



The Provincial

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Community Health Workers

A vital link in the health care chain



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The Provincial

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FROM THE PRESIDENT Darryl Walker

Community Living program cuts short-change the developmentally disabled

The B.C. Liberal government has made numerous staff and programming cuts over the past 9 years, in an effort to reduce the role of government. But perhaps one of the most troubling developments has been their recent targeting of developmentally disabled people.

We've become alarmed by many stories about Community Living BC (CLBC)-funded agencies and group homes being squeezed to find roughly \$22-million in "efficiencies" (read cuts). We've been told that CLBC is pressuring agencies to make significant staff cuts, and to move group home residents into 'home sharing,' a residential service model that is largely unregulated, untested and in most cases does not serve the clients' best interests.

The government claims that Community Living funding has increased, but budget documents show that CLBC funding is being frozen for the next 4 years, while caseloads are projected to grow by 10 per cent.

At least 19 group homes have closed or are closing across the province, impacting families and the support workers who work with the clients. CLBC has also confirmed another 23 group closures by March 2011.

The government claims that Community Living funding has increased, but budget documents show that CLBC's funding is being frozen for the next 4 years, while caseloads are projected to grow by 10 per cent — a funding cut in all but name. The government also says it is not closing group homes to save money. However, CLBC's service plan states that the introduction of alternate residential settings "has reduced the average residential cost by 12 per cent over the last seven years."

Other developments are equally troubling. The government claims they are not forcing clients into the new living arrangements, but Powell River's executive director of the local community living association was quoted as saying, "I can't say they're not. Against the family wishes, people were moved, yes."

While the government claims that home share contractors are experienced service operators, some agencies have been forced to turn to Craigslist to recruit home service contractors.

The BCGEU has been working with community partners to raise public awareness about the impact of CLBC cuts — in part by co-sponsoring community meetings in Victoria and Vancouver with stakeholder groups, including: Moms on the Move, the B.C. Association for Community Living and B.C. FamilyNet.

A number of proposals have come out of these meetings, including a call to focus more public attention on the issue, along with the protection of group homes and a demand that the government appoint an independent representative for adults with developmental disabilities, with powers similar to Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, the Representative for Children and Youth.

The BCGEU will continue building relationships with stakeholders and we pledge we will continue to push to save group homes and increase funding for people with developmental disabilities, to help them achieve their full potential.

Getting to Green

Union continues journey to reduce environmental footprint

Carbon footprint. We see the phrase used everywhere, every day – in news stories and in casual conversation with friends. But what does it mean, really?

Dictionary.com defines *carbon footprint* as “a measure of the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere by a single endeavour or by a company, household, or individual through day-to-day activities over a given period.”

Delegates at the 2006 BCGEU Policy Convention passed a resolution directing the union to initiate a campaign to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and reduce the impact of business travel. Since then, the union has taken a number of steps to become more sustainable.

One of the most significant measures has been to engage an environmental consulting firm to assess the BCGEU’s actual carbon footprint created by our Burnaby headquarters and Lower Mainland Area Office (LMAO) – with 2009 marking the fourth year that assessment data has been compiled.

The results have been instructive. The union has learned, for example, that facilities operations accounted for 61 per cent of total GHG emissions in 2009, followed by vehicle travel at 29 per cent, and air travel at 10 per cent. Sixty seven per cent of facilities emissions at the Burnaby HQ is created by natural gas consumption, which is used to heat and

cool the buildings.

Given the prominent role that weather plays in heating and cooling facilities, it stands to reason that results will vary year over year. In the past four years, total GHG emissions have ranged from a low of 475 tonnes (2008), to a high of 533 tonnes (2009). Overall, the BCGEU’s annual GHG emissions has been reduced from 4.06 tonnes per employee to 3.76 tonnes in 2009, with the lowest year, 2008 reaching 3.37 tonnes.

Some significant steps have already been taken by the union to reduce our carbon footprint. Video conferencing equipment has been installed in HQ and area offices, which is expected to have a significant impact on vehicle and air travel.

Conservation measures have resulted in a 33 per cent reduction in the use of standard envelopes from 2008–2009. One hundred per cent recycled paper is now used for photocopiers and printers. Outdoor watering has ceased, as drought-resistant plant varieties are used at both facilities.

Colleen Forshaw, BCGEU’s environmental officer and mail centre supervisor, took a moment to reflect on what the union has learned since embarking on this journey toward sustainability.

“We found that taking the time to establish a baseline was a valuable tool in measuring our carbon footprint. We don’t guess or

assume we are making positive changes, we know we are because we measure our consumption. We now know which areas need closer monitoring and are continuing to improve in those areas.”



COLLEEN FORSHAW

BCGEU president Darryl Walker notes that the union continues to make progress in reducing its overall carbon footprint.

“We are moving into phase 2 now, which is to bring the remaining buildings owned by the BCGEU into the program. A baseline study will be completed for those buildings as well. Experience tells us that even small measures can reduce our carbon footprint.”



BCGEU’s annual GHG emissions has been reduced from 4.06 tonnes per employee to 3.76 tonnes in 2009, with the lowest year, 2008 reaching 3.37 tonnes.





Fixing the home support crisis

Community health workers are the unsung heroes of our health care system.

Home support greatly improves quality of life for seniors and people living with chronic conditions or illness – helping them stay out of hospital and live in their homes longer.

Preventative health measures delivered by community health workers save the health care system millions, possibly billions of dollars annually in acute care costs.

Couples like Bill and Bonnie Gies in Delta depend on home support. Bonnie, 68, was diagnosed with secondary progressive Multiple Sclerosis (MS) in the early '90s.

For over a decade, Bonnie's condi-

tion has moved into secondary progressive MS. She can't walk, can't see well and has difficulty using her hands. She relies on four hours of home support a day for personal care, help around the house and physiotherapy.

Bill and the rest of the family help out, but they wouldn't be able to manage without home support.

"It's also important for the in-house care-giver," says Bill. "If a person tries to do this on their own, from what I've observed, they end up in worse shape than the client over time. It's not a one-person job to take care of somebody."

Bill feels that home support is extremely important for those living alone.

"It gets to be critical if you are a single person living alone. We're

not in that situation, we have two wonderful children who support us in a major way and we work together. But I can't imagine what it must be like for people who have no one but themselves. They're basically isolated."

Regardless of data showing that home support saves our health care system money, client time has been cut significantly in the past decade due to funding cuts.

"Most palliative patients don't get the time they need from agencies – yet government is saying that clients need to max out allotted home support hours before accessing other services such as facilities and hospitals," said Carla Dempsey, chair of BCGEU Community Health Component 8 and a home support worker for 18 years. "In the end, the clients, mostly seniors, are not getting what they



Regardless of data showing that home support saves our health care system money, client time has been cut significantly in the past decade.



Carla Dempsey

need to prevent catastrophic health problems.”

Funding continues to be a significant issue, says Dempsey.

“Health authorities don’t get enough money from the B.C. government, so they cut funding to the agencies, who have to find a way to do the same work for less. That’s how we’ve ended up in this crisis, where agencies are finding it difficult, and sometimes impossible to operate.”

The lack of adequate funding for home support is also taking a toll on workers in the field.

According to a Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) report, *Towards an Enhanced and More Accessible Home Support System for BC’s Seniors*, home support agencies across B.C. are facing significant recruitment and retention issues.

The report notes that as working conditions deteriorate and community health workers are expected to deliver more complex care in less time with no increase in pay, many workers are driven out of the field.

Fewer trained workers and high staff turnover present a challenge for continuity of care – which clients like Bonnie Gies consider paramount to her well-being.

“Each visit on each day is different. It’s important that I have people who know the routine, and it’s important that they are well-trained,” says Gies.

Unfortunately, continuity of care becomes difficult in a climate where contracts are turned over and funding is reduced.

“Like most others, I became a

community health worker because I wanted to help people and I believe that home support provides dignity for seniors and people living with disabilities,” said Dempsey.

“But instability in the sector makes it hard for people to stay in this line of work.”

What’s the solution?

The CCPA outlines key solutions in their *Plan for an Enhanced and More Accessible System of Home Support*.

First, increase community health workers’ wages to improve recruitment and retention.

CCPA notes that many community health workers move into Facilities, where workers are often paid higher wages and receive more assistance to provide care.

Improving wages would also help address the issue of unpaid work.

“Community health workers put in a lot of free time, gathering client information, reading care plans and preparing schedules for the next day,” says Dempsey.

Second, the report also recommends that health authorities and agencies redesign home support to improve teamwork and stability.

Finally, the CCPA insists that client hours be increased – allowing community health workers to provide personal care as well as basic services like housekeeping, laundry and meal preparation – allowing seniors to age safely and comfortably in their own homes.

“Something has to happen,” says Dempsey. “With our aging population, we need to take home support more seriously. The solutions are there and are affordable. All we need now is the political will.”



Bill and Bonnie Gies of Delta rely on home support, which allows Bonnie to live independently at home. Bonnie was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in the early 1990s.

Building a
better future
for seniors



www.bcgeu.ca

In response to the crisis in seniors’ care, both in facilities and in home support, the BCGEU has launched a campaign aimed at raising awareness around seniors’ care issues.

The campaign, titled **Building a Better Future For Seniors** features a toolkit for activists to use in response to crisis in seniors’ care in local communities.

Visit www.bcgeu.ca/seniorscare and download copies of leaflets, fact sheets and more information on the campaign.

Connecting unions & communities

Prince George Regional Conference
October 21-23

Conference participants attended workshops and discussed ways that the union can reach out to the public and community partners when dealing with justice issues in the workplace and community.

BCGEU president Darryl Walker provided an overview in his keynote speech, outlining many of the challenges members face in the north, including cuts to forestry and the closure of facilities for the developmentally disabled.

“Since the Liberal government was elected, they have gutted the Ministry of Forests,” Walker said. “You live in forest-dependent communities and you know first-hand how the government has let this industry slide and how we need to fight to rebuild it.”

Keynote speaker Napoleon Gomez, president of the United Mine and Metallurgic Works in Mexico, brought an important international perspective to the conference.

“The miners in Mexico are seeking justice and the right to safety and good working conditions on their job,” said Gomez. “Our struggles are much like yours.”

Jim Sinclair, president of the B.C. Federation of Labour spoke about reaching out to workers who are not members of a union, through the “Employee Action & Rights Network” set up by the federation for workers to learn about their rights.



UNION LEADERS – BCGEU president Darryl Walker (left) and BCGEU Treasurer Judi Fillion (right) stand with guest speaker and Mexico union president Napoleon Gomez.

Workshops were led by three well-known experts in their field. Wade Rathke, the Chief Organizer for ACORN International, Dr. Charlotte Yates, the Dean of Political Science/Labour Studies at McMaster University in Hamilton and Chris Corrigan, a noted facilitator for progressive organizations.

Rathke’s workshop looked at how unions link with community organizations in grassroots campaigns. Yates discussed the history and future of unions, noting how new workers place new demands on union leadership. Corrigan’s “World Café” session had delegates listing issues their union should address.

‘Champions of Change’ Mona Dykes (Local 612) and Kelly McDonald (Local 1006) hosted a presentation on the National Union of Public and General Employees’ *All Together Now* campaign, which calls for quality public services and tax fairness across the country. Dykes, McDonald, and ten other ‘champions’ are talking to members around the province.

Stand-Alone Bargaining

Kelowna Child Care Society ratifies collective agreement

BCGEU members employed by the Kelowna Child Care Society voted to ratify a two-year agreement in November. It includes a first year wage raise between 3.2 per cent and 5.7 per cent depending on positions. Pay adjustments have been introduced for the lower two classifications, resulting in 17 to 20 per cent pay increases. The agreement foresees modest increases in annual vacation, and expires on March 31, 2012.

Van. Aboriginal Friendship Centre ratifies 3-year agreement

BCGEU members at the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society have ratified a three-year agreement that includes wage protection but a reduction in hours of work, an increase in benefits for non-status workers, and improved

access to overtime. The BCGEU represents 30 employees at the Society working in the daycare, homeless shelter, recreation, maintenance, and other positions.

Pro Trans BC bargaining reaches stalemate – mediator called in

Bargaining with Pro Trans BC, which operates the successful skytrain Canada Line between downtown Vancouver and the airport, broke down at the end of November.

The BCGEU bargaining committee explained that the employer was not prepared to make the necessary monetary improvements to conclude a first collective agreement. The outstanding monetary issues include wages, pension and health and welfare benefits. A Labour Relations Board mediator has been appointed.

BCGEU Region 2 women explore life-work issues

Be strategic with your time. Give up superwoman aspirations. These were some of the pieces of sage advice delivered to 100 participants at the BCGEU's Region 2 Women's Conference, *Double Duty: Finding Life/Work Harmony*.

The two-day conference, held in mid-October, featured guest speakers, panel discussions and the chance for BCGEU members to share ideas to better achieve balance in their busy lives.

Delegates agreed on one thing: juggling life and work is an endless challenge.

"As social workers, we're always looking after everyone else," said Local 604 member Dorothy Birch. "We have families and we look after them. Our parents age and we're looking after our parents. When are we looking after ourselves? What kind of trouble does that get us into?"

"At this point in my life, I don't think I have a work-life balance because I feel like I'm living to work," admitted Local 403 member Maria Lopez, who said she attended the conference in the hope of learning ways to achieve balance.

The members' sentiments are echoed in a recent NUPGE survey on women's lives. The survey, which was presented at the conference, found women are experiencing higher levels of work-life conflict due to unpaid care-giving, lack of control over their time, and an unequal division of labour in the home.

Participants identified a variety of other barriers to life-work harmony, including a lack of flexible work hours, guilt about taking time for themselves, family responsibilities, and the threat of job loss. They also outlined a number of possible remedies they and the BCGEU ought to undertake.

Recommendations included better worker education and communication on workplace rights, standards for flexible work hours and job sharing, a women's blog site, time management training, and learning to say a guilt-free "no" to demands on their time.

Attendees said the chance to network and speak with other busy women at the conference was beneficial. "I found it interesting to learn how other women are balancing their work and life," said Local 303 member Pamela Pye. "I'm not feeling alone. I'm learning how to shuffle things and go forward personally."

Organizers said the conference was so successful that plans are already in the works for future women's conferences in other regions of the province.



Conference panel: BCGEU VPs Lorene Oikawa (left) and Colleen Jones (right) joined other panelists to discuss work-life balance.

Conference participants (Pictured l-r): Maria Lopez, (Local 403); and Gladys Radek, Walk 4Justice

Conference participants (Pictured l-r): Brenda Vallancourt (504); Audrey Todd (203), Kim Keys (203); Pamela Pye (303)



Reflections on Colombia

BCGEU vice-president Colleen Jones, along with BCGEU president Darryl Walker, was part of a delegation that visited labour and community groups in Colombia in October 2010. Here is Colleen's diary of the trip.

October 23

It was great seeing everyone making the trip at Vancouver airport. I'm excited, yet nervous because I've visited Colombia before. I know we will face different challenges everyday.

October 24

We travelled to Cali and met with our partners from NOMA-DESC, a human rights organization that works with unions and communities. We met the wives of sugar cane cutters and heard their stories of struggle and desperation. The husbands are losing work to modernization.

There are no health and safety regulations, illegal weighing of the sugar cane means less income and less sugar cane being cut. Children are hungry and seemingly have no future. The women are on the front lines fighting for their husbands and their future. They're the ones facing off against the government, the employer.

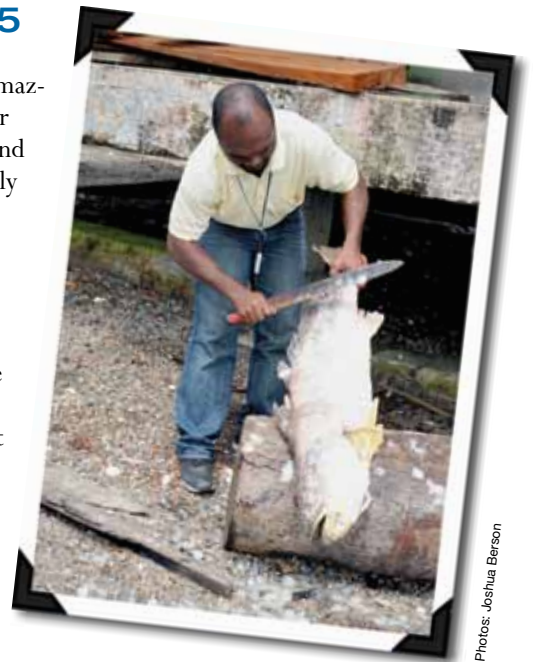


We shared a great meal of rice and chicken. Each woman provided her own dishes and some of the food. Leftovers got wrapped and put out for any hungry souls. They don't want anyone to go

hungry. Any food that wasn't taken was fed to the community dogs. These people care passionately about the environment and each other. I was so honoured to have met these women who do much with so little.

October 25

Our journey was amazing. We travelled for 2 hours on a long and winding, rough, hilly road. Saw amazing scenery. We ended up in a city called Buenaventura, a poor but comfortable place. Then we travelled about 2 more hours by boat to a village. Along the way, a huge dead fish was seen floating on the water. Apparently whoever spots the fish gets to keep it, so we retrieved it. What a celebration there was on the boat! The fish would be shared by everyone.



Photos: Joshua Ebersen

The village was nothing but shanty shacks. We had an interesting meeting with community councillors. They asked us to support their project to create community governance, saying it would change their lives completely. During the meeting, about 15 paramilitary officers showed up and stood outside the room. They made sure we saw them. The community members told us they hadn't been seen in their villages for quite awhile. When we left, I prayed that the community would be okay and safe.

October 26

This was a mentally emotional day. In the morning, we travelled into a displaced community and spoke with the leaders. We learned it was a dangerous place and were told to keep our bags close to our bodies, and stay close together. The village was quiet and clean, but worn. With heavy hearts, people told us their stories. Some had been threatened and forced to move their families.

One man's eight brothers had been killed by the FARC, the revolutionary armed force. A woman spoke about human rights violations and being threatened with death and rape. This community was largely made up of Afro-Colombians; people who, in the past, were often kidnapped and turned into slaves. They struggle to defend human rights and are trying to develop allies. They're grateful for NOMADESC's support. They have a vision for the year 2020 to service basic needs with a holistic approach.

October 27

We met with members of FENALTRASE, the National Federation of Public Service Workers, in Colombia. It's a partner of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. The organization has been struggling. It has claimed bankruptcy, had new



elections and, in 2009, reactivated the union in solidarity with hospital workers.

The federation has some strong activists who are dedicated to the labour movement. What was remarkable was our common issues, such as privatization, job cuts and a loss of public services.

October 28

Met again with FENALTRASE and did some visits to the barrio. We rode a cable car to one low-income community that was left behind after the 2005 Pan-Am Summer Games.

This displaced community has only one entrance and exit, a checkpoint managed by paramilitary, and no water or electricity. People here want to rescue their core values and restore rightful services. During the course of the day, we saw the gulf between affluence and poverty. It is hard to reconcile at times.

October 29

On this day, we dressed in our best clothes to meet with Canadian Embassy personnel in Bogota. We told them of the stories we'd heard and what we had seen. We asked that they share our concerns with the Colombian government.



We asked why labour leaders and activists are being killed or threatened. It was a good meeting. I hope we made a difference in some way. We also met with the Colombian Ministry of the Interior & Justice, where we were told everything we wanted to hear.

We were told displaced people would get restitution for their land, that there would be health services and work done to end poverty and inequality, that trade unions and their leaders would be protected and that a human rights office would be created. It all seemed too good to be true.

Later, we dined with Jose Alvear Restrepo, the head lawyer from the Colombian Lawyers' Collective, who advised against trusting what we had been told earlier by the government. Yessika Hoyos, who spoke at our NUPGE convention in Vancouver recently, was also there. It was great to see her and learn more about the work she's doing for the labour movement.

October 30

Sightseeing in Bogota. A beautiful city of contrasts. So much wealth and poverty.

October 31

Yay!!! I can't wait to get home and hug my family.

Public service reorganization is still a 'work in progress'

Weeks after the October 25 cabinet shuffle announced by premier Gordon Campbell, it appears the change to the public service are starting to settle in.

When the shuffle was announced, there was a major re-organization of government, especially the creation of the Ministry of Natural Resource Operations, which has assumed many of the responsibilities from the ministries of forests, mines and agriculture.

"There is no doubt there were many questions about the re-organization when it was first announced," said Darryl Walker, BCGEU president.

"We have met with government officials and are actively working with them to see that the transition is as smooth as possible. They have made it clear that the re-organization is proceeding.

"There was no consultation with the union before the change and I think the government has learned that working with the union on these major changes can make them go a lot smoother."

Around 2,400 employees will be moving from ministry to ministry or program to program.

Under the collective agreement, the joint union/employer Article 29 committees have met to consider the changes.

Committees for the ministries that

will be losing staff to the new Natural Resources ministry have been meeting to look at how employees will be placed. A number of the committees have met and are trying to work their way through the massive number of changes that will take place.

Many government employees have been through a number of restructuring changes, and there are inevitably problems and delays with each shift in policy.

"The union is not opposed to change, especially if it can be shown that they will improve the delivery of service to the public," said Walker.

BCGEU members expressed concern about the changes, responding to the union's call for comments about the re-organization.

"Basically we are meeting our legal obligations and not much beyond," said one member. "Stress levels of all workers are high as we are all trying to figure out how to achieve the key goals and priorities with even less than we had already."

Another member noted that: "since the March 2010 re-org of the Forest Service, I and many of my colleagues in various 'dirt' ministries have not had a job description, never mind a re-classification. The latest re-org has all but halted that."

The comments were not restricted to changes in the resource ministries. One member wrote: "Our organization has been restructured four times in three years. Each one

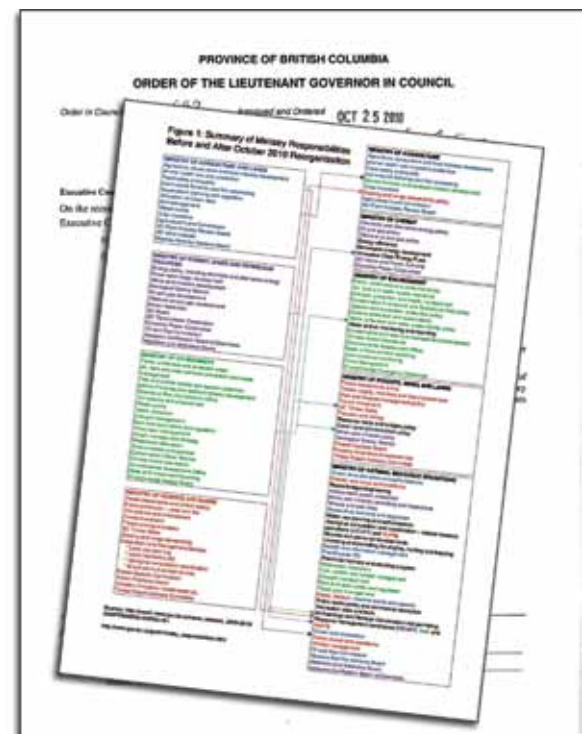
changes lines of communication, freezes spending, suspends projects, and delays approvals of staff requests until the new structures gel enough to become productive."

"The scale of these changes is huge and I would encourage members to check our web site regularly for updates," said Walker.

"We also want to hear from our members on how the changes are progressing."

Members can send their comments to Darryl Walker by e-mail: president@bcgeu.ca.

“Stress levels of all workers are high as we are all trying to figure out how to achieve the key goals and priorities with even less than we had already.”



RE-ORG AT A GLANCE – At 44 pages, the Orders in Council (OIC) that created the resource ministries' reorganization was longer than the OIC for the B.C. Liberals' entire government reorganization in 2001. In front is a colour coded diagram of the re-org, created by a UBC forestry student.

Union sisters share a kidney

One Thursday evening in June, Sunshine Gudlaugson was checking email at home. In her inbox was a desperate cry for help: a former workplace colleague was in the final stages of kidney failure. After a few hours of research, Sunshine made up her mind: she would donate one of her healthy kidneys, if she possibly could.

“My sense of justice was immediately outraged,” says Gudlaugson. “Here was this kind, beautiful young mother, my age, clinging to life by her fingernails. If that was me and I was dying and I had kids, I would want somebody to step up for me.”

Gudlaugson works as an employment and assistance worker at the Ministry of Housing and Social Development, and is a member of BCGEU local 603.

Laureen Dhaliwal is another BCGEU local 603 member, who worked alongside Gudlaugson in the Vancouver ministry office for all of one week in December 2009.

By summer 2010, Dhaliwal’s kidneys were functioning at just six per cent of normal capacity. The mass email was an act of desperation by her husband, Jesse. Laureen has a rare blood type, and the expected wait time for a donor from the deceased donor registry was around eight years. With her kidney functions shutting down, Laureen was getting weaker by the day. She faced the prospect of spending four days a week in hospital for dialysis – for the rest of her life.

Gudlaugson underwent a series

of medical tests to ensure she was medically and psychologically ready to donate a live organ. The tests were all favourable; Gudlaugson was the perfect universal donor.

Gudlaugson immediately called Dhaliwal: “What are you doing on September 27?” she asked, referring to the planned operation date.

“I was sleeping when she called, so my reaction was slow, like in a dream,” says Dhaliwal. “After a few minutes, the reality of what she was telling me sank in. I became very excited. We talked about how we were going to celebrate, and then hung up to call our husbands and share the good news.”

To her supportive husband, Gudlaugson said, “Let’s get this kidney show on the road!”

The operation was a success: “Sunshine’s kidney, my new kidney began working immediately. I went from six per cent kidney function to 50 per cent overnight, and it has continued to improve to 60-70 per cent,” Dhaliwal says. Her recovery process has been tougher than she imagined; she will need to take anti-rejection medication for up to a year. The overall prognosis is good, however. As an added bonus, Dhaliwal appears to have inherited Gudlaugson’s low blood pressure, which is partly controlled by the dominant kidney.

Gudlaugson is recovering as well: the bruises have disappeared, and scars are quite small, she says. The women celebrated the first month anniversary of their operation together: they went to the spa, and had their nails done. “I will forever be thankful for Sunshine’s generous



GIFT OF LIFE – Local 603 member Laureen Dhaliwal (top, with children) received a kidney donation from former co-worker Sunshine Gudlaugson (bottom, with husband).

gift,” says Dhaliwal. “We now have a lifelong friendship and I consider Sunshine part of my family.”

“A lot of people have this idea that giving up a kidney will ruin your life,” says Gudlaugson. “That is simply not true. Short of martial arts, I can continue to do anything I want.” She encourages everyone to consider becoming organ donors. “Little miracles can happen every day.”

Donor leave protection

Sunshine Gudlaugson is thankful for Article 20.15 of the 15th Master Agreement with the B.C. government, which states: ‘An employee shall be granted the necessary leave of absence with pay for the purpose of donating bone marrow or an organ.’

“I would have donated my kidney anyways, but thanks to this article, I don’t need to feel stressed about my recovery,” Gudlaugson says. To learn more about organ donation visit www.transplant.bc.ca



Our Shared Future: Summit to Build a Better B.C.

More than 60 people from more than two dozen organizations attended the Coalition to Build a Better BC conference *Our Shared Future: Summit to Build a Better BC*. The event was held on Saturday, October 30 at the Wosk Centre for Dialogue in Vancouver.

The summit built on the coalition's earlier events this year. A day long dialogue was held in March, which identified a need for community partners to work together. This was followed by the CBBBC *Rally to Stop the Cuts* in April, the largest political rally held in the province in the last year.

The summit brought together a diverse range of participants, including coalition members and invited guests. By the time the day was over, participants had better defined the coalition's vision for the province plus concrete actions the coalition would develop to make this vision a reality.

Jim Sinclair, president of the B.C. Federation of Labour opened the summit by reminding participants of the aim of the coalition.

"We wanted to be for something. We wanted to create a vision that we could take to British Columbians and engage them. We must build a movement that is going to

put this conversation on the political agenda."

Other coalition members were invited to share their visions for a better B.C.

Amir Ali Alibhai, Executive Director of the Alliance for Arts and Culture spoke of the importance of creating a healthy democratic society that is constantly evolving – one where cultural diversity is valued and our individual stories are told.

Gwen Barlee, policy director of the Wilderness Committee, cited the staffing cuts, regulations cuts, and reduced standards around wildlife protection and mining.

"We need to put the public good ahead of profits and stop evaluating everything through a market lens," Barlee said. "This surely breaks down communities."

"More than ever it is important for us to share a common understanding and goals," Tracy Porteous, executive director of the Ending Violence Association, told summit participants. "When I imagine a better B.C. I see more investment to break the multigenerational cycle of domestic violence."

Porteous pointed to the need for more counselling and advocacy services, affordable childcare, housing and funded legal aid to help women leave abusive situations.

Summit participants gathered at Simon Fraser University's Wosk Centre for Dialogue in Vancouver at the end of October to develop principles and goals for the Coalition to Build a Better B.C.

Reid Johnson, president of the Health Sciences Association, pointed to health care service cuts that he and his members witness every day.

"Being political means influencing decision-makers. A coalition like this can do that," Johnson told the summit. "We need to influence the decision-makers to propel the province towards a just society."

Summit participants then formed smaller breakout groups and spent time discussing what the coalition should be focusing on in the coming months.

Two action themes emerged from the afternoon: the coalition must continue to expand and strengthen; and the coalition must develop a simple message about fair taxation and communicate that message effectively to British Columbians.

A campaign aimed at educating the public about fair taxation has recently been rolled out by NUPGE, the National Union of Public and General Employees.

The recommendations from the summit will be brought to the coalition's governing body for consideration, of which BCGEU is a member.

“We wanted to be for something. We wanted to create a vision that we could take to British Columbians and engage them. We must build a movement that is going to put this conversation on the political agenda.”



AirCare close to 2020 extension

The Lower Mainland personal vehicle emissions testing program, AirCare, will likely be extended and even expanded until 2020. In November, Metro Vancouver mayors and councilors unanimously recommended extending the program, and expanding it to focus on heavy-duty diesel vehicles.

“This is a big endorsement for AirCare,” says BCGEU president Darryl Walker. “The union did some focused campaigning to ensure Metro Vancouver mayors understand the measurable environmental and economic benefits of emissions testing for older vehicles.”

AirCare has been in place since 1992, and the current program had been scheduled to end on December 31, 2011. One hundred and fourteen BCGEU members work at AirCare facilities in the Lower Mainland.

“We are doing our bit for the environment,” says Local 1003 member Roy Cross, — who works at the South Vancouver AirCare testing station. “I can see why some cars fail and others pass, it’s sometimes pretty obvious. I think AirCare is beneficial for everyone, including our environment.”

“I have visited several AirCare testing centres, and I know our members are proud of the positive environmental impact of their work,” says Walker. “Their jobs are real green jobs that drive economic growth and help limit our environmental footprint. Around \$35 million in car repairs and \$21 million in new car purchases every year can be linked to the emissions testing program.”

Metro Vancouver’s recommendation follows an independent review process which concluded that AirCare is the most cost-effective way of removing auto emissions from the air we all breathe. In fact, the program is cheaper and more efficient than any other transportation-based measure to reduce pollution, the report said. AirCare catches nearly 50,000 cars that still fail the test every year — nearly 15 per cent of the total.

AirCare’s environmental and health benefits will outweigh the program costs until at least 2020, the



HEALTHY INVESTMENT — (l-r) Dave Cumming, chair of Local 1003, with AirCare member Ken Kan at East Vancouver AirCare location on Charles Street.

review concluded. Transportation still accounts for nearly 40 per cent of British Columbia’s greenhouse gas emissions. Cutting our exhaust emissions is not only a very important way to keep our air breathable, but also helps avert the potentially catastrophic effects of climate change. Cars need to be properly maintained to make sure they do not pollute more than necessary. The emission performance of newer vehicles is actually deteriorating more rapidly than initially thought, the review report warned.

Around \$77 million in healthcare costs will be saved by AirCare’s extension, the report found. The benefits may be hard to quantify, but more auto pollution does mean increased rates of cancer, premature births, and hospital admissions for respiratory diseases.

“The bottom line is that AirCare means better air quality and better health for British Columbians, and especially for Fraser Valley residents who are most affected by air quality issues,” Darryl Walker says.

The final decision regarding AirCare’s extension rests with the government of British Columbia. A decision is due in the coming months. Victoria is unlikely to go against the unanimous recommendation issued by Metro Vancouver — that AirCare is not only environmentally effective, it is also revenue neutral for the government. When that decision is finalized, British Columbia will join other jurisdictions such as Ontario and California in extending their respective emissions testing programs.



Metro Vancouver’s recommendation follows an independent review process which concluded that AirCare is the most cost-effective way of removing auto emissions from the air we all breathe.

BCGEU activists champion public services and tax fairness

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead

Famed cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead could have been talking about a handful of BCGEU activists who’ve taken on the challenge of educating union members, community allies and the public in BC around public services and tax fairness.

These 12 BCGEU ‘Champions for Change’, along with the BCGEU provincial vice-presidents, are part of *All Together Now!*, a national member-to-member campaign spearheaded by the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE). The campaign involves activists across the country talking to co-workers, friends, families and the public about the need for fair tax policies and to achieve greater prosperity, opportunity and living standards for Canadians.

“This campaign is getting our message out that the Campbell Liberal government’s reckless economic policies and deep cuts to public services are having a profound impact on families and communities across our province,” says BCGEU president Darryl Walker.

“The Liberals want us to believe that government spending is out of control and it’s time to cut back. The truth is, government spending in our province has steadily declined over the past decade and BC has the smallest public sector per capita of all the provinces. There is no fat left to trim.”

Walker said irresponsible tax policies are the real reason why the government says there’s no money for public services or public employees. The number of corporations paying no income tax in BC is five times higher than when the BC Liberals took office. The number of people making \$100,000 - \$200,000 a year, yet paying no income tax is eight times higher than 2001. And the number of people making over \$200,000 a year, yet paying no income tax is three times higher.

“BC doesn’t have a spending problem, we have a revenue problem. And we have a revenue problem because we have a tax fairness problem.”

After attending a three-day training session in Ottawa at the end of September, the BCGEU champions hit the ground running, giving dozens of campaign presentations across the province to co-workers, union meetings, labour councils, seniors, young workers, community organizations, MPs, MLAs, municipal councils, and more.

To date, they have gathered over 600 signed equality pledges and proclamations, and posted photos, news and updates on the campaign website (alltogethernow.nupge.ca), Facebook page (ATNcampaign) and Twitter.

For the champions, it’s been as much a learning experience for



BCGEU Champions of Change 2010

them as it has for the people they’ve talked to.

Sandy Terlecki, BCGEU champion in Castlegar, said she never thought about the revenue versus deficit connection prior to the campaign: “Once I realized how important revenue is in keeping public services rather than worrying about deficit, I was energized. Once I realized that the taxation in our province is extremely unfair, I was more energized.”

The champions say the campaign has been a hit with members, and has touched a nerve.

“Members are very supportive and encouraging,” said Vincent Sherry, from Prince George. Kelly McDonald, from Bridge Lake, agreed: “The response has been positive everywhere I have made a presentation.”

Added Sharron Gardner, from Kamloops: “It’s a bit of an uphill battle because of the impact all the cuts and job loss has had on the membership. But I think this is a good starting place to build solidarity and begin to build a stronger union.”

The campaign runs through to June 2011 and will culminate in a series of “days of action” across the country. Contact the BCGEU coordinator at: carol.adams@bcgeu.ca to arrange for a free presentation to your group from one of our 12 local champions across British Columbia.

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40010201
RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:
4911 Canada Way, Burnaby, B.C. V5G 3W3
Email: theprovincial@bcgeu.ca



Shop Public

Where you shop does make a difference

It doesn't matter what time of the year it is. If you are planning to pick up a case of beer, a bottle of wine, or some other alcoholic beverage, you should "shop public."

That's the message from Craig MacKay, the chair of the union's retail and warehouse component at the Liquor Distribution Branch (LDB).

"I think the public knows that the \$877 million in net revenue (2009/2010) the LDB makes goes towards health and education in the province," said MacKay.

"Our campaign reminds consumers of that message so that they will be encouraged to shop at public liquor stores."

During peak entertaining periods of the year like B.C. Day and Christmas, the Retail, Stores and Warehouse Component 5 has run ads promoting public stores. This December, they picked up the pace with a wider range of promotions.

"In addition to our advertizing we've been distributing promotional items to the public, and we're delighted with the response," says MacKay.

"We want people to enjoy their beverage of choice and to think about how shopping at the LDB means that tax revenue is returned to the public.

"If the response to our promotions is any example, we are definitely getting the message out. People are making the connection about why they should shop at public stores," said MacKay.

One of the union's key messages is that staff at LDB stores are responsible in ensuring that minors are not able to



Value, selection, expertise and responsibility – Staff at the Port Coquitlam Signature liquor store on Westwood gather before opening for a briefing on wine selection from an in-house wine consultant

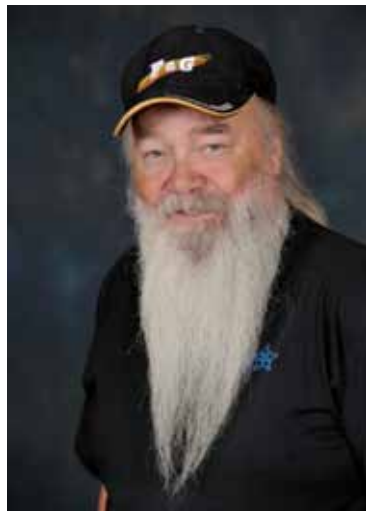
purchase alcoholic beverages.

This is borne out by an independent report done for government that shows that public stores are twice as good at checking identification for underage customers as privately-owned liquor outlets.

The RCMP are currently investigating a currently number of private stores for violation of policies on ID checks.

"We want people to enjoy their beverage of choice, but to enjoy it responsibly," says Mackay. "The union has worked hard to get the message out about the value of the public liquor stores."

More information on the union's promotional campaign is available at: www.ShopPublic.ca.



Craig MacKay, Component 5 Chair

“I think the public knows that the \$877 million in net revenue (2009/2010) the LDB makes goes towards health and education in the province.
”

MARKET PLACE

EXIT

Value • Selection • Expertise
Responsibility



BC LIQUOR STORES