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## provincial

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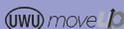


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# LETTER



## From the President

### To make democracy work, people must be participants, not just observers

**T**he BCGEU's democracy works thanks to the participation of the thousands of activists at all levels of our movement from stewards in the worksite, to local and component leadership. They get there because of the individual members that nominate and vote for each position in our union.

Our democratic institutions at the municipal, provincial and federal levels are not as healthy. Plagued by declining voter engagement, especially among youth; a persistent lack of diversity and inclusion; and a discouraging tendency to turn a small percentage of votes into total dominance of a legislature, our first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system is broken. Ironically, British Columbians are about to get a lot of chances to use it.

*“Most of these elections are opportunities to change the players—the candidates and parties that compete for our votes—and one is a chance to change the game.”*

As I write this, B.C. voters are facing at least three opportunities to cast a ballot in the next 12 to 18 months. Municipal election day; the provincial referendum on electoral reform; and the next federal general election will happen in 2019.

Add to that list the chance of another provincial election happening within a year; that the federal riding of Burnaby-Edmonds has a by-election coming up; and that the municipal election could spur a by-election in the provincial riding of Nanaimo. That's a lot of opportunities for British Columbians to exercise their right to vote.

One of these is not like the others. Most of these elections are opportunities to change the players—the candidates and parties that compete for our votes—and one is a chance to change the game. The provincial referendum on electoral reform is our shot at changing the rules that govern who gets elected in our province and how. It's our chance to replace our current, dysfunctional electoral system with proportional representation (PR).

Here's what we know about PR: it gives equal value to every vote, resulting in higher voter turnout; increased diversity and dissent in legislatures; and reduced inequality in society. In short, PR results in a more robust democracy because it encourages and rewards participation. We know this because many of the countries Canadians look to as models of the values we cherish and aspire to, use PR to elect their representatives: Scandinavian and Western European democracies, Iceland, and New Zealand to name a few.

In closing, I want to thank all the BCGEU members who stood as candidates during this municipal election cycle. Among them is our own president emeritus Darryl Walker who is running for Mayor in White Rock. At the time I'm writing this I don't know the results but I'm grateful to anyone who participates because participation makes our democracy stronger. I hope all of you will help strengthen our democracy further by voting “yes” for PR.



BCGEU president Stephanie Smith (right photo) joins striking Hard Rock Casino workers and families on the picket line, in a show of strength and solidarity.



## Casino workers stand strong across the province

**I**t was a hard-fought deal. In the end, our members won. After standing in solidarity on strike for more than ten weeks, over 400 members of the BCGEU at Hard Rock Casino Vancouver in Coquitlam ratified a first collective agreement in August. They persevered through extreme weather, employer tactics, and disgruntled customers.

“Through their hard work and unity, Hard Rock workers achieved a solid first agreement,” said BCGEU president Stephanie Smith. “These workers have stuck together and it has paid off. I’m so proud of the commitment and solidarity our members have shown.”

This was a marker in a long road. Employees at Hard Rock voted to join the BCGEU in May 2016 and had been trying to negotiate a first collective agreement with their employer since January 2017. When they reached impasse earlier this year, 99.5 per cent of Hard Rock workers voted in favour of strike action.

In a great show of solidarity, they walked off the job in mid-May after mediation broke down. Workers weren’t happy with what was on the table for wages and hours of work.

“Many of the employees at Hard Rock hadn’t had a wage increase in over 10

years,” said Smith. “Now, they will get yearly increases starting in six months.”

In addition to wage increases and standard union protections, such as a grievance procedure, Hard Rock workers also achieved signing bonuses, the BCGEU target benefit pension plan and improvements to scheduling and hours of work.

*“These workers have stuck together and it has paid off. I’m so proud of the commitment and solidarity our members have shown.”*

Since the agreement came into force, Hard Rock workers have started steward elections, a tips committee has been elected, and the grievance process is up and running. The strength and stability provided by a collective agreement means these workers can focus on improving their working conditions together within a clear structure.

Meanwhile, in the Okanagan, workers have shown similar resolve at the four Gateway casinos: Playtime Casino in Kelowna, Lake City Casino in Vernon, and Cascades Casinos in Kamloops and Penticton. Over 675 BCGEU members working at these casinos walked off the job on Friday, June 29.

“Our members are asking for living wages that would bring them in line with the industry standard for casino workers in B.C.,” said BCGEU Component 17 vice-president Dave MacDonald. “These workers are the heart of their casinos. Gateway is a successful company in a highly profitable industry — they can afford to pay their staff what they are worth. By paying workers living wages, the money that Gateway makes in the Okanagan stays in the local economy instead of going to Vancouver, or even Ontario where Gateway owns several large properties.”

Morale has stayed high. Workers on the line have held solidarity rallies with other unions, theme costume days, a rally outside the BC Lottery Corporation head office, community days cleaning up the beach or volunteering at the food bank and lots of public support. You can send a message of support to striking workers at: [supportgatewayworkers.ca](http://supportgatewayworkers.ca)

These are just two examples of the thousands of casino workers that BCGEU represents. Workers at Starlight and Grand Villa casinos in the Lower Mainland are also fighting a difficult employer for a better contract and we will continue to stand strong and united.



## BCGEU pressures Forensics Hospital to improve safety for staff

**W**hat would you do if you went to work every day not knowing if you would be spat at, scratched, bitten, kicked, punched, stabbed or strangled unconscious? This is a reality for BCGEU members in a number of occupational sectors.

Often, BCGEU members working at the Forensic Psychiatric Hospital (FPH) face violence in their work. They treat patients found not criminally responsible of committing serious crimes due to mental illness.

Our members are committed professionals who provide care and treatment for roughly 190 patients confined to the hospital facility on Colony Farm lands in Coquitlam.

The facility has a history of patient-on-staff violence, especially since the former BC Liberal government removed FPH from direct government control and placed it under management of the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) in 2013.

In the past five years, the PHSA has been served 57 safety violation orders by the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB), along with 102 inspection reports exposing the employer's failure to protect its employees.

The WCB even levied a \$171,000 fine on the PHSA, which was ultimately reduced to \$15,000 by the BC Liberal government.

Since May of this year, there have been 22 patient assaults on staff at the facility. August was a particularly violent

month, which saw seven staff members assaulted by patients. On September 11, four FPH staff were assaulted by a patient, with three rushed to hospital with severe injuries.

After repeated attempts negotiating with the employer and advocating for improved safety protocols at Forensics, the BCGEU finally went public with a series of news releases, site visits and media interviews.

*In the past five years, the PHSA has been served 57 safety violation orders by the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB), along with 102 inspection reports exposing the employer's failure to protect its employees.*

We called on the B.C. government to intervene to ensure staff safety and take the Forensic Psychiatric Hospital back into direct government service.

The union's public campaign prompted an on-site inspection by four WCB officers to investigate the Sept. 11 assault on staff. Shortly after, the employer asked to meet with BCGEU leadership to discuss plans to increase security measures at the facility.

# VIOLENCE IS NOT PART OF YOUR JOB. YOU DON'T HAVE TO PUT UP WITH IT.

The BCGEU will support you. 1-800-663-1674. ohs@bcgeu.ca.



In a joint statement on Sept. 19 between the PHSA, the BCGEU and another union representing staff on-site at the facility, the employer pledged to take immediate and longer-term measures to improve safety, increased security guard presence, with 24/7 coverage in the hospital's high-security units; increased evening and weekend supervision and clinical support; establishment of new specialized clinical-security teams at FPH; additional staff, along with increased orientation and specialized training in relational security and emergency response measures.

"The BCGEU has repeatedly raised concerns about the safety of our members at Forensic Psychiatric Hospital over the last number of years," said BCGEU president Stephanie Smith.

"We are pleased to see the PHSA taking those concerns seriously and we look forward to doing our part to create a safe, healthy workplace for our members."

About 270 BCGEU members work at the Forensic Psychiatric Hospital as health care and rehabilitation workers, recreational therapists, rehabilitation assistants, patient escorts, forensic security officers, psychiatrists and social workers, psychologist assistants, counsellors, administrative staff and food service workers.



## New deal for BCGEU highways members

**F**ifteen years of job security for workers maintaining roads and bridges in B.C. We're pretty happy with that. This is one provision of a significant labour succession agreement with the provincial government reached earlier this year.

With the agreement in hand, our members on the Component 10 bargaining team have been working with members to ratify a total of 24 new highways maintenance contracts throughout the province. The first three took effect September 1st in service areas 2, 3 and 24 on Vancouver Island, North Vancouver Island and in Burns Lake. This is a significant milestone in what has been a long battle to ensure well-trained, experienced highways workers continue to keep B.C. highways safe.

Highways maintenance has seen a lot of changes over the last three decades. In 1987, contracts were privatized by the Social Credit government. This meant the govern-

ment would award contracts to companies — including international companies — willing to do highways work for the best price.

This put B.C. workers in a precarious position along with the traveling public. Under the arrangement, workers with years of experience could be replaced by cheaper, inexperienced labour. Highways workers with local knowledge and experience know best where the trouble spots are. They're trained for the specific maintenance of our roads and bridges in their areas.

Since privatization was here to stay, the solution was successorship — a process requiring the successful bidder on new highway service contracts to honour the terms of labour agreements bargained with existing workers. Experienced workers would be able to stay in place and maintain their seniority rights and other contract provisions negotiated through multiple rounds of bargaining over decades.

"We've reached a significant milestone in privatized highway maintenance, not only in B.C. but right across Canada," said Rory Smith, Component 10 vice-president. "Maintaining successorship rights to employment, seniority, benefits and pensions will now extend to 46 years since privatization first took place in the province. We will continue to build relationships with our members and engage with government to keep the discussion and relationship alive and well into the future."

*"We've reached a significant milestone in privatized highway maintenance, not only in B.C. but right across Canada. Maintaining successorship rights to employment, seniority, benefits and pensions will now extend to 46 years since privatization first took place in the province."*

The latest labour succession agreement provides labour stability for workers and their families in 140 B.C. communities. This will also go a long way toward establishing the next generation of well-trained highway workers.

The story of highways successorship demonstrates the power of working together as a union to fight for what's fair, and against practices that are harmful to workers and the public. Since the 1980s, the contracting-out of public services has cut labour costs for government. But, we know it has also impacted workers and communities

when precarious work environments led to a decline in the quality of services the public relies on.

Thanks to the hard work and leadership of Component 10 and the BCGEU highways bargaining committees over the years, provincial governments have been forced to look past the bottom line to acknowledge the importance of successorship in the sector, resulting in job security for B.C. highways workers now and for years to come.



## You have protection against online harassment on the job

**W**e know employees can be disciplined or fired for making negative remarks against their employer or co-workers. Did you know employers have a responsibility to protect workers from online harassment on the employer's social media platforms?

That's right. Employers have a legal duty to take all reasonable steps to prevent their employees from harassment in the workplace. That means harassment from clients, customers and other members of the public.

The legal duty is mandated by occupational health and safety statutes and sometimes also incorporated into collective agreements.

Here's some background. A recent arbitration decision in Ontario found employers have to protect against harassment on the employer's social media platforms.

These platforms include Facebook, Twitter and online forums where employers solicit comments and feedback from their customers and the public.

The union involved in the decision argued there were serious problems with the employer's Twitter account. It was used to receive and respond to customer complaints and inquiries.

But, it also received a high number of offensive tweets that directed profanity, derogatory language and threats of violence at company employees.

Some of the offensive tweets contained photographs and video of employees. The union filed a grievance requesting the employer shut down its Twitter account. The employer rejected the call, advising the union there was nothing it could do to stop the public from making comments about the organization on Twitter.

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The practice in place saw the employer responding to offensive tweets by simply sending the author a message indicating the organization didn't condone nasty comments. Users were asked to refrain from such conduct and instructed on they how to appropriately file a complaint against employees.

The arbitrator hearing the grievance found the employer was in violation of its duty to provide a workplace free from harassment by allowing the offensive tweets.

As well, the employer was ordered to work with the union to develop an appropriate social media policy.

The policy needed to include a requirement to ban users who posted offensive tweets or content that invaded the privacy of the organization's employees.

The arbitrator took exception with the existing practice whereby the employer merely communicated to the public that it does not condone abusive, profane, derogatory or offensive comments.

Instead, the arbitrator ordered the employer to request offending Twitter users immediately delete offensive tweets and advise them that if they don't, they'll be blocked. Also, when appropriate, the employer should seek the assistance of content administrators at Twitter in deleting offensive tweets. The arbitrator also ruled on the issue of privacy, ordering the employer to disallow Twitter users from posting photographs or videos of employees.

The take-away is this: If an employer utilizes social media channels to engage clients, customers and the public, then a strong case can be made to adopt and implement a comprehensive social media policy. Ideally, this policy should include proactive measures banning users who harass employees or post materials that invade the privacy of employees.



COMMUNITY  
BENEFITS  
COALITION OF BC

been as low as two per cent on major B.C. infrastructure projects. That's not nearly enough to ensure a skilled trades workforce for the future.

It's estimated that B.C. will have a shortfall of roughly 8,000 skilled workers in construction and maintenance by 2027. We need to ensure opportunities are there for apprentices to learn their craft and to manage this shortage.

Under the agreements, there's a goal of 25 per cent apprentices on public projects. We know we need more apprentices on the job, and this is the framework to ensure this happens. That's why the agreements are so important.

We all have a stake in ensuring infrastructure projects benefit our communities, and BCGEU members have an even higher stake.

Our members in post-secondary trades and vocational institutions, such as BCIT, Camosun College, Okanagan College, Northwest College and Vancouver Island University, are some of the instructors involved in the training included in the CBA framework.

"For far too long, B.C. provincial governments failed to invest in training or create new opportunities for apprenticeships. The BCGEU is pleased to see the change of direction signalled in the new Community Benefits Agreement framework," said BCGEU president Stephanie Smith.

Visit the Community Benefits Coalition of BC online at: [www.letsbuildbc.ca](http://www.letsbuildbc.ca) to find out more.



## Building a Better B.C. for everybody with Community Benefits Agreement

**W**e pay for public infrastructure projects, so it makes sense that we'd want to get the most value out of them. That's why the BCGEU has recently joined the Community Benefits Coalition of BC, a group made up of unions, local companies and organizations.

Here's a story to illustrate why we joined.

Meet Jasmine. In 2010, she graduated from Simon Fraser University with a bachelor of arts degree and a pile of debt. Soon after she became pregnant. Jasmine quickly realized she'd need to find work that would support her and her young son, and allow her to pay off her student loans.

When she couldn't find work with her degree, she took a welding program offered by a B.C. trades training institute. She was hired to work on the Kitimat Modernization Project (KMP) before she'd even completed her pre-apprenticeship. The KMP is a public infrastructure project.

"I can honestly say that this job changed my life. There's an immense amount of pride in being able to

work and earn a decent living for your family, to support yourself and to build your community. It was a phenomenal opportunity for me, a single mom," said Jasmine.



The Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) — the new construction framework announced by the B.C. government in July — will provide the same opportunities for families like Jasmine's to thrive and prosper. That's something the BCGEU is happy to endorse.

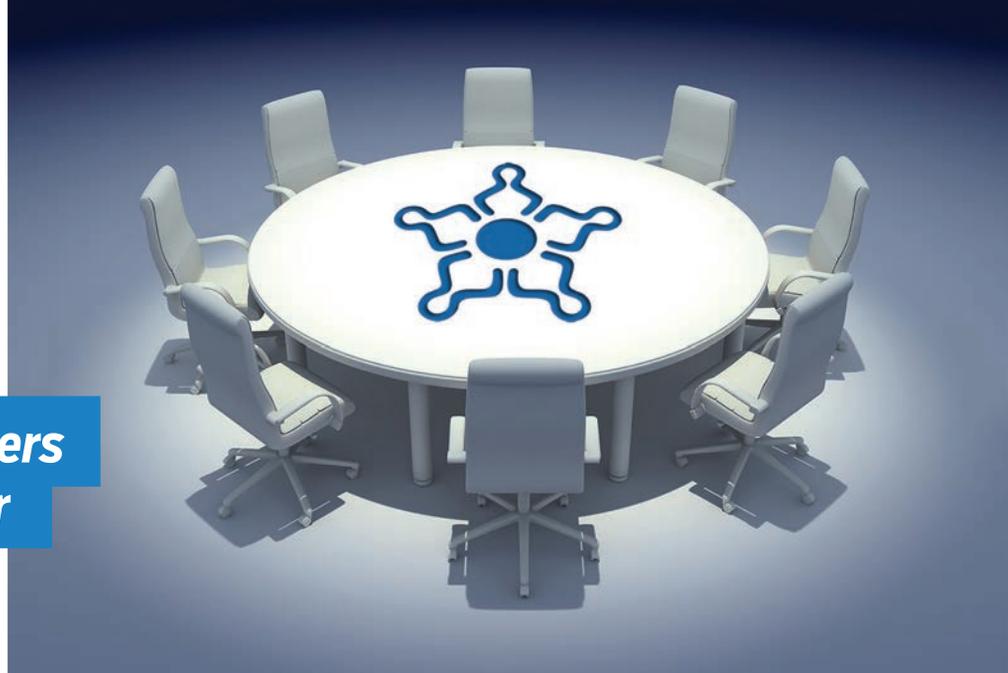
CBAs ensure public infrastructure projects, like the widening of Highway 1, include terms to increase the participation of underrepresented groups, such as Indigenous workers and women.

Apprenticeships are also given priority. Apprenticeship ratios have recently



# SECTORAL BARGAINING:

## Thousands of members ratify new three-year agreements



**W**hen the union started preparing for sectoral bargaining 18 months before our collective agreements expired, some people asked “why now?” It’s a question our leadership team discussed at length before deciding to pursue negotiations with the B.C. government.

There were two reasons to bargain early. First, we were into the fourth year of a five-year agreement. There was pent-up demand from members for improvements to agreement language, benefits and wages.

The other reason was practical. For the first time in nearly two decades, British Columbia has a government that supports working people and is committed to fair collective bargaining.

Under the BC Liberals, bargaining mandates were ostensibly net neutral — “net zero” and “cooperative gains” being two memorable examples. The objective was “lean government.” The political reality of the current minority government means an agreement early in the mandate would be in the best interests of BCGEU members.

During the late spring and early summer, we negotiated and ratified deals for members in the public service, community health and community social services sectors.

### Public service deal brings improvements for tens of thousands of public service members

For seven weeks and dozens of bargaining sessions, the BCGEU’s public service bargaining committee sat at the negotiation table with the B.C. government’s Public Service Agency (PSA), hammering out an agreement that addresses the needs of our diverse membership.

*"In this round of bargaining, we stuck to our principles and were able to make substantial progress in a number of key areas we've been trying to address for years."*

It also lays a solid foundation for other sectoral tables queuing up to bargain. In August, members ratified the agreement by a vote of 62.7 per cent of members who voted.

“In this round of bargaining, we stuck to our principles and were able to make substantial progress in a number of key areas we’ve been trying to address for years,” said BCGEU president Stephanie Smith. “Wages, recruitment and retention, benefits for auxiliary workers and bullying and harassment are just a few issues our members identified as priorities for these negotiations.”

In the end the union negotiated the best agreement for members in many years.

Some highlights include: general wage increases of two per cent each year of a three-year agreement; a Medical Services Plan savings payout; targeted temporary market adjustment increases to address recruitment and retention; wage grid increases for targeted administrative classifications; auxiliary conversion language that will see 20 wildfire auxiliaries converted to full-time status, as well as 64 Liquor Distribution Branch (LDB) auxiliaries and 12 regular part-time LDB workers.

In addition, the union was able to negotiate significant benefit increases, including a BC Wildfire footwear allowance; increases to long-term disability benefits; the ability to coordinate benefits with a spouse, and more.

“We bargained hard for each and every proposal,” said Smith. “After 16 years of staff cuts and wage restraints, there was a lot of demand for positive change from our membership. We knew that we wouldn’t make up all the lost ground in one round of bargaining, but your bargaining committee is proud of what we achieved.”

The 18th public service agreement will be in effect from April 1, 2019 – March 31, 2022 and covers more than 27,000 members working in direct government service.

## Significant progress made for members in community health sector

BCGEU members in the community health sector ratified a new collective agreement in mid-July. Like the public service agreement, this deal takes effect April 1, 2019 and expires March 31, 2022.

Key sections of the agreement include a six per cent wage increase over three years and improvements to employment security.

New funding has also been allocated to close the wage gap with other health workers doing the same type of work. This provision amounts to an important win for community health workers who've long sought wage parity.

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*"This is the most substantial amount of money ever committed to close the wage gap between community health and facilities workers."*

A labour/employer committee will review the compensation for occupations in the community and the health facilities sectors and identify which ones will qualify for the increases.

Increases will be applied to wages primarily. It's also possible they will be applied to shift premiums and other compensation areas.

"This is the most substantial amount of money ever committed to close the wage gap between community health and facilities workers. It's a very significant move in this round of bargaining," said Scott DeLong, the vice-president of the BCGEU's community health component.

Community health workers provide services to seniors and others in their home, work as alcohol and drug counsellors, work with adults and children in community settings and provide administrative support to other health care workers.



(Top) Members of the public service bargaining committee at the opening of negotiations for a public service collective agreement.

(Bottom) BCGEU staff members and elected officials gather at the union's Burnaby headquarters to count ballots during the public service ratification process.



## Strong support for community social services agreements

Community social service (CSS) workers voted by 85.7 per cent in favour to ratify their new collective agreement. It provides significant compensation increases, while meeting the government mandate of improving the services British Columbians count on.

CSS consists of three collective agreements: community living, general services and Aboriginal services. Like agreements in the public service and community health, these also come into effect on April 1, 2019 until March 31, 2022. The agreements include wage increases, as well as significant gains related to low-wage redress, to close the wage gap between our members and those that work in comparable positions in health and the broader public service.

"I'm extremely impressed with what the CSS bargaining committee was able to achieve because, as a former

Component 3 member, I know what this agreement is going to mean to members and front-line workers. And while the agreement doesn't fix everything, this is an excellent foundation to build on over the next three years," said Stephanie Smith, BCGEU president.

## Moving forward

We're presently negotiating new agreements for members in health facilities and health sciences. We will also be entering into negotiations for our college instructors and support staff in the coming months.

While we're pleased all of the agreements represent a significant step forward, we know there's still more work to do with members in all sectors to continue building momentum and further strengthen support for the work BCGEU members do.

You can find out more about bargaining and new collective agreements by visiting the BCGEU member portal at <https://my.bcgau.ca/login>



# Vote to take back control of our democracy

All across B.C. at homes from Port Renfrew to Fort St. John, envelopes from Elections BC have been arriving in your mailboxes. These special envelopes contain the key to taking back control of our democracy: a special referendum ballot.

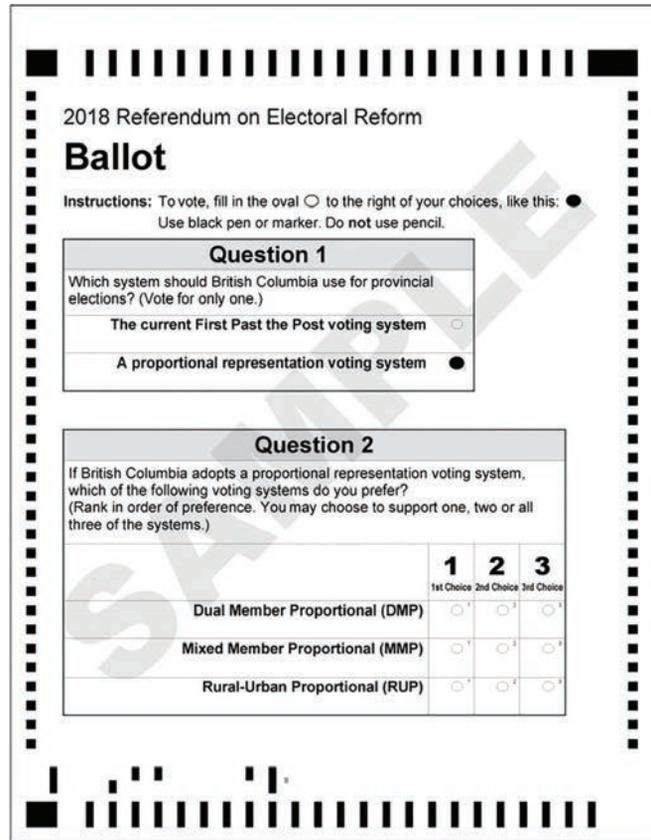
If you've not received your ballot you can do so by going to [elections.bc.ca/ovr](http://elections.bc.ca/ovr) or by calling 1-800-661-8683 from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday. You must request your ballot before midnight, Friday, November 23, 2018.

Voters are increasingly disengaged because they don't vote with their hearts, they vote strategically. But, there's a big appetite for change.

This starts with voting YES to proportional representation. Here's a simple guide to doing it in this referendum:

1. Open your package from Elections BC and read it carefully. You're being invited to vote on two questions.
2. Mark your ballot in question 1 to vote for "A proportional voting system." This question must get 50 per cent +1 in order to pass. You MUST vote for this option if you want to vote for change.
3. Vote for any one of the three voting systems in question 2. All of these systems are improvements over our current system. For more information about these different systems listen to the informational webinar hosted by our union at: [fairelections.bcgeu.ca/info](http://fairelections.bcgeu.ca/info)
4. Post your ballot as soon as possible. The ballot must be received by Elections BC before November 30th at midnight. All the information about voting in the referendum is available at <https://elections.bc.ca/referendum/how-to-vote/>
5. Post a photo on social media of yourself mailing your ballot. Studies show the best way to motivate friends and family to vote is to show them you're taking the lead. On average, social proof like a picture multiply your vote by a factor of five.

**Why do we support proportional representation?** For years, we've voted but nothing seems to change. Election promises are made, then broken. New governments are tasked with repairing or undoing the work of old govern-



This is how you must mark your ballot in order to vote take back control of democracy.

ments. Meanwhile, the cost of living keeps going up. More of us worry about making ends meet, making their next rent or mortgage payment, and being able to retire comfortably and with dignity.

We all have different hopes and goals for ourselves and our families.

Whether you're concerned about child care, health care for an aging parent, housing affordability, or the viability of local businesses being squeezed by the high cost of living — we should all be entitled to a government representative at the decision-making table. Our existing voting system makes this impossible, but proportional representation delivers.

This is our opportunity to change the course of history in British Columbia. If you've had enough of broken promises, and wasted tax payer dollars, vote YES to proportional representation.

It's time for us to take the wheel, to steer our government, and our economy. That means seizing the opportunity that we have.



**B**y the time you read this, you'll probably know who your next municipal council and mayor will be for the next four years. When it comes to local election seasons, this has been a particularly heated one for many communities in B.C.

Years of skyrocketing land prices across the province have led to the worst affordability crisis in memory. Many communities are facing housing shortages, employers are struggling to recruit workers, families are being displaced, inequality is on the rise, and many of our urban centres are becoming exclusive playgrounds for the wealthy.

The affordability crisis has sparked an appetite for meaningful change in B.C. It helped bring the NDP government to power over a year ago and has now ushered in a new generation of civic leaders with new ideas about urban development to communities across B.C.

Recognizing this momentum, the team running BCGEU's *Affordable BC* campaign, with the support of our friends at CUPE 1767, recently produced a new report detailing actions local governments can take to improve affordability.

Some of the recommendations this report makes to civic leaders include:

- Defining "affordable rental housing" in municipal policies as housing that: a) costs 30 per cent or less of an area's monthly median household income; or b) is at least 30 per cent below market rent in that area (whichever is lower in a given community)
- Using new rental zoning powers to increase and protect the supply of affordable rental housing in a way that serves our communities over the interests of wealthy investors
- Fast-tracking affordable housing construction
- Waiving development fees for affordable housing projects
- Waiving property taxes for public and non-market affordable rental housing construction for 10 years
- Building new affordable rental housing on municipal and school district owned lands

- Supporting the implementation of the land value capture tax system, which can help stabilize land values and raise funds for affordable housing projects and public transit

More and more we're seeing a desire for bold change in the way we regulate and tax real estate to ensure it remains affordable for everyone.

With the local elections behind us, we now have chance to work with new mayors and councils to implement changes in our communities to make life more affordable.

You can learn more about our municipal housing plan at: [www.affordablebc.ca/municipal-plan](http://www.affordablebc.ca/municipal-plan)

What can you do? Bring this plan to your city hall and ask your elected officials to implement these policies locally. Ultimately, publishing a report will not make local officials implement these policies. They will only do so if their constituents ask for change.

Since the *Affordable BC* campaign was launched a year ago, we have seen a lot of progress made on housing at the provincial level. Together, we can also work to bring changes at the local level.





# UBCM 2018

**I**t was a jam-packed agenda when the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) held their annual convention in Whistler in early September. It brought together local government representatives from around B.C. to discuss a wide variety of issues and vote on policy resolutions. These issues included library funding, short-term vacation rentals, eliminating daylight-saving time, and much more.

BCGEU leadership also attend the convention because many of the issues discussed at UBCM affect our BCGEU members at work and in their communities. We're there to represent our members' interests.

This year, we focused on communicating about our *Affordable BC* housing campaign, our position on cannabis sales and the funding of services.

## Cannabis

With the legalization of recreational cannabis across Canada a reality, cannabis was one of the leading issues at the convention, where multiple resolutions were debated. Local governments have been given a say in where cannabis is grown and where it's sold. They'll also be responsible for enforcing new bylaws and paying for additional policing costs.

Cannabis is relevant to the BCGEU as our members work at the provincial cannabis warehouse, in government cannabis stores and online retail sales.

"Workers at government cannabis stores, like workers at government liquor stores, are trained to sell products in a socially responsible manner," said Kusam Doal, the BCGEU's vice-president, retail stores and warehouses.

## Funding announcements

The provincial government traditionally makes at least one funding announcement at the UBCM convention each year. This year, there were three: child care, wildfires, and community infrastructure.

BCGEU represents more early childhood educators than any other union in the province. The government's childcare plan is a good example of how communities benefit when different levels of government work together.

*BCGEU leadership also attend the convention because many of the issues discussed at UBCM affect our BCGEU members at work and in their communities.*

There was new funding announced to support local governments to better understand their local childcare needs and develop new childcare spaces in their communities. Families are already paying less for child care than under the former B.C. government, but there's still a shortage of spaces.

Wildfires are another issue that affects BCGEU members — those



who work as forest firefighters and those who live in vulnerable areas. The government announced a program which offers funding to First Nations and local governments to help make their communities more resilient to wildfire.

Finally, there was an announcement outlining how all three levels of government — federal, provincial, and local — are working together. The announcement was for two infrastructure funds that will result in all government cost-sharing to build arenas, community centres and transit, and energy infrastructure.

### Housing affordability is at a crisis point.

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## B.C labour icon remembered at miners memorial weekend

**G**inger Goodwin. We're so glad to have been a part of a summer celebration of his memory.

The BCGEU was the title sponsor of a very special miners memorial weekend in Cumberland B.C. in June. The event marked the 100th anniversary of B.C. labour icon Albert "Ginger" Goodwin.

Goodwin emigrated from England to work in Vancouver Island's notoriously dangerous coal mines in 1910. His experiences led him to become a union leader, a socialist, and an activist. He's remembered as "a worker's friend" for his tireless efforts to improve conditions for fellow workers. His death in 1918 prompted the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council to stage Canada's first ever general strike.

In June, BCGEU members gathered with over a hundred other union members and activists to pay tribute to and promote Goodwin's legacy. We co-hosted an interactive labour history workshop with Canadian Union of Postal Workers and the Simon Fraser University labour history department. Our cross-component committee, comprised of members from north and central Vancouver Island, held a pancake breakfast for attendees.



Ginger Goodwin funeral procession reenactment

Attendees and Cumberland residents also participated in a staged reenactment of Goodwin's funeral procession, based on an iconic original photo of the event.

At the annual vigil held beside Goodwin's grave, MLAs Scott Fraser and Ronna Rae Leonard announced the B.C. government would reinstate a 12-kilometer section of Highway 19 that runs through Cumberland as "Ginger Goodwin Way." The signs, which were first put up in 1996, were removed soon after the B.C. Liberal government was elected in 2001. Fraser also proclaimed July 27th as Ginger Goodwin Day in British Columbia,

marking the exact day he was killed 100 years ago.

"Figures like Goodwin remind us that many of the labour movement's achievements were hard won," said BCGEU executive vice-president James Cocco. "It's encouraging to see those sacrifices being recognized by our government and in our communities."

Miners' memorial weekend is an annual commemoration of past and present labour issues, hosted by the Cumberland Museum and Archives. Next year's events will be in June 2019.



## Members attend summer training

**F**ifteen BCGEU members and local chairs attended the 2018 Western Regional Summer Institute on Union Women (SIUW) at Sonoma State University in July.

This year’s theme *The RESISTERhood — working womxn organizing for collective power* focused on organizing and collective action as integral to advancing working women’s issues and building power for all workers. The focus was on inclusion, with the new spelling for *womxn* as a way to be inclusive of gender nonconforming and transgender people. The spelling also achieves language justice through simultaneous translation for English and Spanish. The plenaries embraced the power of personal storytelling, ending sexual harassment, and mobilizing members. New skills were put to use at a solidarity rally for UNITE HERE! Local 2850 hotel workers to support them in landing their first contract.

“There was an overwhelming sense of being comfortable and safe at an international level. Women in unions are just a phenomenal force,” said BCGEU 1204 chair and attendee Sue Frith.



“It’s this crazy thing about getting women together. You see how awesome we are and how much value we have and that there’s a ton of work we can do in the world. It’s really empowering,” said Chelsey Baron of Local 1707.

SIUW is a program from the United Association for Labor Education. It has rotating hosts from university labour education programs and labour unions, including the BCGEU and the Vancouver District Labour Council, as well as state and provincial labour federations. The 2019 SIUW will be held in Victoria, B.C.

## New First Nations guidebook for members

**T**here is a groundswell of change happening in Canada with respect to relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

The BCGEU has always strived to be a positive ally to Indigenous Peoples and is committed to the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

As part of our ongoing work to put this commitment into action, we’re pleased to announce the BCGEU guide to First Nations acknowledgement, protocol & terminology, a new resource for members, staff and elected representatives of the union.

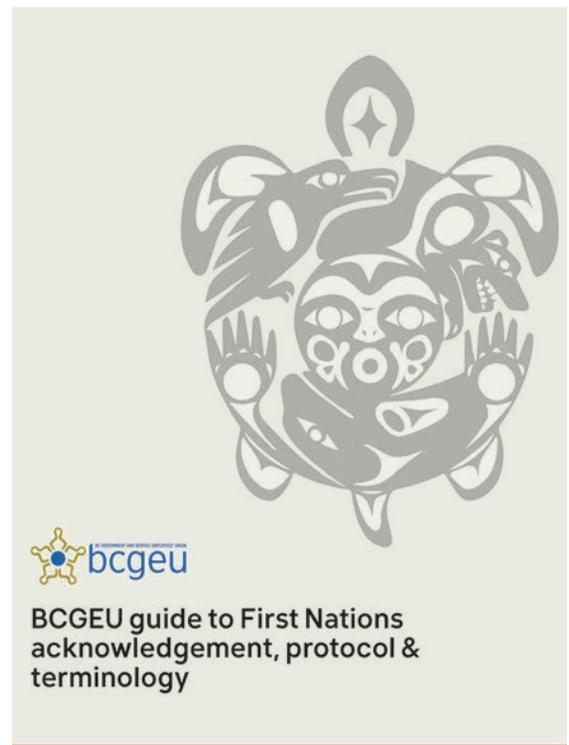
“The BCGEU guide to First Nations acknowledgement, protocol & terminology will help our members, staff and

leadership walk the path towards justice and reconciliation and help us do our work together in the right way,” said BCGEU president Stephanie Smith.

The guide is meant to support you in taking meaningful steps to advance healing and reconciliation in our communities, in our workplaces and in our house of labour.

It includes protocols and helpful tips on simple and more complex reconciliation efforts, including acknowledging whose territory or treaty land you are on at the beginning of meetings, events and conventions to talking about the uncomfortable truths about the history of Canada and how Indigenous Peoples have been treated.

Copies of this resource will be available at all BCGEU area offices, as well as on the BCGEU member portal for use by the membership.



We hope you find the BCGEU guide to First Nations acknowledgement, protocol & terminology a valuable tool.



# Labour Day

In September, Labour Day celebrations took place across B.C., bringing workers and their families together. This year, in the lower mainland, the BCGEU participated in a family event at the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE) along with the BC Federation of Labour, affiliate unions, and labour councils. Photos from the event are below.



(ABOVE) Members, activists and elected leaders of the BCGEU joined other unions and citizens at the 2018 Labour Day festivities in Vancouver.

# Pride

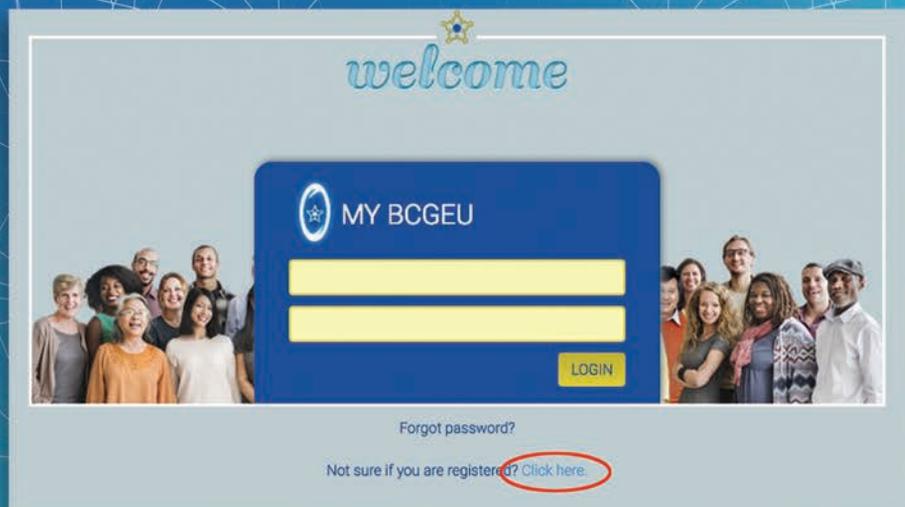
Pride is more than a parade and a celebration. Pride is a movement. This year, our union proudly marched in solidarity with the LGBTQI2S+ community alongside our members across British Columbia. We supported events in Smithers, Fort St John, Nanaimo, Quesnel, Cranbrook, Surrey, Prince George, Victoria, Vancouver, Kamloops, Kelowna, and Dawson Creek.

The Pride parade is an opportunity to remember where the movement came from; to appreciate and celebrate everything the movement has achieved; and to recognize that the struggle for equality continues.



(ABOVE) BCGEU members, activists and elected leaders joined thousands of British Columbians to celebrate Pride festivities across B.C.

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