



The Provincial

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How Safe? are our roads ?

Commercial vehicle inspection staff cuts and changes in regulation affect public safety



Inside: Activist Profiles • BCGEU Direct • On To Ottawa

In this issue:

BCGEU Direct 3

How Safe are Our Roads? ... 4-5

Activist Profiles 6

On To Ottawa Anniversary 7

News 8,10

BCGEU Community 11-15

Partnering with Vancity 14

The Provincial

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

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Provincial Executive

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
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| | Lori Joaquin |
| Component 17: | Dave MacDonald |
| Component 20: | Byron Goerz |



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

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Darryl Walker

Labour Day: Pause, reflect, take action



Labour Day is a day to celebrate and a time to re-commit ourselves to the goals we have set as an organization. Whether you are a local executive member, a steward or an activist in your workplace, Labour Day is a chance for members, their families, colleagues and friends to come together and enjoy the different events taking place around the province and celebrate labour's contribution to B.C.'s economy.

Given what many of our members have gone through, there's a need to set aside some time to consider our course of action for the fall and beyond. Our members who work with the provincial government have faced layoffs, especially in the Ministry of Citizens' Services and the Ministry of Forests and Range, which have been hit particularly hard.



The cuts have clearly had an impact. Members who work for the provincial government have let their employer know how they feel. The annual "Workplace Environment Survey" shows a significant drop in employee satisfaction. For example, the measurement of the provincial government's "vision, mission and goals" is down eight points over last year (a ranking of 64 last year).

Take some time on Labour Day to pause, reflect and renew your commitment to your fellow workers and what we can accomplish together.

Bargaining wasn't easy. While we have reached agreements with the provincial government and in the health sector, we know that the zero and zero mandate wasn't what we wanted. And as I write, our members in community social services are still dealing with an employer who doesn't seem to take negotiations seriously.

On top of all of this, we have a government that is in serious political trouble over their decisions on the HST, child protection, seniors care, and other issues.

We need to use Labour Day to kick off an active agenda for the fall. Our two conferences this Fall, the Regional Conference in Prince George and the Women's Conference in the Fraser Valley, will give us an opportunity to discuss our course of action. Our main job will focus on membership outreach. I want the union to reach out to our members all around the province so we can listen and talk about the issues that are important to us. Whether it's bargaining, job security, cuts in services to seniors, or health and safety I want to hear from you. I feel strongly that members need to see their union representatives in the workplace. We have to continue recruiting stewards and health and safety representatives in all our worksites.

It's a tall order, but I believe it can be done. Labour Day can be the kick-off to an ambitious plan to continue strengthening our union. Take some time on Labour Day to pause, reflect and renew your commitment to your fellow workers and what we can accomplish together. Check out the BCGEU web site (www.bcgeu.ca) for a list of B.C. Labour Day events. Send me your ideas for activity in the fall (president@bcgeu.ca).

BCGEU Direct office to open this summer

While the construction site isn't quite finished, the office space set aside for the union's experimental "BCGEU Direct" office will buzz with activity in a few short weeks.

BCGEU Direct is designed to handle the ever-increasing number of calls from members to area offices.

As a pilot project, BCGEU Direct will handle inquiries for the Lower Mainland and the Peace River area offices to start.

"I am excited about the possibilities BCGEU Direct brings to the union," said BCGEU president Darryl Walker. "The office should provide members with even greater access to the information they need."

BCGEU Direct will perform a variety of functions. "Whether it's getting information from a collective agreement or having a copy of a collective agreement sent to them, or faster response time for members updating their address or asking about the status of a grievance or bargaining, this office will provide quick answers to inquiries," said Walker.

BCGEU Direct's office will be located at the Lower Mainland area office. Staff will handle incoming calls and redirect them where necessary.

Barbara Crowley, a long-time BCGEU staff representative, will supervise the operation.

"Having worked with members for so long and having worked as support staff and servicing



BCGEU Direct Representatives will be ready to take calls when the office opens for business (l-r): Sarah Fawns, Jeremy Radick, Gina Cherubini, Barb Crowley (Supervisor). In front: Chris Flatekval.

staff in an area office as well as at headquarters, I understand what we need to do to make sure we respond quickly to requests from members," said Crowley.

"BCGEU Direct has the potential to be a huge asset in the way we get information to and from our members."

The office will start taking calls this summer. The pilot project will be reviewed at the end of the year. The provincial executive will then decide whether to expand it province-wide.

"More information will be posted on the union's web site as we work through the details of how BCGEU Direct will work and what it will mean for activists and members," said Walker.

"Please let me know your thoughts regarding this new initiative."

”

I am excited about the possibilities BCGEU Direct brings to the union. The office should provide members with even greater access to the information they need.



HOW SAFE ARE OUR ROADS ?

B.C.'s Commercial Vehicle Inspectors worry about road safety

It's becoming a familiar pattern in the public service — staff cuts, self-regulation and policy shifts aimed at achieving short-term savings. This approach has a huge impact on the delivery of public services.

Except in this case, it's public safety on B.C. highways that are affected. And B.C.'s commercial vehicle safety inspectors are concerned that years of erosion in their ranks is affecting their ability to fully protect the public.

SHRINKING RANKS

There are 52 fewer Commercial Vehicle Safety and Enforcement (CVSE) inspectors to patrol BC's highways since 2003, when the group was brought back into government service from ICBC.

Successive budget cuts and a government policy of not filling vacant positions has created serious staff shortages that has led to weigh scale closures and burgeoning workloads that make it difficult, if not impossible to fully do their job.

The Haig weigh scale on Hwy. 7 was closed largely due to a shortage of staff. Others, like the Pacific border truck crossing scale in Surrey had open hours reduced due to staffing shortages.

George Foisy, a commercial vehicle inspector with 38 years experience, notes that traffic patterns change when the government closes weigh scales.

Foisy says that commercial truck traffic on Hwy. 7 through Agassiz to Highway 1 has increased since the Haig scale was closed. Truckers know they can take these routes and have a smaller chance of having their loads checked.

"People don't realize how much crap is floating up and down our highways, especially in the Lower Mainland," says Foisy. "It's just a matter of time until we have another catastrophe on our roads."

SAFETY LOOPHOLES

Recent changes to CVSE Best Practices policy that exempt vehicles under 5,500 kg from commercial inspection make it more difficult to ensure the safety of vehicles used to transport workers to and from job sites.

Inspectors point to a new practice, where some farm operators and others, like tree farm contractors, now use smaller passenger vehicles to transport workers and avoid inspections altogether — creating a black safety hole that leaves workers and the general public unprotected.

COOKING THE BOOKS

The provincial government is quick to point to their annual out-of-service (OOS) statistics (the percentage of commercial vehicles taken out of service compared to those inspected — currently between 20-25 per cent) as evidence that their policies are improving road safety.

What they won't tell you is, that these statistics are largely based on the June Road Check campaign, which takes place every year in the first week of June. The event is broadly advertised, which allows fly-by-night operators to take their vehicles off the road for 72 hours to avoid inspection.

More accurate data on OOS rates lies in the monthly Focus Inspection Team (FIT) inspections that occur across the province.



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GEORGE FOISY

According to inspectors, OOS rates across B.C. often sit between 30 to 45 per cent. Unfortunately, these statistics are not factored in to the provincial OOS rates.

SHELL GAME

The B.C. government's claim that it is placing more inspectors on road patrol across the province doesn't stand up to scrutiny.

While portable officer positions remain vacant, the government is moving commercial transportation enforcement officers (CTEOs) from already short-staffed weigh scales into cars to patrol the roads.



KEN MACKENZIE

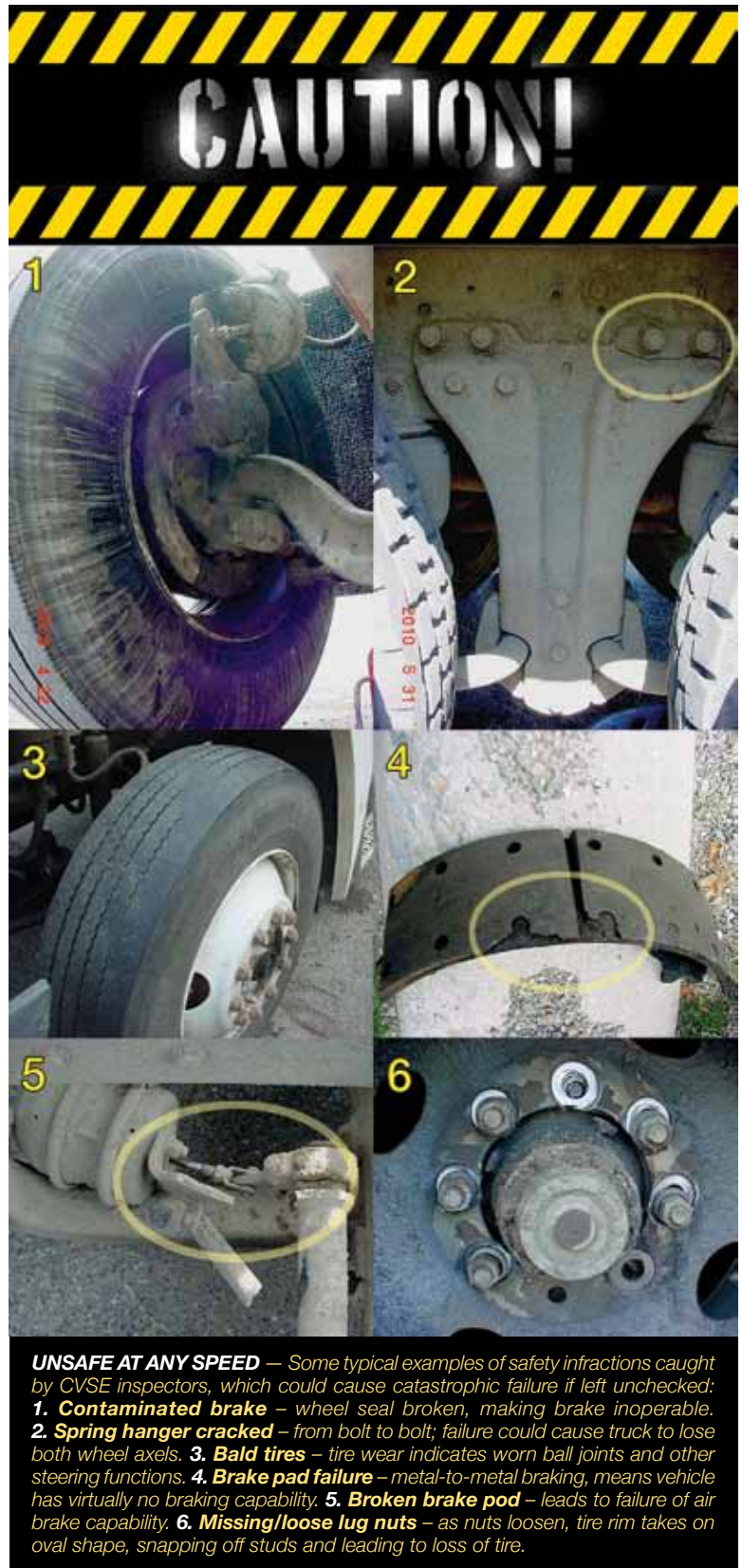
However, CTEOs only spend 30 per cent of their work week on the road, and are limited to weigh scale hours, which often excludes weekends and off-peak hours. CTEOs also operate within a limited range around the weigh scales. Portable officers, on the other hand work flexible hours, up to 10 hours a day as needed, and patrol a much wider territory.

Ken Mackenzie is a portable inspection officer who covers a massive area, from Smithers to the Queen Charlotte Islands and north to the Yukon border alone, where there used to be two patrol officers to share the workload.

"If you're going to preach safety, then you have to practice safety," MacKenzie says. "The only way to do that is by adding manpower, not taking it away. It's not that the positions aren't there, it's just that they're not being filled."

Mackenzie notes that recent increases in allowable weights on heavy hauling trucks (from 63,000 kg to 73,000) will have an impact on northern roads that are subject to severe seasonal weather conditions.

Cost-cutting in areas like public road safety is a false economy. Short-term savings will ultimately cost more down the road, in loss of life, productivity and economic growth. If the government is serious about protecting public safety on BC roads, they must fill the 52 vacant CVSE inspector positions and move to strengthen enforcement measures across the province. Our very lives may well depend on it.



ACTIVIST PROFILES



LEAH FRIESEN

**Accounting Clerk, Local 1710
City of Fort St. John - Young Worker
Member, Young Worker Committee**

Leah Friesen's mission is to get young workers as fired up about the labour movement as she is.

"What's really inspiring me is showing young people they can bring about social change; that one person really can make a difference," she said.

A BCGEU member for five years, Friesen became active last year as a young worker, when her local chair "drafted" her onto local 1710's committee. Now, she sits as a member of the Provincial Executive's Young Worker Committee. She's also getting a solid labour education. Friesen was one of the students selected to attend the BCGEU's Labour Institute at Capilano University in May.

She's using her education to inform others.

"I'm learning a lot about unions in Canada and around the world and I'm trying to educate young workers," she said. "Some don't always see what the BCGEU is doing for them. I get satisfaction from people becoming more aware of the union."



PAUL FINCH

**Project Coord., Shared Services BC
Local 1201, Victoria
Member Young Workers Committee**

Paul Finch's interest and background in activism and social justice drew him to elected office almost as soon as he joined the BCGEU five years ago.

"I had been on the executive of the Camosun College Student Society. When I got here, I was elected shop steward then to the local executive. I believe very strongly in the work the BCGEU does," Finch said.

A member of the BCGEU's Young Worker Committee, Finch's activism is motivated by his desire to help others.

"I want to be a benefit to my co-workers. Being able to have a positive effect on their lives is very rewarding."

One of Finch's goals is to encourage young workers to become more active in the union by finding new ways to engage youth.

"I'd love to increase our participation to a point where there's tons of people running for local elections, people who really carve out some interesting positions."

Labour Trek Celebrates Anniversary

Seventy-five years ago this June, thousands of young men fed up with poor working conditions and low wages, boarded boxcars in B.C. to deliver a key message to the federal government in Ottawa about the unfairness of poverty. It is as relevant today as it was in 1935.

History of the Trek

The trek began after a group of young unemployed workers gathered in Vancouver in 1935. The purpose of the assembly was to strike against the abhorrent working conditions imposed upon the workers by military commanders in relief camps.

Met by persecution from Vancouver's mayor and the police, the striking workers decided to take their issue to Ottawa, where they could speak directly with the federal government.

Hundreds of workers - also known as "Trekkingers" - boarded Canadian Pacific Railway boxcars on June 3, 1935, near the foot of Main Street in Vancouver.

By the time the Trekkingers reached Regina, their numbers had grown to more than 3,000.

In Regina, the Trekkingers were met by RCMP, who had been sent by Prime Minister R. B. Bennett. The RCMP prevented the thousands of Trekkingers from continuing onto Ottawa. Instead, they allowed only the trek's leaders to travel to meet with Bennett.

The meeting with Prime Minister Bennett proved fruitless. Following the meeting, the frustrated remaining Trekkingers in Regina took action. The event would become one of the most infamous and oppressive police riots in Canadian history.

The violent riot happened on Dominion Day. While it ended the trek, it was costly for the prime minister and his party. Bennett paid a political price for crushing the workers' crusade. In the next general election, the Tory government went from 134 to only 39 seats.

The new government addressed many of the concerns raised by the Trekkingers. It abolished relief camps and took steps to create an unemployment insurance system.

75th Anniversary Event

Support for the trek is very much alive today because we are still dealing with some of the poverty issues that

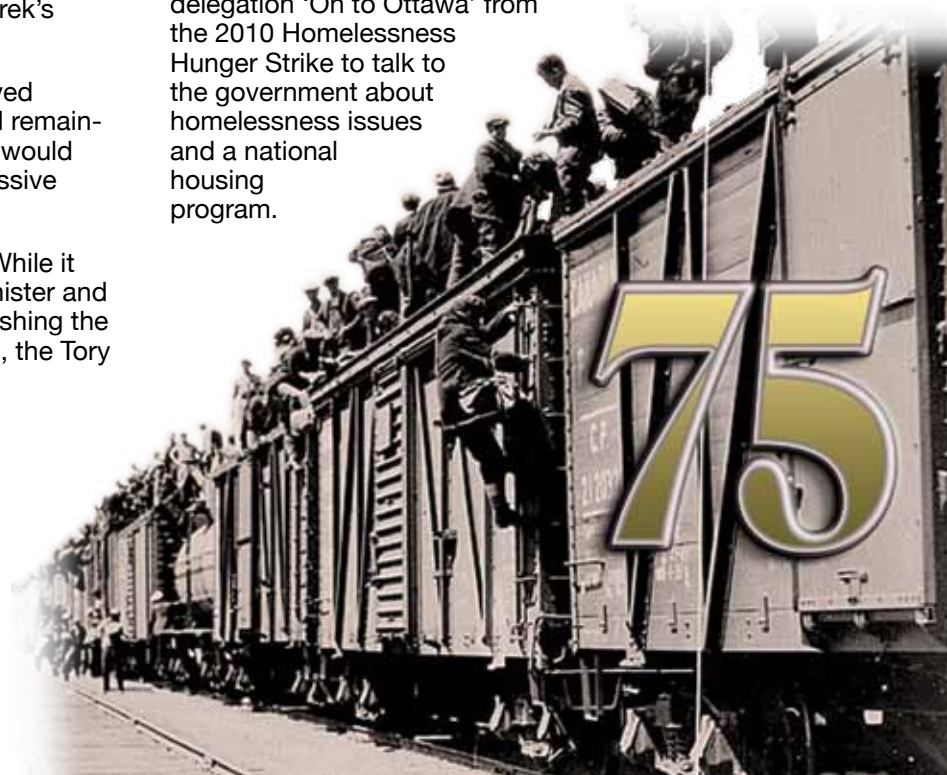


HONOURING OUR PAST — BCGEU activists attended the 75th Anniversary celebrations at Crab Park in Vancouver. (l-r) Lorene Oikawa, BCGEU VP; Pamela Willingshofer, Local 1204; Larry Dea, Local 703; Tamara Weber, Local 404; Paul Finch, Local 1201; Tony Sprackett, Local 1201.

galvanized the Trekkingers.

The On to Ottawa 75th Committee held a rally and commemoration ceremony on June 6 at Crab Park in Vancouver to raise awareness about the issues and mark the anniversary of the trek.

Hundreds attended the rally to celebrate the anniversary and send off a delegation 'On to Ottawa' from the 2010 Homelessness Hunger Strike to talk to the government about homelessness issues and a national housing program.



Ombudsperson responds to crisis in seniors' care

Seniors' care in B.C. is in crisis. The crisis has gotten so severe in recent years that B.C. Ombudsperson, Kim Carter, was forced to undertake a systemic investigation into the state of seniors' care in the province.

The investigation began in 2008 after Carter's office received numerous complaints from family members and advocates of seniors in care — more than 50 individual complaints from June to August 2008.

Stakeholders were invited to make submissions and the public response was unparalleled in the history of the Ombudsperson's office.

The BCGEU submission addressed problems in long-term care, patient care, recruitment and retention, capacity, and home support.

"Health care workers who provide direct, daily care to seniors are well positioned to identify the problems that seniors are facing," said BCGEU president Darryl Walker.

"BCGEU made a number of recommendations including increasing nursing care hours, establishing an independent seniors' advocate and several others regarding expanding home support."

B.C. Ombudsperson Kim Carter (right) addresses a meeting of the B.C. Health Coalition upon the release of her report on seniors' care.



Carter released a report entitled *The Best of Care: Getting it Right for Seniors in British Columbia (Part 1)* in December 2009.

The report found that the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport had failed to adequately provide care for seniors and included ten recommendations to enhance seniors' rights and improve care.

"This report is the first part of the Ombudsperson's ongoing investigation in response to a growing number of complaints and increasing public concern about seniors' care in the province's residential care facilities," said Rachel Tutte, Co-Chair of the BC Health Coalition (BCHC).

"That is why it is so important that our government respect the legitimacy and integrity of these recommendations by moving immediately to implement each of them."

Of the ten recommendations, the BC Liberal government intends to implement only four.

The Ministries have not

agreed, for example to support the establishment and development of regional family council organizations — something that seniors' advocates say would go a long way to giving a strong voice to seniors across the province.

"The recommendations around family and resident councils — and all of the report's recommendations — are simple, inexpensive and positive steps to ensure a better quality of life for people living in these facilities," said Alice Edge, Co-chair of BCHC.

The need to improve seniors care is critical. The BCGEU along with the other partners of the BCHC will continue to demand the government address this crisis so that seniors in British Columbia can age with the dignity and respect they deserve.

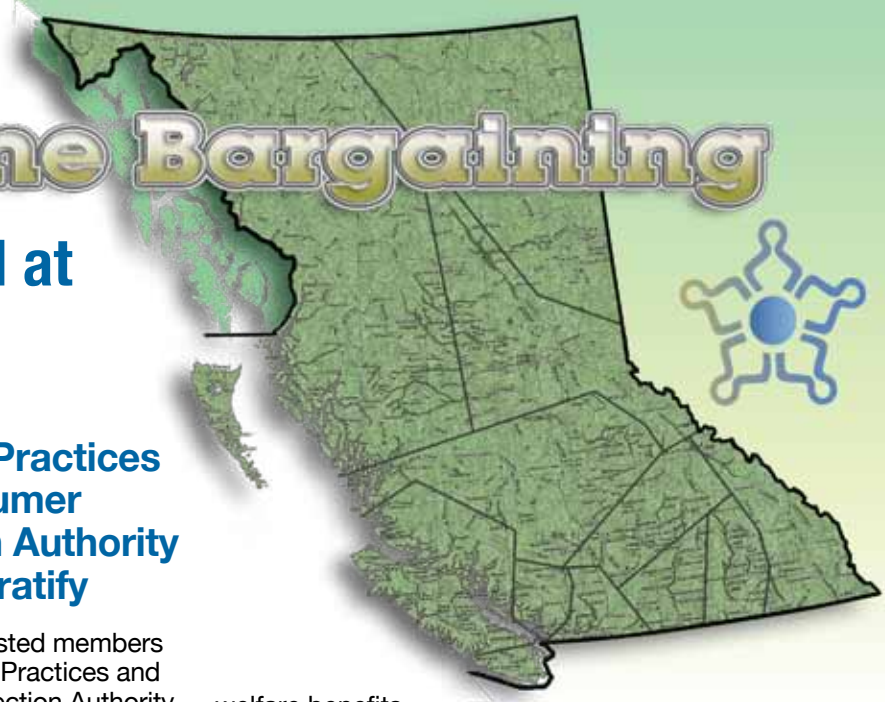
Download a copy of the Ombudsperson's report at: www.bchealthcoalition.ca



The report found that the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport had failed to adequately provide care for seniors.

Stand-Alone Bargaining

New agreement ratified at Community Living BC



Component 6 members at Community Living BC have a deal.

The members ratified their new agreement on May 31.

Topping the list of agreement highlights is employment security for employees who have regular status as of April 1, 2010.

Bereavement leave provisions were improved and temporary markets adjustments for IT staff and financial officers were continued.

CLBC is funded by the provincial government and was held to the mandate set for the public sector. The agreement is for two years and expires on March 31, 2012.

Burnaby child care centre votes for an agreement

Workers at the Burnaby Children's Centres Society have ratified an agreement on a new contract ending March 31, 2014.

The agreement provides for wage and vehicle allowance increases and improved language for on-call duties, vacation preference, and scheduling.

The agreement covers approximately 30 BCGEU members in Component 3.

Business Practices and Consumer Protection Authority members ratify

A mediator assisted members at the Business Practices and Consumer Protection Authority reach a two-year agreement.

Highlights of the new agreement include improved health benefits, family illness leave, and a one-day increase in vacation. The agreement for the 29 members will expire March 31, 2012.

Members at worksites in Dawson Creek, Gibsons and Victoria ratify agreements

In Victoria, BCGEU members who work for the Salvation Army's Addictions and Rehabilitation Centre (ARC) and the Salvation Army National Recycling Operations (SANRO) both ratified a new three-year collective agreement. The agreements include wage increases and new harassment language.

Workers at the Town of Gibsons ratified their new three-year agreement, ending December 2012. The new contract has a wage increase in the first year (2 percent); second year (2.48); third year (2.6). There are also improvements to health and

welfare benefits. Staff at the town provide a wide range of services from administrative work to outside work involving parks and maintenance.

In Dawson Creek, members at the Lake View Credit Union ratified a new four-year contract with the help of a mediator. Highlights of the agreement include a wage increase averaging just under three percent over the life of the agreement. There is also an increase in annual vacation and an increase in interest on the employees' RRSP deposits. Thirty staff at the credit union work as clerks, tellers, loan officers and member service officers.

Legal Services Society members approve strike vote

In a vote held on July 7 & 8, BCGEU members at the Legal Services Society of B.C. approved a strike vote by a 71 per cent margin.

The main issue remains protection against contracting out of members' jobs. The union tabled several proposals on employment security, which have so far been rejected by the employer.

Moving together to end homelessness in Kamloops

The Kamloops District Labour Council has joined the United Way, local businesses, the municipal government and other community groups to develop a homelessness plan for the city. Their ambitious goal is to eradicate homelessness within five years.

The “Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan” issues a number of recommendations, including creating a homelessness coordinator position that will implement and follow through on other recommendations. The job will be partly funded by labour and community groups, including the BCGEU.

The action plan was presented

to local labour activists at a BCGEU-hosted forum last March, which was attended by about 150 people.

At the event, James Hughes shared his story. He put a face to homelessness in that community.

After a brain injury left him unable to work, James left Ontario to head out west. He ended up on the streets, and ultimately in jail. He was eventually released in Kamloops, a community where he had no connections.

In the last six months, he has at last secured housing. His main goals are to keep a roof over his head and work on making himself employable. James’ story really illustrated



ACTION ON HOMELESSNESS — James Hughes (right) spoke about his life on the streets at the labour-sponsored homelessness forum in Kamloops. Frank Anderson (left).

the complex moral, social and economic angles to the homelessness issue. Dealing with homelessness is not just about making housing affordable, it’s about dealing with related problems such as mental health, addiction, poverty, abuse and hunger.

The BCGEU is proud to support a community-driven initiative to deal with homelessness in Kamloops. For more information, or to get involved, please contact BCGEU staff representative Frank Anderson at (250) 372-8223.

BCGEU adds its voice to call for poverty reduction plan

There is a growing call in B.C. for a provincial poverty reduction plan (PRP), and the BCGEU is at the forefront of that call.

The union is an active member of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, a diverse group that is recommending legislated targets and timelines for reducing poverty rates, increasing income levels and ending homelessness.

Given the province’s high rates of child poverty and rising levels of homelessness, there is an urgent need for a

PRP in B.C. In an April letter to Premier Campbell, BCGEU president Darryl Walker noted that “BCGEU members, through their work and in their communities, are acutely aware of this need.”

In addition to calling on the premier to commit to poverty reduction, the union recently provided a submission to the Standing Committee on Children and Youth, urging it to consider a PRP as a solution for child poverty.

“Child poverty is family poverty,” wrote the union, and it “cannot be addressed without implementing meas-

ures in a wide range of public policy areas, including income support, low-wage work, food security, housing and homelessness, child care, education and training, and health services.”

It appears the PRP message is being heard. City councils in Nelson, Grand Forks and Parksville have recently passed motions calling for a provincial PRP, and other provinces already have plans in place.

Add your voice to the call for a B.C. PRP, by signing the petition at: <http://bcpovertyreduction.ca>.



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Stay connected and active in retirement

Retiring from the workforce doesn't have to mean retiring from playing a key role in B.C.'s labour movement. Thanks to BC FORUM — the Federation of Retired Union Members — union activists can stay active.

Since 1995, BC FORUM has been helping retirees and active union members, age 50 and up, maintain their relationship with the trade union movement. The organization has more than 4,200 members around B.C. and hopes to add thousands more.

"There are more than 100,000 retired union members in B.C.," said Diane Wood, former BCGEU Secretary-Treasurer and a BC FORUM director representing the BCGEU. "That's a powerful voice if we can tap into it. We're really working hard to sign up new members."

BC FORUM's mandate is to bring union retirees together as a strong force to help influence public policy and to sustain, what Wood calls, "solidarity across the generations." BC FORUM members sit as delegates on labour councils across B.C.

They're also called upon to deliver public presentations on issues that matter, such as proposed changes to the Canada Pension Plan. BC FORUM also alerts members about picket lines, demonstrations and government initiatives.

"We feel a real commitment to members who have been in the labour movement," said Wood. "People who've been advocates or active for many years through their union may



STAYING ACTIVE — Retired BCGEU activists, officers and staff give the union a strong voice at BC FORUM. (left to right): Wendi Lawrence (former BCGEU vice-president, now BC FORUM staff); Lorraine Logan, Millie Canessa, Diane Wood (former BCGEU Secretary-Treasurer), De Whalen (former BCGEU staff rep), Victor Johnson, and Soren Bech (former BCGEU staff rep).

feel disconnected after they retire and they don't know what vehicle is available for them to fully participate. They care about their communities, their families and the issues that affect them. They care politically and they want to stay connected."

BC FORUM also offers resources to union members who are still employed but plan to retire soon.

Membership includes benefits, including access to travel medical, homeowner and tenants insurance, and extended health and dental benefit programs. Members also receive the Advocate, BC FORUM's official newsletter.

BC FORUM is affiliated with the BC Federation of Labour and Working Enterprises group, which the BCGEU provided seed money to create in 1991. BCGEU members also get their first year of membership in BC FORUM paid by the union.

Retirees and any active union member over the age of 50 can join for an annual membership fee of \$15.

To sign up, renew or for more information, go to BC FORUM's website at www.bcforum.ca, call (604) 688-4565 or send an email to: bcforum@bcfed.ca.



There are more than 100,000 retired union members in B.C. That's a powerful voice if we can tap into it.



Grab a pair of Dayton boots - at a discount

Dayton boots are a legendary brand. Now you can nab a pair at a discount price thanks to your BCGEU membership – see below for details.

In the 1940s, Dayton founder Charlie Wohlford developed a reputation for making the toughest logger boots around. A couple of decades later, in the 60s, Dayton's double-sole black boots were popular.

At the time, folks wearing Daytons weren't welcome at some bars, as they were assumed to have biker connections.

Dayton motorcycle boots may have given them street credibility, but the truth is that they have always manufactured top-notch working class boots.

“The brand was built for working people,” says Dayton CEO Stephen Encarnacao. “For decades, they have been the footwear of choice for firefighters, policemen, or construction workers – any trade that requires a boot as tough as the job. In fact, Daytons are about to re-issue a Canadian Standards Association-approved steel toe work boot later this year.”



At the factory located behind the main showroom at 2250 East Hastings Street in East Vancouver, boots are still made entirely by hand.

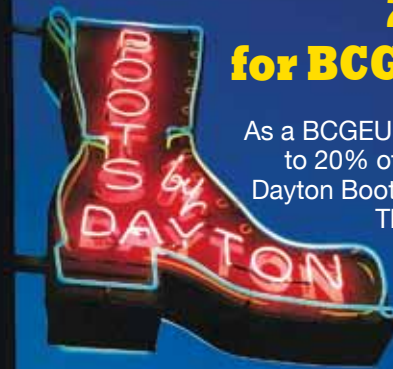
Encarnacao employs 16 professionals – who are paid a living wage – to build boots using old-style, quality-above-all-else manufacturing techniques that few boot makers still use anywhere in the world. The boots aren't cheap but they are known to last decades.

Dayton Boots Special Purchase Offer:

**20% discount
for BCGEU members**

As a BCGEU member, you are entitled to 20% off the list price of a pair of Dayton Boots, apparel & accessories.

The same discount applies on all Dayton Boots repairs and reconditioning, as well as Rino's ReNu general show repairs and Rino's Shoes for the Stars.



Specific terms:

- BCGEU members must present their BCGEU union card and photo ID at time of purchase or when order is placed to receive the applicable discount.
- This offer is good on the purchase of one single purchased or repaired item.
- Not valid with other offers or on sale merchandise.
- No cash back.
- In-store only at Dayton Boots location at: 2250 East Hastings Street in Vancouver.
- Regular 30-day return policy applies.
- Tax not included.
- Offer expires on December 31, 2010.

New BCGEU area office opens in Castlegar



he BCGEU is the latest ‘family’ to move into 2316 Columbia Avenue in Castlegar. Built in 1949, the former family residence has been transformed into the union’s new West Kootenay Area Office, servicing Area 09.

The house has been fully renovated, and a new upstairs space has been created to accommodate seven full and part-time BCGEU staff, guests and union-sponsored gatherings. An elevator has also been added to make the building wheelchair accessible.

The office ‘officially’ opened on May 15, 2010 with an open house and speeches from local dignitaries and BCGEU president Darryl Walker. Also in attendance were treasurer Judi Filion and Colleen Jones, BCGEU vice president and Trail resident.

The event kicked off with a dedication by Marilyn James, a spokesperson for the Sinixt First Nation, whose ancestors were the original peoples of the West Kootenays.

The BCGEU area office sits on Sinixt traditional territory. James thanked the BCGEU for its work on behalf of its members and the communities in which they live.

“I’ve come to acknowledge this building and what the BCGEU represents to this community,” James told the crowd. “I want to acknowledge the BCGEU as a supportive group that addresses issues of employment, gender and salary equity.”

BCGEU president Darryl Walker said the new area office’s best attribute is its location.

“It’s in the community and not in a business or commercial area,” said Walker. “It’s a house, and you can already see how comfortable people feel in it. We want to be part of the community — smack dab in the middle of it. We’re working with everybody, people are all around us and they’re welcome here.”

Vice president Colleen Jones echoed Walker’s views on the office’s accessibility.

“Now that it’s in Castlegar, it’s more centralized and the airport is right here,” she said.



CENTRAL LOCATION — The new BCGEU West Kootenay Area Office (top) was officially opened by BCGEU officers (bottom, l-r) Treasurer Judi Filion, President Darryl Walker, and Vice President Colleen Jones.

The spaciousness of the 3000 square foot office is another plus, according to treasurer Judi Filion.

“It’s a beautiful facility and I’m glad to see that we’ve got a bigger area and better working space for our activists to use,” Filion said.

Staff members boast the house has already attracted its share of unexpected visitors. One recent guest was a man with family ties to the building.

“Quite a few people drop in,” said BCGEU administrator Danae Theobald. “They love the charm.”

Partnering with Vancity

BCGEU and Vancity want to work together. We're a natural fit: our organizations share similar progressive values such as democratic membership, a commitment to social and economic justice and community development. Together, we hope to do great things for our members, our union, and for the community.

Vancity is Canada's largest credit union, with 59 branches throughout Greater Vancouver, the Fraser Valley and Victoria, and \$14.5 billion assets under management.

The BCGEU already represents 400 Vancity employees working in branches throughout the Lower Mainland, the Fraser Valley and Vancouver Island, as well as at the Vancouver-based member services call centre and the centralized administration and payment systems department.

Last November, BCGEU President Darryl Walker and Vancity CEO Tamara Vrooman signed an agreement that lays the groundwork for a new relationship. We established a partnership committee to plan and implement a number of joint community projects.

In July, members of the BCGEU and Vancity senior leadership volunteered together to paint and freshen up an emergency shelter in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The shelter is run by the Lookout Emergency Aid Society. Lookout workers are members of the BCGEU, and the society itself is also a long-standing member of Vancity.

The next joint project will focus on the society's library: BCGEU and Vancity members will stock it with reading and audio-visual materials for use by shelter residents.



Photo: Joshua Berson

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP — Vancity CEO Tamara Vrooman and BCGEU President Darryl Walker joined a number of other BCGEU and Vancity volunteers at a joint painting session this summer, to freshen up the Lookout Emergency Aid Society shelter in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.



Under the agreement, Vancity and the BCGEU will work together to provide information to Vancity employees on the role of the labour movement.

Under the partnership agreement Vancity and the BCGEU will work together to provide information to Vancity employees on the role of the labour movement in achieving social justice, our common values, and the benefits of the collective agreement at Vancity.

The BCGEU has held meetings at a number of branches. Workers at the Surrey City Centre Branch voted to join the union in early May.

A few weeks later, workers at the Newton branch in Surrey joined the BCGEU. To date, the BCGEU has met with Vancity employees at seven branches, with more meetings being scheduled.

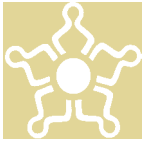
Under the partnership agreement, the BCGEU has

committed to working with Vancity to increase our members' awareness of the products and services provided by Vancity.

Treasurer Judi Filion is meeting with representatives of Vancity who are developing a communications package for BCGEU members. Watch the website and upcoming issues of the *Provincial* for details.

The BCGEU has considerable experience representing credit union employees in British Columbia — including our members at Interior Savings Credit Union, First Credit Union, Lakeview Credit Union, Grand Forks District Credit Union, and Union Bay Credit Union.

Take pride this summer



The BCGEU has long been a strong and vocal supporter of equality. We are committed to the quest for safe, tolerant and non-discriminatory workplaces for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) union members.

We are proud of the work BCGEU members have done and are continuing to do in their communities to challenge homophobia and transphobia in society.

This year, 2010, marks the 41st anniversary of the decriminalization of homosexuality in Canada. Before 1969, it was a crime to be gay or lesbian in this country. There have been some extraordinary legal and political victories since then.

Gay and lesbians have won important protections against discrimination in human rights law. They've also won legal recognition of same-sex couples and same-sex marriage.

Despite the successes, more work needs to be done. Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered members of our community continue to be confronted by the hostile face of homophobia and transphobia. Sadly, gay bashing remains an all too frequent occurrence. Some GLBT youth live with the fear of harassment.

Education is the remedy. We must share our stories with each other and the community. We must work together to fight against all forms of discrimination. We need to celebrate our diversity and live with dignity.

One way to show support is to attend a Pride event in your community. Events are taking place around B.C. throughout the summer.

Hundreds of BCGEU members will be participating in events in Comox, Nanaimo, Victoria, Vancouver, Prince George and the Kootenays. Check the BCGEU E-bulletin and website (www.bcgeu.ca) for news of upcoming events.



UNION PRIDE — Every year, the BCGEU president, officers, members and activists take part in Pride festivities taking place in communities across British Columbia.

Photos: Joshua Berson



OUT

In your community



DC GOVERNMENT AND SERVICE EMPLOYEES' UNION

bcgeu

PRIDE!