movement more than one hundred years ago won workers, unionized or not, many basic rights we take for granted – the eight hour day, health and safety laws, the right to join a union, the right to free collective bargaining, safe and decent working conditions, and a minimum wage. In Canada unions also fought for and won the Canada pension plan for all workers, an insurance system for unemployed workers, and a universal public health care system.

These hard-won rights are now under attack. But we are not going to let them take these rights away. Together we will fight to defend them. Moreover, together unions and the community are fighting to bring an end to corporate tax cuts and demanding a fair taxation system that will afford quality public services for all.

That's why unions matter.

## Where union membership can be a death sentence

Imagine holding a job where the working conditions involve death threats and harassment. These are some of the hazards Berenice Celeyta faces as a human rights defender and director of NOMADESC (the Association for Social Research and Action) in Cali, Colombia.

A key mission for NOMADESC is raising international awareness about the human suffering and rights violations caused by five decades of civil conflict in Colombia.

In March, Celeyta visited a number of Canadian cities, including Vancouver, during 12 days of speaking engagements and interviews. Her stay included a stop at BCGEU headquarters in Burnaby.

“The objective of the tour is to help people understand what’s going on in Colombia,” Celeyta said through a translator. “The media doesn’t really cover much of what’s going on in terms of the reality there.”

NOMADESC conducts human rights training and research, provides legal assistance to indigenous peoples, peasants, trade unionists, afro-Colombian communities and other groups, and creates community-based peace and social justice programs.

The organization also monitors incidents of violence plus judicial executions, massacres, assassinations, arbitrary detentions and torture.

The BCGEU supports the work of NOMADESC through its more

than two decades-long partnership with CoDevelopment Canada, a global justice organization that assists groups in Latin America.

The reality of being a union member in Colombia is often ignored and is “basically a death sentence,” she said. According to Celeyta, more than 2,500 Colombian unionists have been killed for defending their rights.

Many more have been fired from public sector jobs. NOMADESC has been working to get workers reinstated whenever possible. A recent court case was settled in NOMADESC’s favour and ordered the reinstatement of 54 workers to their civil service jobs.

“We were able to take their case to an international court,” she said. “It took 6 or 7 years, but the court is now asking the Colombian Government to reinstate those workers.”

Celeyta is especially concerned about government workers in Colombia, a worker sector vulnerable to massive layoffs as the national government pursues an agenda of mass privatization.

“They replace workers with many years of experience with contract workers. This is leaving people in the street and often in great poverty,” she noted.

Celeyta said international solidarity and the support of organizations such as the BCGEU and its members are vital to the defense of human rights in Colombia. She urges union members to keep speaking out against worker oppression and demand the Government of Canada direct



Photo: Joshua Benson

**LABOUR RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS** – Berenice Celeyta, director of the Association for Social Research and Action (NOMADESC) visited the BCGEU headquarters in Burnaby as part of a 12-day Canadian tour to raise awareness of human rights violations in Colombia, including the targeting of union activists and public service workers.

the Colombian Government to respect human rights.

Believing “a new Colombia is possible”, Celeyta plans to continue fighting against human rights violations, drug trafficking and corruption in a public way, despite the ever-present dangers to her personal safety.

“We must have justice, equality and dignity for the Colombian people. They kill us for telling the truth. But there are many men and women, like me, who are ready to not lie,” she said.

“My commitment begins by being at the side of peasants and indigenous people and workers and really seeing in their eyes the situations they are living. You can’t do nothing after seeing that.”

For more information about the work of NOMADESC, visit the CoDevelopment Canada web site: [www.codev.org](http://www.codev.org).

“We must have justice, equality and dignity for the Colombian people. They kill us for telling the truth. But there are many men and women, like me, who are ready to not lie.”

## Wisconsin: 'canary in the coalmine'

On March 12, 2011, more than 100,000 protestors converged on the State Capitol building in Madison, Wisconsin, after Republican Gov. Scott Walker approved a law stripping the state's 175,000 public sector workers of their bargaining rights.

"The energy of the protests in Madison was unlike anything I have ever experienced before in my many years as an activist," said the BCGEU's Holly Page, who was sent to Madison to help coordinate the rally.

The rally ranks among the largest civil protests in the U.S. in decades. In advance, protestors marched in the streets and occupied the rotunda of the State Capitol building. "This is what democracy looks like," they chanted. "Shame!" they shouted when the bill was suddenly passed on March 9, with little forewarning.

"Everywhere you looked there were signs supporting public workers and unions," said Page. "It's as though every citizen and group in Madison and Wisconsin was behind this protest. Local police were having pictures taken with protesters and high-fiving people," she added.

Polling indicated a majority of Wisconsin voters opposed their government's action. Everywhere, it seems, union members are being framed for problems they didn't create.

"We need to stop the race to the bottom. Gov. Scott Walker is using public employees as scapegoats," said BCGEU President Darryl Walker in an opinion editorial for

The Tye. "Why should anybody condemn the Madison protestors because they are middle class workers protesting for the right to maintain a living wage, good working conditions, and a decent retirement? Most of us share those aspirations," he wrote.

Walker argues the real problem isn't the public sector: "You don't join the government to get rich. B.C. has the leanest public sector in the country, on a per capita basis. And it has just gone through a decade of brutal cuts. Public service workers do enjoy a decent and fair wage, but when you take inflation into account, it has barely increased in real terms in a decade," he said.

Events unfolding in Madison should serve as a warning and a call to action to us all. "The labour movement will not stand for a race to the bottom," Walker said. "Efforts to curtail labour rights could be just what's needed to remind everyone that the workplace rights we take for granted were fought for and must be defended," he added.

"Wisconsin is the canary in the coalmine," is Page's favourite protest sign in Madison.

On April 2, the BCGEU joined other unions from B.C., Oregon and Washington at a rally to stand in solidarity with workers struggling to keep their right to collective bargaining.

The rally sends a clear message, that union-busting won't be tolerated in our country, and shouldn't be tolerated anywhere. Labour rights are human rights. An injustice to one is an injustice to all.



## BCGEU members across sectors tackle mental health and addictions

**B**CGEU members, staff and Provincial Executive are calling for immediate action from the government to improve mental health and addictions services in BC, following a roundtable discussion March 22, at BCGEU headquarters.

The 40 participants, including correctional officers, social workers, drug and addiction counsellors, mental health care workers, B.C. Housing workers and others, are urging the union to take a leadership role on this critical issue.

“You’re here because you are leaders in our union and can stand up and speak out for better conditions for the members you represent, and for a better society for our most vulnerable citizens,” said President Darryl Walker in his welcoming remarks.

“We need to work together to identify things we should do – as the BCGEU, as a union of mental health and addictions workers – to use our collective voice, our power and our influence to make this province better for the people who need these services.”

Roundtable participants talked about the need to take immediate steps to address the complex needs of people with mental illness and addictions including: investing in early screening and intervention; affordable housing; public awareness and education; workplace strategies; treatment; and other community services.

Participants also identified

**ROUNDTABLE CALLS FOR ACTION** – BCGEU elected officers, staff, correctional officers, social workers, addiction counsellors and mental health workers gathered for a roundtable session on mental health services in B.C.



opportunities for the BCGEU to address the issues through government lobbying, training and skills development, and union-specific and public awareness campaigns.

Members spoke from their own personal and work experiences on the front-lines: “This isn’t easy work, but we do it because we want to make a difference in people’s lives,” said one participant, an addictions counsellor.

Guest speakers, Dr. Jean Moore and Bev Gutray, from the B.C. Alliance for Mental Health/Illness and Addictions, talked about the public policy and infrastructure obstacles over the past decade, including insufficient funding, non-integrated services, and frequent ministry re-organizations.

BCGEU researcher Jonathan Chapnick provided an overview of the provincial government’s recent 10-year plan, *Healthy Minds, Healthy People* which purportedly aims to address mental health and addictions through a population health approach at each phase

of life. Chapnick concluded the plan falls short, with almost no concrete references to funding, new investment, or mechanisms to monitor performance, actions, and outcomes related to targets.

Participants identified common challenges including: inadequate financial resources and competition for limited funds; cookie-cutter and band-aid solutions; and a failure to adequately address associated issues like safe, affordable housing, employment, and the need for 24/7 support services.

They agreed this roundtable was a good first step to the union taking a leadership role in addressing the mental health and addictions issues. One participant noted: “I would like to be part of the solution and attend more meetings like this with my union brothers and sisters.”

Ideas harvested from the roundtable will form the basis of a campaign proposal for the union to address the needs of members in the sector and the people with mental illness that they support.

“This isn’t easy work, but we do it because we want to make a difference in people’s lives.”

# \$150 in your account. What more could you ask?

How about socially and environmentally responsible banking, special member benefits and shared profits too?

Vancity and BCGEU have a lot in common. We share common values, including a commitment to social and economic justice. We're actively involved in protecting our environment (in fact, Vancity is already carbon neutral).

At Vancity, we also like to share our success. This year, we're sharing a record \$23.5 million with our members and their communities.

We want you to learn first hand all the great things about banking with us. That's why we're offering **BCGEU members \$150 to transfer your payroll to Vancity.**

Here's how it works: bring your direct payroll deposit to Vancity and we'll credit your account with \$150 after your first paycheque is deposited. If you're already a Vancity member with direct payroll, we're sorry you can't take advantage of this offer, but thank you for your business.

Bring your direct payroll deposit between Monday, April 4 and Thursday, June 30, 2011, and \$150 is yours.

Contact Karen Heir in Vancouver at 604.877.6521 or [karen\\_heir@vancity.com](mailto:karen_heir@vancity.com) or Nada Johnston 250.519.7424 or [nada\\_johnston@vancity.com](mailto:nada_johnston@vancity.com) on Vancouver Island to get started. Or visit any local Vancity community branch.

**Vancity**





## Brother Gary Ralph

(April 12, 1943 -  
February 10, 2011)

**B**rother Gary Ralph died peacefully on February 10, 2011. He leaves his loving wife

Sherrie, daughters Kerrie, Kellie (Dean), beloved grand kids Shayna, Jake and Savannah, his sisters, many family and friends.

Brother Ralph's career in Corrections spanned almost 34 years. He started at Okalla on August 14th, 1968 and was promoted to Principle Officer in 1977.

Brother Ralph and his family eventually transferred to Victoria where he worked at the Jordan River Camp until it burnt down in 1982. He then worked at the Blue House in 1982 as a Principle Officer and then as the director.

When the Blue House closed in 1992, Brother Ralph returned to Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre (VIRCC) where he worked as a Senior Correctional Officer until he retired in 2002.

He received the honour of the top level Exemplary Service Medal in 1998 while working at VIRCC.

Brother Ralph was a shop steward throughout his career and was the chair of the BCGEU Corrections & Sheriff Services Component 1 for three terms between 1996 and 2002. After retirement, brother Ralph was named a Life Member of the BCGEU.

Brother Ralph was known for his outgoing personality, sense of humour and his caring attitude towards people.

Brother Ralph's generosity, humour, kind heart and love for people had a strong impact on many and he will be deeply missed.

*"Gary really cared about the workers and dedicated hours of his own time to the union."*

*He bled BCGEU blue and yellow and was a union man through-and-through. He made many lifelong friends throughout the union movement.*

*B.C. lost a great trade unionist. Gary had a long and important career with Corrections and was dedicated to improving the lives of workers. He stood up for the things he believed in, like safety, fair wages, and dignity.*

*You made a difference Gary, and paved the way for the rest of us."*

**Dean Purdy, Component 1 Chair**



## Sister Virginia Reynolds

(November 9, 1942 -  
January 24, 2011)

**I**t is with great sadness that we announce that sister Virginia Reynolds passed away in her sleep on January 24, 2011 after a lengthy fight with diabetes and heart disease.

Sister Reynolds was a Community Support Worker in Gibsons for over 20 years who fought hard and tirelessly for recognition and the rights of Home Support Workers. She was a dedicated BCGEU member - active in Local 403, Component 4 and at the District Labour Council.

The Union's highest honour of life membership was bestowed upon sister Reynolds at the 2008 Triennial Convention.

BCGEU members and others who knew sister Reynolds knew her as a strong leader, mentor, educator and an advocate and she will be deeply missed.

*"Virginia was a true blue trade unionist. Her priority was always the members. I have bargained with Virginia, walked picket lines with her, and had great debates over the future of home support and life in general. She touched so many lives as an activist, a valued friend and mentor. She will be missed."*

**Carla Dempsey**

*"She had great stories that were always insightful, helpful and usually hit the nail-on-the-head for the issue at hand. Her knowledge and experience will be missed!"*

**Susanne Bellefontaine**

*"Virginia will be remembered well for her devotion to the labour movement and more specifically to women in the movement."*

**Joanne Jordan**

*"She stood heads-above in her commitment to improve the lot of home support workers and their clients. She almost single-handedly educated the union movement about the importance of home support. No one was happier when the title changed to community health worker - legitimizing them as an integral part of the health care system. The world was a far better place for her being in it, and is a far sadder place for her having left."*

**Bobbi Pettett**

*"Virginia was a great friend and mentor. Her wise words and dedication to the members she presented were unwavering. She was a great role model for women. She will be missed by all of us in her BCGEU family."*

**Brenda Brown**



**The convention theme is "Unions Matter."**

*Workers in all sectors, including public service workers, already overworked and stressed after years of budget cuts, wage freezes and privatization, are an easy target for conservative politicians who want to hand over even more public wealth to the largest corporations, executives and shareholders.*

*The BCGEU and other BC unions are standing up to the ongoing attack on workers' rights, and much of the convention debate will focus on these issues.*

## Guide for Electing Your Table Officers

The BCGEU's 48<sup>th</sup> Triennial Constitutional Convention is held this year on June 15-18, 2011 at the Westin Bayshore Hotel in Vancouver

Every three years, delegates to the Constitutional Convention elect a new Executive Committee – consisting of President, Treasurer, and four Vice-Presidents. Delegates to convention are elected by Locals, at Local meetings.

Delegates will elect a President, Treasurer and four Vice-Presidents, and debate policy resolutions which provide direction to the union.

Members not attending can follow convention activity online. The union's web site ([www.bcgeu.ca](http://www.bcgeu.ca)) will post bulletins, interviews, photos and other highlights.

## Candidate Statements

In accordance with BCGEU Policy (Section H, Policy 10), each declared candidate for Full-Time Officers and 4 Vice-President positions may have a picture and a personal statement of up to 1000 words published in a special election issue of The Provincial, and on the BCGEU website.

Candidates are listed first by elected position (President, Treasurer, Vice-Presidents) in alphabetical order. Candidates for Vice-President are listed by gender, in alphabetical order.

## All-Candidates Forum

If you are a delegate to the BCGEU's Constitutional Convention, June 15 – 18, don't miss the all-candidates forum taking place at **7:00 pm on Wednesday, May 18.**

Candidates running for President, Treasurer and the four Vice-President positions will share their opinions and take questions from members.

You can take in the meeting two ways:

- **In Person:** At any BCGEU Area Office
- **Online:** Go to [www.bcgeu.ca](http://www.bcgeu.ca) for an online broadcast of the debate.

## New Delegate Workshop

**So now you're a delegate . . . Now what?**

**Come to the New Delegate Workshop**

*Find out about:*

- Why we hold conventions
  - Delegate preparation
  - Policy positions
  - Rules of Order
  - Chairperson's rules of order
  - Chairperson's role as leader
  - The Agenda
  - Resolutions: Preamble and Motion
  - Resolutions Committee
  - Convention Committee
  - Reports
  - Voting
  - Delegates' Role
- ... and more!*

Watch for an announcement on time/place prior to opening of convention

# candidate statements



## Candidates for President



### DARRYL WALKER

Brothers and Sisters,

In the three years since our last convention much has changed, in our union and the province. One thing however has not changed! We continue to fight for workers' rights. Big business and the political right remain determined to remove labour from the debate and we must not allow this to happen.

At convention, we will review and evaluate our accomplishments, decide what has worked and what we must change. We will come together to debate and decide on key initiatives, policy changes and future directions. It has been my pleasure and honour to serve as your President these last three years and it's my desire to seek a second term. We have struggles ahead but together we can succeed. I am asking for your support to continue as your President.

A bit about the last three years. Since our last convention, we have organized more members than any other union. We have built a financial base that allows us to defend and protect the rights of our members. Balanced budgets have allowed the Defence Fund to continue to grow and facilitated our owning the majority of our offices around the province. Members can truly call their Area Offices home and feel proud to host events.

We have made succession planning a priority within staff and activists ranks. It is important that we have individuals ready to step up and into roles as others move to retirement. The needs of our members are primary in this regard and only by providing opportunities to gain experience can this be fulfilled. Stewards, OHS committee members, joint committee members and bargaining committee members are the backbone of our union and ongoing training in these areas is essential. We continue to review and renew our educational packages.

Our members want more involvement in communities and I support this wholeheartedly! Our union is well respected around the province, whether it's workers looking for a union, environmental groups or social justice organizations looking for partnerships or local politicians wanting to discuss a

specific issue, the BCGEU has become BC's Go To Union. Visits around the province include local politicians, First Nations representatives, and small businesses. Through our Cross Component Committees and local activists we attend most community events. Our members are proud of our accomplishments and are heard to say: "That's my union".

The environment remains a key piece of our platform and we are working with the BC Federation of Labour and environmental groups to promote the protection of good union jobs as our economy transitions to a green economy. We organized a major conference "Jobs, Justice and Climate" last year and will follow up with conferences over the next few years which support green initiatives. Beyond our borders, we are involved with labour and environmental groups from Oregon, Washington and California on the Western Climate Initiative. We are pressing governments and business to set and live within emission levels so that carbon targets can be attained and stabilized. On the home front, we continue to monitor and reduce our carbon footprint.

A number of key structural issues were identified at our 2008 Convention. The needs of equity seeking members and activists was key to this work. A committee has spent the last three years talking to members around the province on equity representation, regional representation and the roles of elected officers of the union. We have heard from our membership and the result will be some exciting, new ideas that will come to the convention floor this year. We continue to look for ways to increase opportunities for women in the union. We have expanded the role of the young workers committee and sought guidance from the committee on enhanced communications so that we can reach out to young workers. If we are to continue to grow the movement we must make room for and support the needs of women, equity seeking members and young workers.

Outreach to member activists has been a priority for my office. We have achieved the beginnings of this through Regional Conferences. Sessions in Prince George and Kamloops have been very successful and more are planned. By bringing together local activists along with senior elected leadership, we have been able to identify and debate issues important to local communities. In this way we tap into our grass roots and become more relevant. We are also taking campaigns such as "Our Forests, Our Future" and the seniors'

*continued...*



# candidate statements

## *Darryl Walker, cont...*

campaign around the province.

As I review decisions made at our last convention and look back on promises made, I am proud of the work we have done. We celebrate our history through a new book to be released soon. Our methods of corresponding with our members continues to be reviewed and renewed.

We have made worksite visits an absolute priority and are close to achieving a visit to every worksite on an annual basis. This along with member-to-member and workplace leadership will certainly strengthen our relationship with our members.

Three years ago we had a Liberal government at the top of the polls. Today we have two parties with new leaders. There is a good deal of hope for our future. The next provincial elec-

tion will be huge for our union/our members. We need to be ready to identify our needs to politicians from all parties and to support those that can deliver on our needs. We can and should make a difference.

Lastly, we have a huge challenge in 2012 bargaining. It is our turn. In 2010 the majority of our members accepted zeroes. We were told we needed to be part of the solution, that it was our part of getting through the downturn. Well, we did our part and now it's our turn. We have been cut, laid off, downsized, privatized, work force adjusted...you name it. 2012 Is Our Turn.

I ask for your continued support as I seek re-election and I thank you for all you have done.

In Solidarity,  
Darryl Walker

## Candidates for Treasurer



### JUDI FILION

Sisters and Brothers,

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as your Treasurer for the past six years. It is the most rewarding position I have had and it is due, in a large part, to the tremendous assistance of your Provincial Executive and staff, and the continued support of our membership. Thank you!

Our Union has had many accomplishments over the past three years. We piloted the BCGEU Direct, a resource center to enable our members better access to our union. We have supported the transition to create a new Component to better serve our members in the Health Sector. We made sound investments by purchasing two more area offices in Kamloops and Nanaimo.

### **BALANCED BUDGETS**

Despite the global economic downturn, the BCGEU is in a very stable financial position and our Defence Fund has grown to \$34 million. Under my leadership, we have had a surplus

budget each and every year. I'm committed to making sure that the Defence Fund continues to grow. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you who assisted me to make this happen. I have sought out members, elected officers, stewards, bargaining committee members and staff for your input on what we have, what we need, what we can live with, and where we need to go.

### **FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP AND ACCESS TO UNION FINANCES**

I have insisted that revenues and expenditures be clear, understandable and available to all members. As Chief Financial Officer, I have put the needs of our members first and committed to continuing accountability and access to our financial statements. I am proud to chair the Provincial Executive Finance Committee which has worked hard to revise financial policies to meet the needs of our membership. For example, we have made improvements to the Provincial Executive Policy G-3, "Union Leave of Absence" and continue to review annually our expense reimbursement rates. I see the Financial Manual as a living, breathing document. It needs to be evolving, current and relevant to the needs of our members. I am proud that our Union provides clear and transparent reporting systems on our finances. The audited financial statements are provided to our delegates in advance of Convention. The statements are also included annually in our Provincial magazine, giving every member the opportunity to review and ask questions. I am

# candidate statements



committed to continuing this practice.

## EDUCATION AND SHARED KNOWLEDGE

I have continued to provide 2-day workshops every year for Component Treasurers and many component chairs who also appreciate the opportunity to further their understanding of the financial stewardship of the entire Union. This workshop provides Component Treasurers the ability to discuss current practices and make revisions to procedures as necessary. The key to making this work is the ability to exchange ideas directly with me as their Treasurer and with the Union's Finance Staff.

The Cross Component Committee Chairpersons continue to meet annually to network together and develop "like" strategies and discuss and share ideas. In 2009 I put forward a proposal to increase the funding for the Cross Component Committees in an effort to support their continuing hard work to bring the BCGEU into their communities. Earlier this year I arranged training and support for the Treasurers of the Cross Component Committees. It's back to the grassroots; it's where I come from and for me it is the future of the BCGEU.

## STEWARDS AND ACTIVISTS - THE FOUNDATION OF OUR UNION

I have visited every region of our Province. I met with members and local activists. I attended Cross-Component Committee functions. I listened. I took advice and I understood more clearly the issues that are important to us. I stood on my beliefs and advocated for enhanced education programs for Stewards. I believe there is no greater power than knowledge.

We need to continue building a solid Steward Structure with more interaction and information exchange among bargaining units. Locals play a key role in our union. I have continued to develop new processes for managing our budget that reflect input from stewards and activists. I have been able to ensure funds continue to be available for the Member to Member (M2M) Campaign. Taking the Union to its members where ideas and solutions are developed was and still is key to being an effective Union.

I have learned a tremendous amount from our Provincial Executive. Your Provincial Executive is a very knowledgeable and experienced group of elected officers. Their advice, ideas and solutions have helped me do an honest and respectable job in terms of the finances and the day-to-day operations of the Union. I have been able to do it on time and on budget. In fact, due to careful monitoring, successful bargaining, and well managed disputes, I have ensured that the Union is in the

best financial position ever. Our Defence Fund has blossomed to \$34 million, the largest in our Union's history.

You had faith in me. You elected me and I am so proud to have been able to continue the great stewardship of our finances. I have worked hard on your behalf.

I firmly believe that the Union needs strong, well established individuals serving in the two full time officers positions. I would consider myself extremely fortunate to have your support and trust to continue to serve as your Treasurer for the coming three years and beyond.

Be proud of what we have achieved, how far we have come and be confident in our future.

In solidarity,

Judi Filion



## STEPHANIE SMITH

*for BCGEU Treasurer*

*Ready to lead.*

*A new way of doing things.*

I could go into detail about the positions I've held, the committees I've been a member of and the conferences I've attended as a BCGEU activist for more than 15 years, but instead I would rather answer the question that I know you're asking: "What makes you think you can do this job?"

Yes, the stewardship of our members' resources is a core responsibility of the BCGEU Treasurer. But the Treasurer is not a bookkeeper or accountant (we have professional staff for that important work). The position of Treasurer is a leadership position, second-in-charge to the President. Our Treasurer must be ready to step up and be the face and voice of the Union. Our Treasurer needs to be a strong and effective communicator.

I have had the opportunity to bring our members' issues to provincial, national and even international conventions and conferences. I've worked on numerous campaigns supporting our diverse membership and have spoken at rallies and on

*continued...*

## Stephanie Smith, cont...

radio and television. Like you, my stomach churns a bit each time, but bringing attention to the work our members do and the issues we face motivates me. As I continue to expand my skills in this area, I have grown comfortable in speaking out and I am always proud to effectively represent the BCGEU and our members.

It has been a great honour to work with our Young Workers' Committee at their planning and strategy sessions and to co-facilitate the BCGEU Leadership course at the CLC Winter School. The depth and breadth of the leadership capacity of BCGEU activists when given the chance to show it and when provided the opportunities to expand it is so impressive! For me, leadership includes mentoring and supporting others and working collaboratively. It's one of the most vital roles of any leader. I believe strongly in promoting leadership development opportunities for members and activists and I am committed to doing just that as your Treasurer.

As chair of the second largest local in our union (and one whose members are amongst the lowest paid), I am vigilantly aware of whose money we are spending and of our duty to be responsible and accountable. I believe that creative problem solving, a collaborative approach, a willingness to listen and an ability to make sound decisions are what I will bring to the position of Treasurer.

Union policies need to work for our members and activists, not stand in the way of activism. I will work with you and

other BCGEU leaders to review, develop and implement policies that support and promote grassroots activism while ensuring that members' resources are being effectively used.

The BCGEU has significant resources, including valuable assets like the buildings we own. It is important to protect these investments, but we also need to invest in – and enhance – our most important assets, the human ones: our activists and staff. Working with you, my priority as Treasurer will be to prioritize all available funds to support leadership development, activist learning, professional development and campaigns to protect members' jobs and the public's services.

In seeking your support, I am making commitments about how I intend to work with you. I commit to being a leader that brings transparency to decision making. I commit to being a leader who follows up to analyze the impact our decisions have on our members. I commit to being a leader whose decisions will be timely and responsible and will be made in collaboration with your Component representatives and activists. I commit to being a leader that will bring a voice and face to our members' issues out in the public arena. And finally, I commit to being a leader who supports and mentors activists to become the leaders our union needs to build a better BC.

Let's continue the discussion. Find me on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube. And visit my website at: [www.stephaniesmith4treasurer.ca](http://www.stephaniesmith4treasurer.ca) or contact me directly at: [stephanie4treasurer@gmail.com](mailto:stephanie4treasurer@gmail.com).

## Candidates for Vice President



### BRENDA BROWN

Sisters and Brothers,

It is an honor and a privilege to let my name stand for the position of Vice President, of the B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union.

#### EXPERIENCE

I grew up in a trade union family; both my parents were strong union activists. I was taught that as a member of a union, you have rights and responsibilities. We have an

obligation to participate, work collectively, and strive for a better, safer, and fairer workplace for all.

I became actively involved in the union when I was hired as a Long Term Care Aide in Prince George in 1984 and held a number of elected positions;

- Shop steward
- Bargaining committee member
- Prince George Labour Council – Political Action Committee
- President of the Local

I met my husband Apenisa, a trade union activist with the IWA, in 1987 while attending the Labour College of Canada in Ottawa. Together we have 2 children Samantha 21 and Kelesi 19. My family believes in the labour movement, its

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principles and values.

I have been and a member of the BCGEU since 1997 and currently work at Dunrovin Park lodge in Quesnel. I recently was appointed as the BCGEU representative to work with Government, Health Employers and other health care unions, to establish the New Care Aide and Community Health Worker Registry.

As Chairperson of the largest component for the last 5 years, we faced significant challenges representing members. Component 4 had grown to over 15,000 and change was needed. I am proud to have played a key role in the creation of the new Community Health Services Component 8. With the evolution of the new component those covered under the Community Health Services agreement, now have 12 new locals across the province providing more service.

It is important as leaders to be prepared to look at better ways of representing members and always put the needs of the members first.

## **Elected positions in BCGEU include:**

- Shop steward - 1997
- 1st vice local 406, - 1998
- Chairperson local 406 – 2000 - current
- Strike Captain - 2004
- Bargaining Committee member- facilities sector – 2006 and 2010
- Provincial Executive 2003 - current
- Bill 29 negotiations 2008 – Facility sector
- Component 4 Chairperson 2006 – current

## **BCGEU Provincial Executive Committee appointments:**

- Component Chairs Steering Committee
- Finance
- Officer's Benefits
- Constitution and Structure
- International Solidarity
- Resolution
- Women's
- Grievance Appeal

## **POLITICAL ACTION**

It is important as an organization that we are not only socially aware but politically active. Sadly, we are all too familiar with the negative impacts employers and government can have on working families and their communities.

Over the years I have been involved in many campaigns to stop privatization and contracting out. The most personal was the fight to stop the privatization of seniors care in Quesnel and the real threat my members could lose their jobs.

We worked hard to stop the proposed privatization with a very effective campaign and support from our BCGEU staff, members and our community.

I have been a political activist since I was old enough to vote, and am always prepared to lobby MLAs, City Councils, Government Ministers and others to protect the services we provide and the members we represent. We need to take a strong stand against the erosion of workers' rights, and through solidarity, we can make a difference.

## **EDUCATION**

Education is the key to building skilled stewards and activists. It ensures we are a stronger organization moving forward. Education is a priority for activists and we must continue to improve and enhance the opportunities we offer within the BCGEU.

## **Courses and conferences that have assisted me in my elected duties include:**

- 2011 – Conflict resolution
- 2009 Lancaster house bargaining in the broader public sector
- 2009 CLC Winter School - Facilitators Training
- 2007 Commonwealth Study Conference BCGEU Labour delegate – India
- 2005 NUPGE leadership
- 2002 CLC Winter School – Parliamentary Procedure and Public Speaking
- 1987 CLC Labour College of Canada 8-week residential program including: Labour Law, Economics, Sociology, Political Science and Labour History
- 1987 CLC winter school – N.D.P. Campaign Organizer
- 1986 CLC winter school- Political Action
- 1985 Women in the Union – CUPE

## **VISION**

The role of the Vice Presidents of BCGEU needs to be defined and solidified within the organization and must be relevant to the operation of the Union and to the members we represent.

Vice Presidents are an important link between our members,

*continued...*

## **Brenda Brown, cont...**

activists and our union leaders. They need to have a strong voice at the provincial executive level of our organization in order to work collectively on behalf of the entire membership.

To be effective, Vice Presidents must have vision and the skills to find solutions to our issues. They must be open to discussion and debate on our future and work collectively to achieve it.

Our Vice Presidents must play a key role with our partners in the Labour movement. We must work together with local Labour councils, the BC Federation of Labour and our National Union, in order to facilitate growth and sustainability of the Labour Movement in British Columbia and Canada.

As the 'social conscience' of our society, we must remain diligent and active in protecting not only our own members, but those in society who do not have a strong voice of their own.

With almost 30 years experience as an activist, I have acquired a broad base of knowledge. I have the skills and leadership ability to bring our members' issues front and center and will continue to work toward improving and maintaining the best working conditions possible.

I take the responsibility of elected office seriously and value the priorities set out by the members. I have a strong voice, and believe passionately in protecting the rights of every member.

In Solidarity,  
Brenda Brown



## **COLLEEN JONES**

Sisters & Brothers,

**I am asking for your support to be re-elected as a Vice-President.** I offer over 28 years of experience, commitment and dedication with our Union.

During my time as your Vice-President I have worked very hard with many of you at bargaining tables, stood beside you on picket lines, marched

with you at rallies and most importantly spoke out on your behalf on issues and concerns. I want to continue this work and hope that I have your support to do so. I am someone who brings a deep commitment to our union principles and our members. I look forward to working with all of you in the future.

**I became a member of the BCGEU in 1982** when I was hired by the government as an auxiliary in the Liquor Distribution Branch. During the last 28 years, I have held many elected positions on the local executive, the component executive and for the past 6 years as one of your four provincial vice-presidents.

As I prepare this article for the Provincial our Union the BCGEU will be joining with unions across British Columbia, Oregon and Washington at a rally to stand in solidarity with workers who are struggling to keep their right to collective

bargaining. As we have seen and heard in the media Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker has approved a law, stripping the state's 175,000 public sector workers of their bargaining rights. I will be at this rally marching with and beside my brothers and sisters!

This reminds me of one of my first very memorable experiences with our Union and that was almost 25 years ago when the Social Credit government introduced a major restraint program. Making cuts to social programs, wages, educational programs and stripping job security. The response of the labour movement, and our members was so overwhelming, so powerful it changed my commitment to the movement forever.

That experience became known as Operation Solidarity and has never been seen again in this province. Community groups including human rights, womens' rights, anti-poverty, students, seniors, and environmentalists, joined in the rally. In the end about 80,000 people province wide where marching in the streets for social justice! I was part of this rally marching with and beside my brothers and sisters!

Growing up in Trail, I was surrounded by the labour movement where Cominco, known as Teck today, was the main employer. I witnessed the struggles that many of my family and community members have been through fighting for workers' rights, human rights and their civic rights. I have seen how hard it is on communities and the people who lose their jobs, their dignity and their self-respect because of corporate greed and government ideology.

My involvement with the national union's "All Together Now Campaign" that promotes public services, defends public sector

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jobs and demands fair taxation for all has given me and other activists a great opportunity to educate our members, to reach out and speak out to their communities on these issues.

**It is vitally important to elect a government that reflects our core values and understands our issues.** Once again we have provincial, federal and municipal elections coming up this spring and possibly this fall. It is important to our members, their families and our communities that we elect a government that stands for our core values and responds to our issues.

A government that is committed to social justice, ending poverty, believes in fair and quality health care, education and a government that also understands the value of affordable childcare and early learning, I will work very hard alongside our members and community activists once again to see that that happens.

**I am committed to bringing issues forward on behalf of our members.** I have worked hard to do just that. I continue to walk, work and stand with our members and activists, I have supported members at the bargaining tables and stood with members on picket lines while we have fought for our rights. I believe worksite visits continue to be one of the most important opportunities that we have to understand our members' issues.

Worksite visits should provide the opportunity for you to speak to your elected representatives and activists visiting worksites, talking and listening to each others' issues and taking those issues back to be acted on, making a difference for all. It is a great opportunity to see what our grassroots members are facing at their workplaces, as well as provide an effective way to show the employer that the members have the strong support of their union.

**Education has and always will be a high priority issue for me.** Education is one of the most important tools we have to encourage members to become involved. Activists should have access to educational sessions in their own area, making it more convenient and practical for them to participate.

As an activist, I know the life/work balance challenges we face, making it difficult to participate in educational opportunities and union events that take us away from home. I want to work with all of you to make changes and find ways that the Union can support our members so that they can become more involved.

**Your Provincial Executive has already begun to plan for the major round of bargaining coming up in 2012.** I know that once again all sectors will be well prepared, supported and resourced going into this round of bargaining. Our

issues will be prioritized based on the information we receive at these bargaining conferences planned for the fall. We need to be solid and united once again at bargaining tables as we all deserve a fair deal.

**My commitment to the members of the BCGEU** is to continue to connect with the members, to be a strong and effective voice for the members, develop more opportunities for our members to continue to be involved and most importantly to continue to work with you and stand beside you in Solidarity!

In Solidarity,

Colleen Jones



## LORENE OIKAWA

*"The people united will never be defeated!"*

The deafening chants are taking place about 3,300 kilometres away from BCGEU headquarters in Burnaby, but with social media I am transported to Wisconsin.

I see solidarity in action: Workers supporting workers and taking a stand for workers' rights and justice.

My name is Lorene Oikawa. I am so proud to represent BCGEU as one of your vice presidents. The enthusiasm I feel today is just as strong as when I chanted at my first rally and sang Solidarity Forever and raised the BCGEU flag.

I am asking for your support so that I may continue to use my skills and voice to work with you, because we are the union. United in purpose, our diverse experiences, abilities and knowledge is what gives the BCGEU its strength.

I am deeply committed to speaking out on behalf of members from all components and areas of the province. I have worked hard to promote and advance our campaigns and issues – challenging government, employers and sometimes our own labour movement.

## A strong effective voice

As your vice president, I have been an effective voice and

*continued...*



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## **Lorene Oikawa, cont...**

representative for all members. Many of you will have heard me at BCGEU, BC Federation of Labour and NUPGE conventions when I stepped up to the microphone to speak passionately and to articulate the concerns of members.

I am known for my creativity and ideas, but I am equally known for putting my ideas into action and not just within the BCGEU. I have promoted issues and initiated some changes as a member of the BC Federation of Labour (BCFL) Executive Council, chair of the BCFL Human Rights Committee, and a member of the Canadian Labour Congress Human Rights Committee.

From city council meetings to public forums, I have presented on a range of topics including human rights, climate change, child care, poverty, health care, food security, migrant workers, highways maintenance standards, public services, anti-bullying, and labour history. We must continue to get our message out to a wider audience.

As a front-line government worker, I have not forgotten the actions of the BC Liberal government when they first slashed services and programs and cut so many workers, our members.

I was one of the workers whose position was deemed redundant and I tell people that if not for my union who negotiated provisions in our collective agreement, I and many others would not be here today. We cannot let people forget what happened then or what's happening now.

Our members are dedicated to providing quality services and see increased workloads, the devaluing of their work, and a widening gap between the have and have-nots.

Instead of offering respect, fair wages and decent working conditions, government and other employers have chosen to ignore the plight of workers and their clients. We speak for our members, but we also speak for those who aren't being heard.

We need strong, effective voices to ensure that our issues and concerns are heard not just during federal, provincial and municipal elections, but also afterwards with whoever is in power, and with employers and not just during bargaining.

I will continue to work with you, locals and components, the provincial executive and our staff to improve conditions for our members and their communities.

## **Commitment to education**

Education is a powerful tool. My education includes a degree from UBC. I am taking courses as part of my commitment as a trustee on the Public Service Pension Plan Board. I also contribute to the education process by facilitating training events.

I am continuing work on preserving our workers' history and stories through the BCGEU Oral History Project. Film is an effective medium for telling stories and I have been the BC Coordinator for the Canadian Labour International Film Festival (CLiFF), the first labour film festival for Canada, since its inception.

The BCGEU Environment Committee, which I chair, is looking at education as a key component of our work on climate change. We will continue to build our resources for our activists.

## **Connecting with members**

I am a fourth generation British Columbian with family and friends across BC so I am keenly aware of the need to hear from all areas of the province.

I have met with members in all areas of our province including Peace River country, Terrace area, Prince Rupert, Prince George area, Williams Lake, Quesnel, Cariboo area, Nelson, Castlegar, Cranbrook, Kootenays, Kelowna area, Kamloops area, Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley, and Vancouver Island.

I have heard your concerns and ideas, and will continue to seek out new ways and technologies to connect with members so we can increase participation in the union.

## **Building outreach opportunities**

Our call for social justice is shared by many community groups. We can be more effective when we work together. That's why I have initiated outreach opportunities.

Whether through the work of the BCGEU Equity and Human Rights Committee, which I chair, or through my work with cultural and academic groups, we will continue our outreach to organizations supporting Aboriginal workers, workers with disabilities, workers of colour, and lesbian, gay, transgendered and bisexual workers. I have also taken the lead to form the Asian Canadian Labour Alliance in BC.

We need to continue our relationship building with community and this is another important connection to our membership which will be even more diverse in the future.

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## We are the union

Our union's strength depends upon the contributions of our new and experienced activists. We share a desire to take up the cause and answer the call to organize and fight for workers' rights and a just society.

We have much to be proud of and there are also areas to improve. I see the possibilities and am eager to continue the work we've begun. Just like the people chanting in Wisconsin, I know we can accomplish much more when we work together. We are the union and we are strong.

## Re-elect Lorene Oikawa, your voice for vp.

[voicevp@loreneoikawa.ca](mailto:voicevp@loreneoikawa.ca)



## MIKE CLARKE

First and foremost I want to thank the members that are taking the time to play an active role in our Union's democratic process by reviewing the profiles of those running for positions, and hopefully remaining involved throughout the upcoming discussions, debates, and convention, of course.

My initial connection with the BCGEU began in 1985 in

the process of working to organize my workplace to become members. The utmost concern to my co-workers was the complete lack of respect shown to them by the management of the day. My worksite was one of the first group homes opened in Williams Lake after the closure of the Tranquille Institution in Kamloops.

We rarely had any information on the people that were transferred, and unfortunately were often faced with various forms of violence in the workplace on almost a daily basis.

The consistent response of the Employer that "this is part of your job" was as unacceptable then as it is today. These very difficult working conditions were compounded by the fact that we were only paid \$5.76 per hour with minimal benefits.

Shortly after we joined the Union, my co-workers encouraged me to represent them as their first Shop Steward. Many were fired during the organising drive, and while I was a little concerned at first, I knew I had a strong Union behind me. I felt so

honoured that people entrusted this role to me.

As the years progressed, I found myself naturally taking on more active roles, within my worksite and beyond. At that time I joined others on our Health & Safety Committee to work towards addressing the serious issues facing us with Violence in the Workplace.

When collective bargaining started, I was encouraged to take on the role of Bargaining Chairperson, which I did from 1986 to 2000. A Sectoral Bargaining Council was developed to represent over 40 agencies across the Province at that time, and I was very privileged to chair this Council. This Council ultimately represented members working at Women's Centres, Counselling and Addiction Services, Child Care, some Aboriginal Services, and many worksites in Community Living.

This group represented over 10,000 workers from 4 Unions and took on the Government of the day in a 12-week strike in 1999, culminating in some much deserved increases in pay and benefits for an incredibly dedicated group that was significantly underpaid. The many members that won that strike were absolutely amazing, and it was won through their hard work and dedication.

Somehow, in between bargaining sessions, I also involved myself in the Local structure of the Union, by initially becoming Chairperson for Local 0406 in 1994. Just as it has recently, Component 4 splintered off another offspring, which became Component 3. I was fortunate to be encouraged to become the first Chairperson of the new component, which also allowed me to represent them at the Provincial Executive level of our Union. I also at that time sat on various Committees, including Health & Safety, Finance, and Grievance Appeal.

In May of 1999 I was honoured to be elected to my first term as Vice President, which offered me the opportunity to become even more involved in one of my original passions that initiated our organising drive, Health & Safety. I also took on another very important role as Chairperson of the Child Care, Family and Work Life Balance Committee.

Both of these areas have allowed me to do what I think are two extremely important avenues for Labour. Work on mentoring new activists with training, mentoring, and support, and make connections with Advocacy groups that have similar goals and beliefs.

Within the realm of the CCFWLB Committee I have worked progressively with Firstcall, (Coalition for Children and

*continued...*

## Mike Clarke, cont...

Youth) over the years – specifically on Child Poverty, Homelessness, Child Care, and the Living Wage Campaign. All areas that we have strong beliefs in as a Union, and we can certainly support and work towards improving. I also work with the Child Care Advocates of BC, and the Early Childhood Educators of BC on issues connected to our committee work, and communities.

On the Health & Safety front, I sit as a member of the BC Federation of Labour Health & Safety Committee to not only represent our Union's immediate concerns, but also to push in areas we believe are important. Such as the "Alive after 5" program that goes into High Schools to educate young workers about the hazards they face in the workplace, as well as having some of our own BCGEU young workers trained to facilitate these courses.

I have been very involved with their Education Advisory group that initiated this process, as well as education for basic and advanced committee work, stress in the workplace, and occupational disease prevention to name a few. Prevention of Violence in the Workplace has also been a massive undertaking, which continues, but also now includes portions on bullying and harassment as well.

We have also had the incredible opportunity of building a stronger relationship with our affiliate members in the Compensation Employees Union, that represent many workers at the Workers Compensation Board.

We have been able to pull their experience and expertise into our realm and hold three Health & Safety Conferences over the years that focus on educating members, and skill building to ensure more effective committees at the worksite level.

I have been so fortunate to be able to take on the roles that members have asked of me, and try my best to both share what I have learned, and more importantly mentor those coming along so that their challenges are easier. To me that is a core element to a strong Union movement.

I can still name, and fortunately still encounter the members along the way that never hesitated to help or assist me with problems in my worksite and solutions. It is most important to me to carry on that legacy of mentorship and support in every way I can.

<http://mikeclarkeforvp.weebly.com/>



## JACK ETKIN

### The BCGEU needs to do more:

Working people are under attack around the world. We are seeing it in Greece and France and England and the United States. Canada may be next, and in fact we are already under attack.

The one group that is big and powerful enough to protect us is Our Unions, including our own BCGEU. That's why I'm running for the position of vice-president of this union.

I believe that the unions must start to build an independent and grassroots media that can get OUR message out to the people of B.C. and Canada. As long as Big Business controls our television, radio, daily newspapers and almost everything else, we are going to continue losing all of the important battles for our futures.

The corporations are out to destroy the middle class, and the unions, and it's up to us to stop them. And we can. But we have to do what they have done, which is to build a media and use that media to put out a message and to support the politicians and political parties who will honestly support us. Otherwise, all will be lost.

**Democracy:** The word democracy comes from the Greek words Demos (the people) and Kratia (to rule). Democracy means The People Rule. There are a lot of things I believe in and want to do, but I PROMISE that I will not do anything that the membership of this union does not want to do, and I WILL do what the members want done. This is not about me, it's about you and what you want.

I want to see a lot more contact between the executive and the members, with the members being central. This means finding out what the membership thinks and feels and wants; and then our union has got to follow the path that is laid out by the members. That is the number one thing I want to do.

**Our governments:** I want the unions, and the BCGEU, to lead the fight to regain citizen control of our governments, because that will benefit us all. I also want our union itself to be as democratic and well run as possible. I would like to see our magazine, The Provincial, become bigger and better and more widely distributed and speak to all the people of

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this great province. Why don't we have Union Television and Union Radio? I want our union to reach out to the broader community and help build a better society for us all. We have lots of talented people, and there is lots we can do.

**The Deficit:** People around this province are being hammered by 'the deficit' that The Politicians and The Media tell us we have. Even this union is telling members not to expect anything 'because of the deficit'. The deficit in BC has been caused completely by Gordon Campbell's tax cuts for the biggest businesses and richest people in the province. In other words, WE are being told to have less so that the richest can have more. We cannot continue to meekly accept that pack of lies; we have got to start fighting back - and the best way to do that is with the truth. THERE IS NO DEFICIT except for the one that the Liberals have deliberately created with tax cuts; and we will not accept those at the bottom having less while the richest keep putting our wealth and our money into their pockets. That is what I want to fight for - but again, I will do only what the membership wants because my greater belief is in having a democratic union where the membership runs the show.

**Me:** I'm 62 years old. I teach English to people moving into the country at the Inter-Cultural Association in Victoria. It's a nice job at a nice place and I am very lucky. I think that everyone should be this lucky. People deserve decent jobs and decent pay. I've been a steward here for several years, and am thankful for the professional help I have received from the union when members have needed help. I'm involved with an independent newspaper and have a program on our community television station (channel 11) in Victoria (google: face to face with jack etkin). I know the power of the media and how to make it work for us.

I believe in protecting our planet. I believe in a more equal society, like we used to have. I believe that greater income equality is vital to the health of our society. I know we can solve the problem of homelessness. I'm tired of corporate free trade deals and billion dollar bank profits. I want full employment. I want more money for our schools instead of for a stupid roof on a football stadium. I don't want our forests and salmon destroyed for the benefit of multi-national corporations. I know that Big Business is deliberately ruining our public health care system so they can privatize it, and I want this union to fight them. I know that family farms can work. I know that we can do better, and I want our union and all of us to be leaders in that fight to move our province and our country in a better direction.

Thank you.



## PAUL FINCH

Brothers and Sisters,

The coming three years will be a crucial period for our union, and I ask for your support to help lead us through an important time that will challenge our principles and our ability to defend the wages, benefits and jobs of our membership.

In this critical time, I ask for your support to serve our union as Vice President, to ensure that our shared goals and values are achieved through Collective Bargaining, Political Action and our own internal organization.

As a Vice President, I will work strongly, side by side with the Provincial Executive, Components, Locals, Affiliates, Staff, and especially the rank and file of the BCGEU to advance our common interests.

I want to start this conversation with you by highlighting those common interests, goals and values. I ask you to view this article as the beginning of a conversation, and I strongly encourage your thoughts, opinions, arguments and feedback. Improving our communications is essential to my campaign platform, and I strongly believe we should reflect the change we want to see in our organization on a daily basis.

### Collective Bargaining

One of the biggest challenges facing our union comes in the form of existing Collective Agreements and those yet to be negotiated. Employers in both the public and private sector have been asking for wage, staff and benefit reductions, while using the global economic recession as a justification for eroding gains that have taken decades to achieve.

We've seen our wages and benefits eroded by inflation, while some of our members face difficult collective bargaining sessions that threaten their livelihood and standard of living. In the next round of Collective Bargaining for the Government Master Agreement, and in all of our bargaining in both the public and private sectors, we need to send an unequivocally strong message – that corporate tax breaks will not be balanced on the backs of our membership.

Under no circumstances should our Union accept another

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# candidate statements

## **Paul Finch, cont...**

“zero and zero” agreement. In times of economic austerity we have tightened our belts, and we expect to make up for lost ground as the economy recovers.

### **Communications**

We need to do better when it comes to communicating with our membership. We need to reach out to our members in the way in which they are able to receive communications, in a timely manner.

It is our responsibility to reach our membership in ways that are familiar and accessible to them, and in which they can give feedback — the old system of printed membership lists and fax alerts on bulletin boards no longer connects with our members.

When we unveil new communications initiatives, we need to follow up with our membership to make sure we’re doing the best we can to communicate. We need to provide our Locals and Components with digital membership lists, and increase our utilization of email and our website. Our communications must be accessible and two-way, not a linear line from the union office to the members.

### **Political Action**

Our union has a proud tradition of supporting Political Action that is consistent with the values of working people.

The BCGEU has an international reputation, and has regularly participated in key labour events in North and South America, Europe and Southeast Asia, while focusing right here in BC to build partnerships with labour, community and environmental groups. Together we can build the kind of future we can all enjoy.

We need to take political action right to our membership. Too often, we enact campaigns from above, or try to push our members into supporting political organizations. To me this is exactly the opposite of what we need to be doing.

Campaigns should come from communicating with and listening to what our members want, so our issues become popular issues that the majority of our members have a vested interest in getting involved in and actively supporting.

We should be articulating positions that benefit working people, so that political organizations are forced to

support our membership, not the other way around.

### **Our Union**

Our union is unique in that we are a diverse coalition of many unions in one. Our diversity is our strength, because when united we can leverage our collective resources to efficiently serve and express the interests of our membership.

We are a single union because we have realized that our collective voices carry more weight together than divided.

Unity requires work to maintain, and the incredible diversity that is our strength needs to be regularly nourished. Often times there are competing influences – public and private sector, urban and rural, and sometimes professions with radically different interests.

We need to work hard to build the lasting connections that ensure our diversity continues to be our strength, and I believe the position of Vice President is uniquely suited to accomplish this task on the Provincial Executive and across the union.

### **Experience**

I started my involvement in the labour movement over a decade ago, working on minimum wage and political action campaigns. For two years, I served as the Finance Executive and Chair of the Board of Directors of the Camosun College Student Society.

I spearheaded a coalition of progressive student unions that included the UVic Graduate Students, SFU, UBC, Kwantlen, and Capilano.

In the BCGEU I’ve served as a Shop Steward in local 1201, on both my Local and Component Executives, and as the Co-Chair of the Joint Union-Management (Article 29) Committee for the Ministry of Citizens’ Services.

I’ve also served on two advisory committees to the Provincial Executive. I have attended numerous Labour Movement functions and conventions, including a recent Environmental conference sponsored by the BC Federation of Labour.

Experience alone is not enough, and I believe it is my firm commitment to fight for and achieve our shared goals that qualifies me to serve as Vice President for the next three years.

In Solidarity,

Paul Finch

# candidate statements



## MIKE NUYENS

### *Listening, Learning, Leading*

Sisters and Brothers,  
I have served as BCGEU Operational Services Component Chair and on the Provincial Executive for the past 13 years. I am now asking for your support as a candidate for the position of BCGEU Vice President.

In my working life, I am a Machine Operator for a contractor in the Privatized Highways sector in Kelowna. My career – and Union activism – started at the Ministry of Highways back in the mid 1980's. I was very quickly elected shop steward when I kept asking the question – what is going to happen to us through the upcoming privatization?

I was elected onto the local executive in 1988 and then into the local chairperson position in 1990. In the interval, I was also elected chairperson of my local highways bargaining committee in the Okanagan. I have enjoyed every challenge these roles brought.

In 1998, I was elected into the position of Chairperson of the Operational Services Component, component 10, and I have served in that position since 1998. I was also elected into the position of Highways Bargaining Council Chairperson, a council that represents over 3000 full-time and auxiliary members.

Holding these key positions challenged me to deal with many complex situations largely triggered by some very aggressive employers and changing Ministry policies designed to weaken a critical public service.

These positions also gave me some awesome opportunities to serve on the following committees and that experience will only help to strengthen my ability to be a strong voice for you as your Vice President:

- Provincial Executive
- P.E. Finance Committee
- Chair of Component Chairs Steering Committee
- Chair of Officers Benefits Committee
- Member of NUPGE Highways Working Committee
- Trustee on BCGEU Pension Board
- Member of Highways Bargaining Council
- Chairperson of the Highways Bargaining Council

- Member on BCGEU Structure Review Committee
- Bargaining Committee member
- Lead Elected Person on Highways Bid Process
- Member of Tri-Party Committee on Highways
- Member of Successorship Committee
- Member of the Education Committee
- Member of the Child and Family Care Committee
- Train the Trainer in OSH
- Member of Constitution and Structure Committee
- Member of Resolution Committee

I have sat on numerous other committees, working groups, and attended many training sessions throughout the Union. And in every instance I have worked tirelessly on behalf of our members in Component Ten and for every member of this Union.

Being a member of the Highways sector, we have faced many challenges. In 2002 we were the first sector of the Union that were told to open up our collective agreements and give back 8 per cent of our contract value plus other flexibility issues or lose our jobs.

My members gave their support to proceed with negotiations and with their help we managed to minimize the impacts and secure a 10 year job security clause.

I still remember that Sunday afternoon as I drove from Kelowna to Kamloops to sign the first of many collective agreements to protect our highways workers across the Province. I remember the call I received from George Heyman giving me the Union's full support in that difficult decision.

I was completely overwhelmed by the fact that my president took the time on a Sunday to reach out to help and to listen to my concerns. That is what a Union should be – there for our members when they need us the most.

In 2004 the BCGEU made the bold decision to develop and submit a bid to take over a highways maintenance contract area. I was fortunate enough to be the lead elected person involved in the entire process, and I was appointed a Director of the company formed to make the bid.

During this process, I was inspired by the support that was given to this innovative project by my peers in other components as they committed their support to help fund the project. I had the opportunity of meeting and talking to all the components executives and countless members throughout the project.

I will never forget how I felt when the Provincial Executive,

*continued...*



# candidate statements

## **Mike Nuyens, cont...°**

your leaders, gave me and the team the thumbs up to proceed with the bid. I was moved. I was humbled. And I was proud to be a member of the BCGEU.

I have the drive, determination and creativity to represent members throughout this diverse and complex Union.

My pledge as Vice President is to get out to worksites. To Listen. To Learn. To be Accessible as a Vice President, not locked up at headquarters. I pledge to be your voice on the issues that matter most to you and your co-workers.

For those of you who know me, you will know that I have strong family values. We have raised two young men that mean the world to me. They have also challenged me with some great life experiences!

I have also been married to my childhood sweetheart for almost 28 years. We were both born and raised in our little town called Lake Country.

My partner's unwavering support has allowed me to be dedicated to the BCGEU for all these years. She is my Rock. She is my Strength. She is my source of support when I need someone to listen to me. And I want to be yours.

Over the last 13 years on the Provincial Executive, I have Listened, Learned and Led in the Union. I have proudly served with three great Presidents, two strong trade Union Treasurers, plus many other tremendous Activists and Staff of this great Union.

I understand the Union, I know the Union, and I want to offer my skills and knowledge in service of the Union.

Highways may be in my blood; however this great Union is my soul. I humbly ask for your vote as Vice President, and look forward to representing you and all BCGEU members in the years to come.

In Solidarity,

Mike Nuyens



## **RICHARD SCHAEFFER**

I am running for the position of Vice President to help the BCGEU continue to make a real difference in the lives of its members and their communities.

But I also believe that our union faces new challenges on many fronts and needs new experienced hands to help meet those challenges.

I have been active in the BCGEU for the last 30 years and have fulfilled many roles at many levels. Since 1981 I have been on committees for Bargaining, Job Evaluation, Labour Management, Grievance Resolution, Harassment and Discrimination, the Rehabilitation Committee and on New Westminster and District Labour Council.

I was a founding member of the Fraser Valley District Labour Council. I have acted as an advocate not only for those in my bargaining unit, but in any local or worksite that looked for assistance.

From all of this background I bring extensive knowledge and commitment to the table. I understand the structure of the Union, and know what needs to change and also how to accomplish that. Because I believe that it's not enough to demand change; you need to know how to work within the existing channels to achieve your goals. You have to know how to work with our activists.

That's why I'm excited by the new roles and responsibilities of the Vice Presidents. These critical positions have been under-utilized for far too long.

The VPs need to be a visible force out working with the membership. They need to report back to the Provincial Executive on their experiences, and put forward recommendations on the next steps. And then the VPs need to follow through.

Specifically, the VPs need to be out across the province working with the members in workshops like the Basic Stewards and Advanced Stewards courses, Bargaining workshops, and all leadership conferences, not only as participants but as facilitators.

They should be training the members and so demonstrate that

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# candidate statements



our leadership works right alongside with them.

The VPs need to value our Young Workers and our seasoned ones as well. After all we cannot have seasoned activists unless they first become active. Especially in these times of economic downsizing we need to recruit new activists continually or we will fail to deliver our union message.

Young workers are a developing resource that requires time and investment. We need to use new mediums of communication to capture their attention. And then we need to act on what they say.

For example, I remember my first Convention with the BCGEU. It was held at UBC and the all-candidates Bear Pit was in the pub. Because I was only 17, I had to sit outside the door on the steps to listen. A mentor of mine came by and asked why I was not inside, and I told him it was because I was too young.

That man was the great Tom Kozar, and as trade unionists, we all stand in his shadow. Because of who he was, and his abiding belief that all members matter equally, Tom worked to ensure that the exclusion of young workers would never happen again.

Tom believed in all-member inclusion, in the transparency of union processes, and in a personal commitment to the union. He acted on his beliefs and values. And, brothers and sisters, that is what I would aspire to as well.

So where do I see these VP positions? I'd like to see these positions working with the Directors of the Union, and that would include areas such as Bargaining, Human Resources, member to member, Advocacy, Education, Servicing, and political Campaigns.

They would not just work with but be considered a full participant in all these areas. They would take their direction from the Provincial Executive, and receive necessary support and feedback to ensure their assignments are appropriate and in keeping with the direction of the Union and PE.

I know that the BCGEU is a strong union that makes a real difference in our worksites and communities. I also believe it can accomplish so much more. I hope that you will give me the opportunity to prove that.

In Solidarity,

Richard Schaeffer



**APRIL 28**  
**NATIONAL**  
**DAY OF MOURNING**  
**FOR WORKERS**  
**KILLED AND INJURED**  
**ON THE JOB**  
**preventable ...**

September 2008 Mushroom **FARM DEATHS** • September 05, 2010

Asbestos Flooding BC With Steady **STREAM OF DEATH** • October 19,

2010 **PARAMEDICS DEAD** • December 02, 2010 Two Construction **WORKERS**

**DIE** in Downtown Vancouver • January 22, 2011 BC Warehouse Worker

**CRUSHED TO DEATH** • February 09, 2011 **PILOT DIES** in Plane Crash

