

# Provincial

Convention  
Candidate  
Statements  
p. 14

## THE FIGHT FOR ESSENTIAL PAY

Orson and Cherylene  
B.C. Liquor Distribution  
Branch workers

p. 3

Big win  
for members  
in the Community  
Living Sector

p. 6

COVID & women a call  
for a just recovery

p. 7





LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Our 51<sup>st</sup> convention will be historic



We are in the final countdown to our 51st triennial convention and, let's face it, this one was always going to be historic.

As the highest governing body of our union—an event that both demonstrates and strengthens our union's democracy—every convention is historic. But, if the 51st convention had gone ahead in 2020, it would have marked the official end of our union's centennial year. Making it a historic celebration of our century of accomplishments and an opportunity to look forward to our next hundred years of activism and fighting for the rights and the values of working people.

Instead, it will be historic for an entirely different set of reasons.

First, our 51<sup>st</sup> convention will be historic for being the first convention postponed due to a global pandemic. Second, it will be our first—and hopefully only—virtual convention.

The virtual platform means this convention will look and feel different—to keep delegates, staff, and elected leaders safe, most business will be conducted remotely and the social opportunities that have been so central to the convention experience in the past will not be part of this one. However, within the constraints of the virtual platform, the convention organizing committee has done an incredible job of making sure that delegates will have a dynamic experience—from debating resolutions and reports, to meetings with committees and caucuses, to honouring fellow activists, to electing the leaders who will represent and support our members until the next convention.

Of course, convention delegates will also have a front row seat for an inspiring slate of keynote speakers from Canada's labour and social justice movements. And that brings me to another reason this convention will be historic. This will be the first convention in a generation where delegates will be addressed by an NDP premier. A premier leading the party's largest and most diverse governing caucus—with more women than men and more IBPOC MLAs than any past government.

Conventions always mark a turning point for our union—a chance to reflect on our history, recommit to our values, and reset our goals and priorities—but the timing and format of this one make it truly historic. I want to thank everyone who has worked so hard to make it happen and I want to thank everyone who put their name forward as a delegate. I am genuinely excited to be part of this event.

More importantly, I want to honour all of you for your courage, strength and resilience over this past year—conventions can be postponed and replanned, lives can't. Whether your workplace was shut down, or whether you spent the year transitioning between remote work and office work, or whether you've been on the frontline every day, this has been a year of extraordinary sacrifice and uncertainty and I've been overwhelmed with the stories of how our members have come together in the spirit of solidarity and support. As we move through our second pandemic summer I hope you and your loved ones maintain that spirit—stay safe, support each other, and get vaccinated if you're able.

*Stephanie Smith*

In solidarity,  
**Stephanie Smith**  
BCGEU president

SPRING 2021

The Provincial is published up to twice yearly by Solidarity Publications Ltd., 4911 Canada Way, Burnaby, B.C. V5G 3W3  
E-mail: theprovincial@bcgeu.ca

Editor: Karen Tankard

Staff writers: BCGEU departments:  
Research & Interactive Services;  
Occupational Health & Safety;  
Conventions

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE

**President** Stephanie Smith

**Treasurer** Paul Finch

**Exec. VP** James Coccia

**Exec. VP** Doug Kinna

**Exec. VP** Joanna Lord

**Exec. VP** Kari Michaels

**Comp. 1** Dean Purdy

**Comp. 3** Andrea Duncan  
Pamela Pye

**Comp. 4** Mahen Ramdharry  
Cina Opel

**Comp. 5** Kusam Doal

**Comp. 6** Judy Fox-McGuire  
Cynthia Egli

**Comp. 7** Cindy Battersby

**Comp. 8** Scott De Long  
Richard Consalvi

**Comp. 10** Rory Smith

**Comp. 12** Maria Middlemiss  
Matt Damario

**Comp. 17** Dave MacDonald  
Megan Washington

**Comp. 20** Rob Davis



4911 Canada Way, Burnaby, B.C. V5G 3W3  
Phone: 604-291-9611  
Fax: 604-291-6030  
1-800-663-1674 (TOLL FREE)

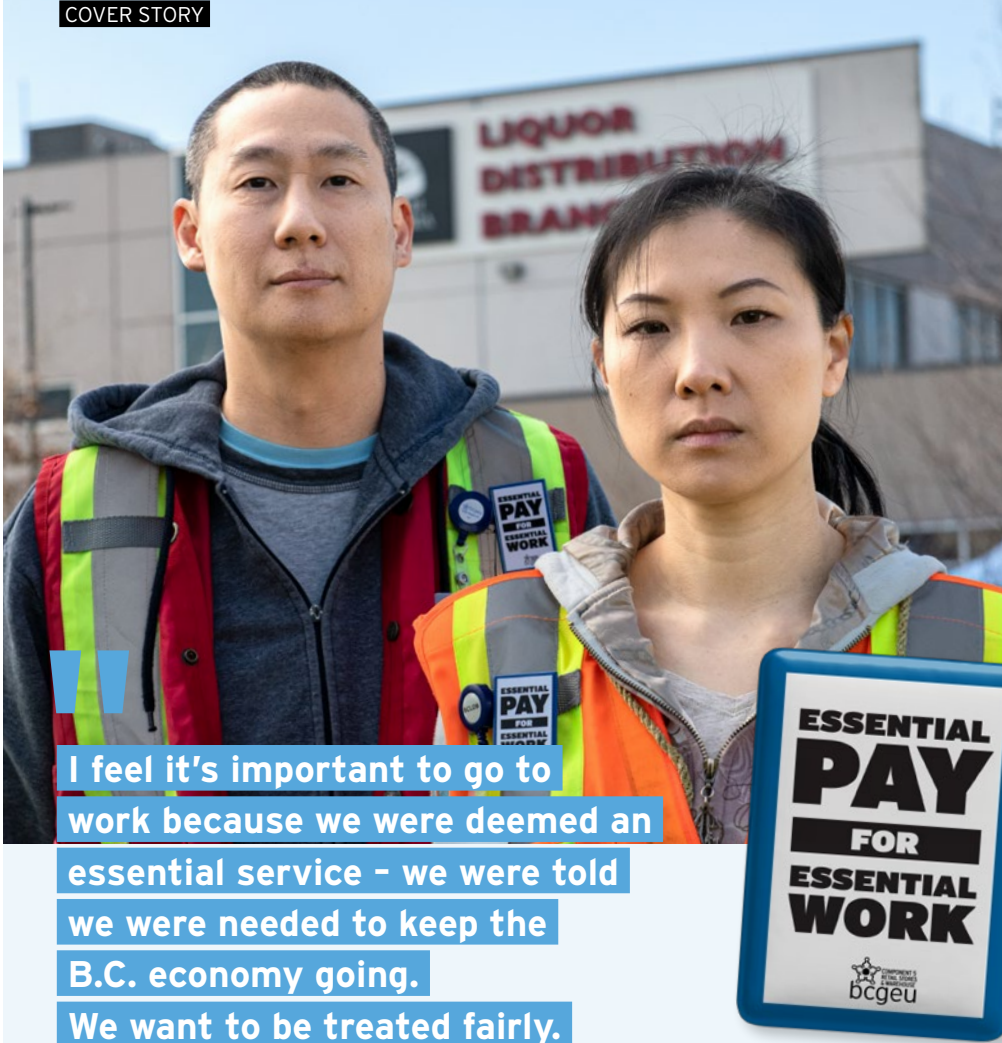
A component of the National Union of Public and General Employees. Affiliated with the B.C. Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress



CONTENT

2	Letter from the president
3	The fight for essential pay
4	The crisis of library workers and B.C.'s social services
5	Unions & climate
6	Big win for members in the Community Living Sector
7	COVID & women a call for a just recovery
8	Solidarity across difference
9	The farmer protest
10	Unlock mental health support for all workers
11	Canada Line strike averted
11	Administrative Professionals' Day
12	Member stories
14	Convention 2021 candidate statements
23	Convention website
24	Unlock mental health support petition

COVER STORY



These are the words of Orson Choy, one of thousands of retail and warehouse workers with the BC Liquor Distribution Branch (BCLDB) who are wearing Essential Pay for Essential Work buttons on the job to show their solidarity and raise public awareness of their ongoing fight for fair treatment and compensation as essential workers.

In its initial response to COVID-19, the B.C. government declared BCLDB workers "essential" but later excluded them from the temporary pandemic pay (TPP) program despite remaining open to the public and, in the case of warehouses, fully operational to support increased demand from stores, pubs, bars and restaurants.

**"Working on the front lines of a pandemic and amidst high product demand has created increased stress and genuine risks to emotional and physical health for all essential workers," said BCGEU component five vice-president Kusam Doal. "BCLDB workers' commitment to their jobs during this crisis deserves to be respected and compensated."**

Since December, members at the BCLDB have been wearing buttons and telling their story publicly through the union's social media, traditional media, and a dedicated website (bcldb.bcgeu.ca). Building strength through organizing, the BCLDB member team has been engaging with their comrades through phone banks and a job action survey. While they pursue cooperation with their employer, workers are also now directly targeting B.C.'s Minister of Finance, Selina Robinson, to release the necessary funds to provide the recognition they deserve for their essential work.

This fight is not our first with the BCLDB, and it won't be our last. Our members' collective agreement will expire in March 2022. Today's organizing and solidarity efforts have the potential to create a solid foundation for future negotiations.



# BURNOUT

## THE CRISIS OF LIBRARY WORKERS AND B.C.'S SOCIAL SERVICES

**The mental health of library workers is in crisis and it was heading there before COVID-19 for many reasons.**

"One factor is vocational awe," noted Jessica Humphries, an activist with the component seven executive and the adult services librarian with Vancouver Island Regional Library (VIRL) in Courtenay. The term, coined by American librarian Fobazi Ettarh in 2018, describes the systemic belief held by library workers about themselves and the profession which results in "notions that libraries as institutions are inherently good, sacred and therefore beyond critique."

"It's this narrative that says, 'They love their work, they love serving community, and so they should take on more but do so without adequate support, training, funding, safe spaces or secure employment,'" said Humphries.

Both Humphries and Jen Seper, library manager at VIRL's Nanaimo North branch and BCGEU library bargaining council chair, noted another factor of library workers' current mental health: libraries are byproducts of colonialism and patriarchy.

"Libraries are predominantly white spaces," said Humphries. "And they're hierarchical - most use a casual staffing model. Or you need a master's degree. It's less likely that a person of colour can afford to work part time, let alone afford university. Also, precarious employment makes securing child-care challenging and stressful. So, we often see a lack of diverse candidates, and a turnover of quality professionals."

"A lot of library workers go into the profession because they want to help," Seper said. "So as more social services in B.C. get cut, libraries become the last place where our most vulnerable community members can go to for help. Repeatedly turning away increasingly desperate people is creating compounded trauma for workers."

The combination of vocational awe and libraries' roots - plus government underfunding of libraries - has created expectations that libraries alone should solve systemic issues like homelessness, community mental health support, poverty, childcare, and equal access to resources on top of typical library services like providing free access to books, Internet, programming and digital literacy training.

Add to this the pressures and stress created from COVID-19, and you have mass burnout amongst library workers.

### So, what's needed?

As for employers, "Implement, in consultation with front line workers, WorkSafeBC's hierarchy of controls in COVID-19 safety plans, restructure library boards so they meaningfully include worker representatives, imbed support workers within the library framework, backfill positions, and centre workers' mental health," Humphries suggested.

As for the library workers, "Our work matters and so do we," said Seper. "We are members of our communities, so to care for them and address these systemic issues, we also need to care for ourselves. We need to continue standing by each other as we do this hard, internal work."

**To get involved in our union's work to address these issues, contact [communications@bcgeu.ca](mailto:communications@bcgeu.ca)**

## UNIONS & CLIMATE: BARGAINING FOR THE FUTURE

The climate crisis and the sustainable management of our natural resources may be the greatest challenge of our time.

Already in British Columbia, mountain pine beetle infestations, wildfires, flooding and unusual weather patterns have touched many communities. Changes will come slowly until they don't.

Science tells us that to avoid the worst effects of climate change and to protect our air, water and food systems, we need to cut our greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in half by 2030 and get to net zero by 2050. Net zero emissions means an economy either emits no greenhouse gas emissions or offsets its emissions.

**Unions can and must be part of the solution to the climate crisis. When we use our political power to fight for issues, such as raising the minimum wage, health and safety benefits or paid sick leave for workers, this leads to major victories for working people.**

By putting climate change on the list of priorities and advocating for environmental justice, unions are saying to decision-makers that members' future health and safety and livelihoods must be part of the political agenda. Unions shouldn't just play a supporting role.

Unions have always campaigned against unsafe workplace hazards and it is workers who fight the impacts of climate change every day. Firefighters risk their lives during flooding and wildfires. With emissions rising, our house is on fire.



We need a just transition. This means a net zero economy that minimizes the impact to workers, the environment and communities. It also identifies and supports future opportunities for affected workers and involves them and their communities in discussions and decisions about their livelihoods.

**Labour unions have many tools in their toolboxes. In addition to political clout, unions can use their financial assets to demand accountability from companies and to future-proof their portfolios.**

Unions can also bring climate to the bargaining table and win in our workplaces and the broader society. In New York, a coalition of unions came together to form Climate Jobs New York and demanded action. Collectively, they negotiated an impressive list of victories including a retrofit of all public schools, reduction of energy use by 40 per cent in all public schools, repair and expansion of the New York public

transit system, construction of a high-speed rail system and the establishment of the Just Transition Task Force.

A similar program in B.C. has massive potential. We need to retrofit our public and private building stock, to build new public transportation, to scale up renewable energy, and to develop a just transition framework that looks at both renewable energy as well as inequality, racial injustices, and the rights of Indigenous peoples.

Now is the time to develop our goals and strategy, and to build alliances with other unions - to work towards real climate solutions.

On April 10, trade union activists will come together for a Labour Climate Forum, jointly sponsored by the BCGEU, BCTF, VDLC, and other unions, to explore labour's role in solving the climate crisis.

**For more information and to register, visit [labourclimatenetwork.ca](http://labourclimatenetwork.ca)**



# BIG WIN FOR MEMBERS IN THE COMMUNITY LIVING SECTOR

Last fall, over 200 new BCGEU members at Lower Mainland Society for Community Living (LMSCL) took on their employer and won millions of dollars in unpaid overtime and statutory holiday wages.

These largely Filipino workers provide community and residential support to clients with developmental disabilities throughout the Lower Mainland. LMSCL had been mistreating workers for years until they finally had enough and courageously challenged their employer and won.

Determined to get fairness and transparency, LMSCL workers chose the BCGEU to help them form a union at their workplace. It was not easy for the workers to reach out and encourage their co-workers at over 30 worksites across the Lower Mainland to come together to fight for what they deserved and form a union. Eventually, after several months of hard work, they won a certification vote and joined BCGEU in the fall of 2019.

At the same time as workers were organizing, four filed a complaint with the Employment Standards Branch (ESB) with the help of the BCGEU. The BCGEU also asked the ESB to investigate and extend any investigation to all of the employer's employees. The employer had been denying its workers overtime and statutory holiday pay for years. LMSCL argued these workers were live in home support workers and, therefore, exempt from paying overtime and statutory vacation pay under the Employment Standards Act. The workers successfully proved they were not exempt.

The employer appealed the initial decision, but the workers won again and again. Eventually, an ESB investigation determined in late October of last year that LMSCL owed its workers over \$2.6 million in unpaid wages.

With dogged determination and hard work, these BCGEU members fought hard to ensure they got the fairness they deserve at their workplace. This process has demonstrated the power of the workers, fighting together to push this forward. In the end, it was a huge win for the workers. They are an inspiration, and a powerful example of what workers can achieve when they work together to stand up to their employer.

## You have rights at a union workplace

Workers at LMSCL fought hard to form a union at their workplace. They fought to gain the rights and protections of union workers in the community social services sector.

Here are some of the rights union members need to remember:



**Violence is not part of your job.** You have the right to a workplace free of physical and psychological violence.



### You do not have to fear repercussions

when you advocate for your clients. Management cannot discipline or fire you unfairly for standing up for what you know is right for clients.



**You have the right to have steward present when you talk to management**

**Talk to a steward to find out more about the rights you have at your workplace.**

# COVID & WOMEN A CALL FOR A JUST RECOVERY

As we mark the one-year anniversary of the global health pandemic, it has been apparent that not all people have been affected equally by COVID-19.

More women, especially Indigenous, Black, racialized and trans women, have suffered health, economic and social consequences of COVID-19.

Women are on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis, as community health care workers, caregivers, educators, service industry workers, community organizers and as some of the most effective national leaders in combating the pandemic.

The crisis has highlighted both the necessity of all women's contributions and the disproportionate burdens women carry.

This is why the BCGEU provincial executive women's committee organized a virtual women's conference entitled, COVID & Women: A Call for a Just Recovery on March 27 for women who live and work in the BCGEU's region three.

Katherine Scott, a senior economist with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, shared her research into the gendered impacts of the pandemic in Canada and why many women, especially racialized women, have been hit so hard.



Her data indicates 56 per cent of women workers are concentrated in occupations that she calls the five Cs: caring cashiering, catering, cleaning and clerical work, many of which are deemed essential. While they are necessary for the functioning of society, none of these roles could be done safely from home. All put the workers at risk of exposure to the virus, making them and their families more vulnerable.

The conference also featured a panel of BCGEU members sharing their stories of working through the pandemic and what they have to offer for recommendations on what a better support system from their workplace, their union and their government would look like. Participants heard stories from the front lines of community health care, women's services, immigrant services and child-care, all sectors that cared for many of us through the crisis.

The essential work that keeps our communities functioning is often done by women, yet

rarely are their stories prioritized in policy discussions about health and safety, or economic justice.

The COVID & Women: A Call for a Just Recovery conference ended with a powerful panel of leaders sharing their vision of an empowered future. Harwinder Sandhu, the MLA for Vernon-Monashee, Toni Boot, Mayor of District of Summerland, and Sussanne Skidmore, secretary-treasurer of the BC Federation of Labour, were the speakers, sharing their perspectives on what a gender just recovery would look like.

Together, conference participants and the BCGEU provincial executive women's committee reflected on the roadmap for a post-pandemic recovery that centres around the needs of all women. We can do this by rebuilding our social infrastructure in child-care, health care, and community social services that are the foundation of our society. A gender just recovery will pull us out of this crisis and make us resilient to the next one.



# SOLIDARITY ACROSS DIFFERENCE



Do you find yourself hanging out with the same group of union or work friends who happen to look a lot like you?

Do you ever experience feelings of discomfort or even irritation when equity and diversity is discussed? Have you ever tried to challenge the racial status quo and been met with nothing but resistance and denial? BCGEU Learning is tackling some of these questions in our new equity and human rights focused online course with the working title of Solidarity Across Difference.

"This course couldn't come at a better time," said BCGEU president Stephanie Smith. "Institutions have to rise up and challenge current and historic systemic racism, including the BCGEU."

The resurgence of Black Lives Matter after the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in the United States and the tragic and unnecessary death of Chantal Moore in New Brunswick has brought urgent attention to the need to tackle systemic racism, including here in Canada. COVID-19 has exposed real inequalities, including those of race, gender and social condition, as well as triggering anti-Asian racism and hate crimes. The former Trump administration fueled a huge rise in blatant racism and white supremacy and neofascism, often expressed in hate crimes there and in Canada.

Solidarity Across Difference is a highly participatory webinar series designed to meet members where they are at. It's an opportunity for

workers to hear from each other and identify how our lived experiences shape the way we see and understand differences at work and in our communities. Through a variety of facilitated activities, participants will engage in challenging, yet refreshing, conversations and be accountable to each other.

The course is designed to spark a transformative experience, gently pushing and encouraging members to consider new approaches to unity and solidarity. The overall goal is to expand our understanding of solidarity and learn how diverse voices, experiences and stories can contribute in positive ways to help us get what we want as workers.

The launch of Solidarity Across Difference also marks a new beginning for BCGEU Learning as it is the first in a new series of courses that will be open to all members regardless of your

level of involvement in the union. Members will be eligible to apply for a leave of absence from work to attend the course.

This is part of our ongoing commitment to make courses more accessible for all members and to offer topics that tackle the critical issues and concerns of the day for workers. Solidarity Across Difference is being developed in consultation with a working group made up of executive vice-presidents, staff and members who are Indigenous, Black and people of colour who will guide the development of the course. The course will be piloted in April and May, and then be opened for all members.

As Layla Saad, who led the Instagram challenge entitled Me and White Supremacy, said, "Building the racial stamina to challenge the racial status quo is a critical part of our work as white people."



# THE FARMER PROTEST

## WORLD'S LARGEST PROTEST YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT

### What is the issue?

The farmer protest in India has been called the largest protest in the world. In November 2020, thousands of farmers, primarily from the states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, marched in protest of three agricultural laws passed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government that will deregulate produce sales, affecting pricing, storing and selling of produce in India. Farmers feel this will drive inequities by removing existing guaranteed prices and instead be at the mercy of market pricing. The outcome of this deregulation will favour companies, thereby destroying the livelihoods of small and low-income farmers.

### How is this relevant to British Columbia?

B.C. has its own lengthy history with immigrants coming from various countries, including India, and taking on farm work only to see exploitation and unfair working conditions. In the 1980s, many farmworkers mobilized and peacefully protested, eventually resulting in the creation of the Canadian Farmworkers Union. The union's work shaped agriculture work for years to come, having a significant impact on immigrants and people of colour in B.C.

The large South-Asian diaspora, particularly the population of Punjabi Sikhs, that reside in B.C. has seen direct impacts of the farmers' protests on their families. We know of several BCGEU members who have family in India.

"My uncle and cousins are farmers in Punjab and they've gone over to Delhi to protest peacefully," said component seven member Raji Toor. "It's affecting them significantly. They are very worried about their future and their children's future."

"I have a family connection, with generations of my own family farming in India and Canada," said Preet Sangha, also a component seven member. "There is a foundational connection."



There have been ongoing peaceful protests here in B.C. to show solidarity and shine the light on the farmers' protests and to call attention to the unjust and violent responses from the Indian government and police. We will likely see this support continue, as a resolution has not been reached.

### What can you do?

In an attempt to bring this dire situation to light, we've seen global demonstrations of solidarity and early signs indicate it may be having an impact.

"This is what unity, solidarity and standing together across borders can do," said Sangha. "Although we haven't seen a resolution on the bills, we're seeing discussion and a shift because of global support. I want members to

know that we should never underestimate the strength we have in numbers. This is a source of our power. When have we seen something of this size? I don't think any government or corporation would expect that we would get this far. They were wrong and they miscalculated how deeply connected we are to the land. Generations of our families have been able to produce and feed our community. This is our pride and joy."

To learn more about upcoming local protests follow [@bckisaanevents](#) on Instagram.

To donate to support the farmer protest: [khalsaaid.org/donate](https://khalsaaid.org/donate)



# UNLOCK MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR ALL WORKERS

Between 2016 and 2019, WorkSafeBC reported an alarming 50 per cent increase in claims for psychological workplace injuries, like PTSD.

Now, during COVID-19, some members are experiencing new or intensified stressors and psychological injuries at work.

Unfortunately, workers struggle to get the help they urgently need because of unnecessary barriers to accessing support for psychological injuries. WorkSafeBC usually requires extensive psychological evaluations, and it can take months to process claims. This can create emotional and financial stress for workers who are already in crisis.

Together we can change this.

Last month, our union launched the Unlock Mental Health Support campaign to call on the government to remove unnecessary barriers.

To bring home what a serious issue this is, members across our union were invited to share their stories about traumatic events at work, and the urgent need to unlock mental health supports for workers.

"I've had a patient tell me he lived two blocks from the worksite, and he was going to bash my head in with a baseball bat," a BCGEU member shared. "I've had scars down my arm from being scratched while trying to protect a co-worker. The worst is doing room checks and finding somebody hanging. It's really tough when a patient you've been working with for a year kills themselves."

"These things affect you outside of work. You put up your wall, disassociate if you have to,"



**CONTENT  
WARNING**

This article contains descriptions of mental illness, violence, suicide, and sexual assault.

another member told us. "Put all those things in the closet in the back of your head, but sometimes the closet door doesn't stay shut. Something triggers a wave of emotions, and you start crying. How do we get help when our closet doors won't stay closed anymore? What about the baggage we bring home to our families? What about the self-medicating? We need help."

One BCGEU member who was sexually assaulted by a client recounted their experience trying to access mental health support through WorkSafeBC.

"The lengths I had to go to prove that my psychological injury was due to [the assault] was unacceptable," said the worker. "The experience of having to retell my story over and over to access care was arguably just as traumatizing as the assault. We deserve support and should not have to re-traumatize ourselves to access it."

Certain occupations, including first responders, corrections officers, and some health care workers, face fewer barriers. They're given what's called presumptive coverage, which allows them to access mental health support without having to prove their injury was caused by their work.

Pressure from workers and the public has already forced the government to extend presumptive coverage to nurses, health care aides, and emergency dispatchers. But many of the workers, who are most vulnerable to psychological injuries, still face unnecessary barriers and this is why our union is calling for change.

Join the campaign to Unlock Mental Health Support for all workers.  
Visit [UnlockMentalHealth.ca](https://UnlockMentalHealth.ca)

# CANADA LINE STRIKE AVERTED

While many of us have been commuting to work via Zoom this past year, Canada Line workers have been heading into the maintenance centre or out onto the station platforms to make sure the trains are running safely and on time for other front line workers still traveling on public transit.

The last year has been difficult, especially with the additional fear and anxieties that front line workers have faced during a pandemic. Making it even more challenging was having to work without a new contract after the previous agreement expired in December 2019.

After several months of bargaining for a fair agreement and with little progress, Canada Line workers voted nearly unanimously in November 2020 to strike. No one wanted to inconvenience passengers during an already trying time, but

members also had to stand up for what all front line workers deserve: respect and a fair contract.

In late January, 72-hours strike notice was given and with the reality of the picket line looming, SNC Lavalin, the employer and operator of the Canada Line, came back to the bargaining table. Talks went long over several days and when a legal strike position was reached, workers held off for a few more hours, hoping a deal would come through. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of the bargaining committee, a fair deal was finally reached.

"Bargaining isn't easy at the best of times and bargaining during a pandemic is definitely not the best of times," said BCGEU president Stephanie Smith. "Canada Line members showed incredible solidarity under extremely challenging circumstances, and they got it done."



ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS' DAY

# WE SALUTE THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS WITHIN OUR RANKS

They're the unsung superstars of their workplaces, and we don't want to imagine what a day without administrative professionals would look like. Each April, we celebrate all that they do. In 2021, Administrative Professionals' Day falls on April 28.

This year, the BCGEU's administrative services component (component 12) has ordered 12,000 face masks for members in the component. Check your email on details on how to order your mask.



"What a year 2020 was," said component 12 vice-president Maria Middlemiss. "None of us could have predicted we'd be dealing with a worldwide pandemic. We faced many more challenges than usual. But admin-

istrative professionals met them head on. As we entered into the provincewide lockdown last March, many of us were deemed essential. We reported to work—as always—to provide necessary services, while worrying about our own health and safety. Some of us were also dealing with elderly family members. Others needed to care for children while schools were closed, and no child-care was available. Regardless of the obstacles, we adapted—showing incredible resilience and determination. There are more challenges ahead. I know we'll continue to provide the essential services British Columbians count on. You are valued, you are respected and we thank you for everything you do."

12,000+

Did you know more than 12,000 members work in administrative services around B.C. and not just in government?

They also work in health, community social services, education, corrections and other sectors.



Laura Kaminker  
Librarianship

“I didn’t start this. It’s important to me to acknowledge all the work that everyone did, that gave me the base to work from. I would not have created this kit in any other way.”

This is the essence of Laura Kaminker’s attitude as a librarian at Vancouver Island Regional Library’s Port Hardy branch.

Originally from New York City then Ontario, Kaminker practices what many library workers exercise today – community librarianship, which is the act of letting the community steer the library. In 2020, Kaminker had the opportunity, thanks to the advocacy of her fellow BCGEU library workers, to use library funds to serve the local Kwakwaka’wakw community.

Kaminker knew the answer had to come from the community itself. She also knew, as a newcomer to the area and a colonial settler on Indigenous lands, she first had to build a trusting relationship.

Through connections facilitated by North Island College’s Indigenous education program, Kaminker was able to convene a group of local Indigenous service providers. Together, they identified the community needed an updated, expanded cultural literacy kit – the knowledge required to fully participate in society, the skills and information needed to have empathy, and understanding of someone else’s culture.

The group also guided Kaminker in selecting the kit’s 15 items, all for a variety of literacy levels aimed at both Indigenous and non-Indigenous library users.

Beyond the completed kit, Kaminker said the most important outcomes of the project were the relationships that formed.

“After using the kit with her family, one patron referred to the Indigenous community as her neighbours – which they are, but not everyone has that attitude,” she said. “That made me incredibly happy. I feel it’s a responsibility of the library to make literacy accessible and to contribute to our society’s reconciliation work.”



Wynn Hartfelder  
Domestic violence support

Meet Wynn Hartfelder, a longtime BCGEU member who works in domestic violence support for women and children experiencing, or thought to be at risk, of domestic abuse.

In her 22 years at Archway Society for Domestic Peace, Hartfelder has worked in a variety of positions. They include senior transition house worker, women’s outreach worker, group facilitator and more.

The Archway Society for Domestic Peace provides a wide range of support services for survivors of domestic and sexual violence through safe shelter, counselling, child and youth advocacy, outreach services and collaborative community projects.

Her work is on the front lines in the transition house supporting women and children in need. Without services such as this, women and children may remain in unsafe relationships involving violence and addiction.

COVID-19 has meant adaptation for everyone at the shelter.

“Things have been vastly different at the house, with social distancing, room capacities and everyone having to wear masks in common areas,” Hartfelder said.

Still, despite all the challenges, she looks forward to making an impact and bringing about positive change.

“For myself and my colleagues, the most rewarding part of this work is building trusting and safe relationships with women and children to support them in staying safe and rebuilding their futures free from violence,” she said.

Anoshika Buthgamuwa  
Early childhood educator

Meet Anoshika Buthgamuwa, an early childhood educator at YMCA Day-care-Beach Centre in Vancouver where she has worked since 2012.

Buthgamuwa believes in her work because she knows the first six years of a child’s life are so important to their development. By providing quality child-care, we are providing childhood education and setting up children to succeed.

“It is so rewarding for me to see with my own eyes how much a child can develop emotionally, physically, socially, and how they can solve problems,” Buthgamuwa said. “Every day, I can see children reach their potential.”

This hasn’t been an easy year due to COVID-19, but she is proud of her team and how everyone has pulled together. She sees the use of personal protective equipment and following protocols as an act of solidarity and mutual care.

“By wearing masks, we are showing our care for one another,” she said.

However, one of the hardest challenges that Buthgamuwa faces is working with children with her mask on who sometimes find it hard to recognize emotions and, for example, want story time to be the same as it always was.

Buthgamuwa is a proud to be part of a hardworking, caring and collaborative team of professionals. She knows her work is at the heart of the quality child-care system that all children need to thrive.



John Manthorpe  
Family support worker

John Manthorpe is a family support worker at Island Métis Family & Community Services Society. Throughout his seven years in this position, Manthorpe has assisted parents with skill-building so that their children can remain in the home, or so they can be reunited after being in care. He also helps connect extended family with children who are unable to live with their parents.

“The work that we do is aimed at strengthening family unity and resiliency utilizing, when possible, tools and practices that have been a part of the family’s successes,” said Manthorpe, adding the work is rooted in the Métis culture. “We take a similar approach when we draw upon the traditions and practices of the family’s community.”

Without people like Manthorpe doing this important work, Métis families would not receive support services which prioritize their cultural values, traditions and practices. Manthorpe is equally proud and humbled of being a part of such positive change and providing these vital services to families.

“One of the great rewards of my work is bearing witness to a family that is rebuilding and reuniting,” he said.

As for the impact COVID-19 has had on his work, Manthorpe said there are many positives that have been greatly accentuated in his personal and professional life.

“Two of these are the importance of strong communities and the need for social connection,” Manthorpe said. “The love of family is also emphasized. I must add that these same values are what draws me to the people and work of my union.”



CONVENTION 2021

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

At our 2021 Constitutional Convention in June, member delegates representing their locals will elect our union's President, Treasurer and the four Executive Vice Presidents for the next three years.

Statements from candidates for these offices that were declared and submitted prior to the deadline are on the following pages.

Candidates will also record video statements and delegates will receive links to these statements by email.

The written and video statements—as well as other important updates on convention—can also be found on our convention website at [convention.bcgeu.ca](https://convention.bcgeu.ca)

Statements p. 15-23 →



STEPHANIE SMITH

PRESIDENT

officers, and more servicing staff in area offices. In fact, we've strategically added more staff in every department to meet your current needs and to allow us to keep growing in the future.

As we've grown in size, we've grown in strength and influence. The relationships I've built in the broader labour movement, provincially and nationally, have created a foundation of solidarity that we can count on. Closer to home, I've been proud to be appointed by our government to serve as "labour's voice" on working groups and advisory boards tasked with developing legislation that is changing our province for the better—like the Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee and the Tourism Task Force. I know that this government, while perhaps not moving as far or as fast as we'd like on every issue understands the importance of including our union in their agenda. My ability to represent you to government and to the public through the media has increased our profile and added to our strength.

Our size and strength means your union is better able to support you where it matters most, in your worksites. The pandemic has forced us to change some of the ways we bring members together to do worksite campaigns, bargaining, and advocacy designed to make your working life better, so we're doing that. I'm proud that we are on our way to transforming our union to be more inclusive and better represent, support, and reflect members from diverse backgrounds and with diverse needs.

We're negotiating stronger collective agreements than ever. We know we won't get everything we table, but we're achieving critical improvements thanks to our pattern language project. In some sectors, we've achieved historic and long overdue increases in wages and benefits. As 2022 approaches we're already well engaged in preparing for upcoming bargaining for more than two-thirds of our members. I'm fully committed to moving forwards, never backwards, in all contract negotiations and stand prepared to put the resources in place to make that happen.

As valuable as collective agreements are, they're not the only tool we have to solve problems, we need to bring our union to life every day in every worksite to support every

member. Along with your treasurer and your senior leadership, I continue to develop and support budgets that prioritize giving activists like stewards and OHS committees as well as members, the tools they need to "be the union" and make real positive change at work.

As our union has grown, I've also grown on a personal level. That's thanks to everyone I've met since 2017—the stories and perspectives you've shared have taught me more than I could have imagined and have prepared me to be your voice. Whether it's at a review of the Workers' Compensation Board, or the labour code, a budget submission or a review of the province's approach to wildfire and flood preparation, it's important to me that our union's position is always informed by you. Being able to meet you in person, in your communities, has been the thing that I've missed most over the last year. I'm more committed than ever to be accessible to you in any way I can be.

Another union leader I know recently said that the pandemic provided them an opportunity to really ask themselves, "Am I 100% in?" I've asked myself that question—because I believe that workers need strong unions and committed union leaders now, more than ever. My answer is a whole-hearted yes! If I am re-elected as president, I promise to do everything in my power to continue growing our union's strength and influence by focusing on inclusion and representation of our membership in all its diversity to make sure we are ready for whatever comes next.

To do so, I am asking for your support in re-electing me as President at our 2021 Convention.

Please feel free to contact me at any time via:

[fb.com/StephanieSmithBCGEU/](https://fb.com/StephanieSmithBCGEU/)

[twitter.com/steph\\_smith303](https://twitter.com/steph_smith303)





# PAUL FINCH

## TREASURER

the union’s finance policy. I have also continued to deepen our financial oversight, refining our procurement and internal audit processes, and introducing successively more complex and effective risk management and accountability measures.

### Continuing to Build the Union

Speaking with many of you at your worksites and in membership meetings over the last four years, the priorities of our union continue to be clear. We must always refocus on our purpose and ensure we are good at the basics, and deliver on our core mandate of negotiating good wages, benefits and occupational health and safety protections. But the basics are not all we can or should do. We must also meet the challenges of the affordability crisis head on, and continue to build a more diverse, inclusive and democratic union.

Reflecting on the past four years, I want to highlight a few of our accomplishments since our last convention:

- The creation of a shareholder engagement program, leveraging our investments to ensure they are ethical and continue to provide superior returns.
- Our pattern language project, creating a backbone template for negotiations that has systematically won key gains, like expanded pensions and paid leave for survivors of domestic violence.
- The Affordable BC campaign, putting forward a comprehensive understanding and policy solution framework to tackle the province's affordable housing crisis, and building a movement to implement those policies on the municipal and provincial level.
- The successful implementation of the new Sector and Bargaining Council language that was adopted by our 2017 convention, leading to the creation of Health Science Professional and Casino councils.
- The expansion of front line servicing to meet the needs of a growing membership, including a dedicated Occupational Health and Safety department with dramatically expanded resources.
- Opening new member area offices in Terrace and Ft St John to help meet the needs of our members in the north.
- Building key alliances in labour and civil society to influence government policy on issues of the day such as housing, money laundering, child-care and labour rights.

- Fighting and winning specific campaigns for segments of our membership, such as winning back the right for Wild Fire crews to wear their distinctive unit patches, and pushing the government to implement a presumption clause for work related illness.

- Our new project to build an area office in Burnaby, and provide affordable housing and childcare to the community while doing so.

### Moving Forward Together

While we have accomplished a lot over the past four years, there is still more to do.

With the rising cost of living in the province, we need to continue to fight on two fronts: winning better wages and benefits for our members in contract negotiations, while at the same time building political support to force municipal and provincial governments to fix the affordable housing crisis.

We need to continue to modernize our union, communicating effectively in both established and new ways, and developing accurate membership and seniority lists.

As we grow, we need to continue to democratize our union to involve more members. That means winning the right to union meetings on employer-paid time on the worksite, to compensate for the inability of most members to attend or even travel to their local meetings.

We also need to address the specific needs of members in specialized occupations, recognizing that while Components often house a diverse array of occupational groups, we need new structures such as sector councils to increase our advocacy for specific professions.

The staff and activists of the union must reflect the diversity of our membership as we advocate and push for justice, in our workplace and across the province, and we must work to create a more inclusive environment both in our union and society.

It’s been an honour to serve as your treasurer, and with your support I hope we can continue to build a financially strong, inclusive and democratic union together.

I look forward to engaging with as many as you as possible before, during and after convention, Please follow and engage with me on social media and over email:

👤 paulgeorgefinch@gmail.com

📘 fb.com/paulgeorgefinch/

🐦 twitter.com/paulgfinch



# JOANNA LORD

## EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

Pride Parades, Centennial events, picket lines and rallies, I have had the opportunity to meet and hear from many of you, your families and friends, in communities from Terrace to Smithers, Fort St John to Williams Lake, Kamloops to Kelowna to Cranbrook, Pemberton to Port Alberni, and Victoria to the Fraser Valley, to name a few.

As part of my Executive duties, I have served on the following:

- BCGEU Committees: Centennial, Education and Scholarship, Grievance Appeal, Political Action and Women’s. I am also liaison to our affiliate, BC FORUM, the provincial body for retired union members.
- BC Federation of Labour Committees: Education, Political Action and Women and Gender Rights.
- National Union of Public and General Employees: Advisory Committee for Women’s Issues.
- Community Groups: Columbia Institute Board, the Advisory and Municipal Committees of the Living Wages for Families Campaign, and the Period Promise Community Action Committee.

The committee work which I am most proud of is co-coordinating the senior leadership conference on equity, diversity and inclusion for our Union in the Fall of 2019 and co-chairing the Centennial Sub-Committee and travelling the Province to meet members and retired members and hearing their stories of solidarity and activism. During 2020 the focus, of course, became dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. From mid-March your senior leadership team have held regular Covid Response briefings and we have all been learning how to engage and support members, and each other, virtually.

**My Journey.** Education and union activism have always been at the forefront of my life. I have worked in administrative and clerical jobs. Following the birth of my son in 2001, I went back to school to complete an Education Degree. While working at establishing my new career in education, I also worked as a Constituency Assistant in my Member of Parliament’s Office. In 2005, I landed a position as an Instructor in the Adult Upgrading Program at VIU. In these positions I have always advocated for people; whether it was for students, fellow workers, or constituents in our communities needing assistance navigating municipal, pro-

vincial and federal programs and legislation. My time working in the constituency office led me to become more active in politics and I stepped up onto provincial and federal NDP executives. I understand the importance of political action in furthering the gains and rights for workers.

**Encourage, Empower and Educate.** As Chair of our Provincial Education and Scholarship Committee I have been a part of growing our BCGEU Education offerings and scholarship program. *Step Up and Organizing Academy* are two powerful courses that continue building internal capacity within our Union by empowering more members to organize in their own worksites for better working conditions, and to become more engaged in our union. An exciting new course, *Solidarity Across Difference*, will roll out in 2021.

As Co-chair of our Political Action Committee, I have worked hard to provide training opportunities for members to use for member engagement generally, as well as for local by-elections, provincial and federal elections.

**Equity, Inclusion and Diversity** strengthen all of us. I am proud of the work we are doing to continue building a more inclusive Union and breaking down barriers to participation. We are a large and diverse union with many differing interests but when we stand together in solidarity, we are rooted in the struggles of everyone. We are all workers.

This past year has been particularly challenging. Covid-19 has impacted us in ways we couldn’t have imagined; at work, at home and in our communities. I am excited to be part of building on how far we’ve come and to the possibilities of where we can go.

Please contact me anytime. I look forward to continuing conversations with you over the next months leading up to the Convention, and dedicating time and attention to the issues that you have raised. I ask you to re-elect me so we can work together to make further gains for a more fair and inclusive society.

In solidarity,

Joanna Lord

👤 Joanna4EVP@gmail.com

📞 250-709-8326

📘 Joanna Lord

🐦 @JoMLord

📍 Joanna.m.lord





Dear Union Family,

We have worked tremendously hard over the last four years to better our union. The COVID-19 global pandemic dramatically altered our lives, whether adjusting to working from home, new workplace policies, refusing unsafe working conditions, or laid off, we have shown resilience and strength and continue to stand up for each other. We remain connected to our communities across BC by engaging activists online and creating space for fresh ideas and perspectives. I intend to build on our success and continue to grow our achievements.

I am honoured to have served this term and I am respectfully seeking re-election for the position of executive vice-president to continue to build the power of our union through developing our members' capacity.

Background:

I've been active in our union since my fellow workers and I at the Kwantlen Student Association organized our workplace against a hostile employer to protect our rights and safety and the people we serve. We faced a board of directors who were harassing staff and who were intent on firing us because we were preventing them from acting even more irresponsibly. Through this tense and difficult time we had to rely on each other to protect our workplace. Shortly after we won certification, I was elected as a shop steward, bargaining committee member, and a member of our local executive.

Over the past twelve years, I have fought for people's rights, and, like the BCGEU, my commitment and motivation continues to grow. I worked to support our members while I was completing my bachelor's degree at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, organizing the feminist collective on campus, volunteering for the campus Pride collective as a positive space workshop facilitator, a student senator, a director of the alumni association, and working full time as a student advocate.

KARI MICHAELS

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

Building our Union's Power

Over the last four years I have worked with all levels of our union to build our power. Every worksite visit, event, and meeting is an opportunity to strategize with activists about what our union can do to address the most pressing issues - whether it's unbearable workloads, housing, the opioid crisis, an apathetic workplace, or a toxic boss. I made it a priority to seek out worksites without activists to build our union's presence and develop new activists to help the work along.

Speaking with members across the province, I heard about the effects of housing unaffordability in our workplaces and communities. Despite winning increases to wages and benefits in bargaining, life is still unaffordable for so many of us. Working on our Affordable BC campaign I have felt the power of our activists to change their communities:

- We organized against mass evictions in Surrey and won.
- I helped mobilize activists in Kelowna to improve regulations on short-term rentals.
- I was honoured to represent our union on the Burnaby Mayor's Task Force on Community Housing which developed some of the strongest tenant protections in Canada for renters facing demovictions and renovations.
- Through collective action we were able to support a project to build new affordable housing in Victoria.
- We called for an eviction ban at the start of the pandemic and continue to fight to protect housing.

We have built partnerships province-wide with unions, labour councils, and community groups to amplify our stories and ensure we can all effect change. Much more needs to be done to address this crisis affecting all our communities.

Commitments:

- **Union Strength:** I aim to build our union's strength by training and recruiting activists that reflect the growing diversity of our union. I will work to ensure training for equity members is offered across the province and that we train activists to deliver equity workshops for members in their workplaces to build worker solidarity and challenge discrimination in all its forms.
- **Diverse and Engaged Members:** Our union continues to organize new members. Workers want to be part of a movement to make their workplaces better and fight for social justice.

One of our greatest strengths is that we have members in almost every community and sector across the province. Our members are the key to stronger collective agreements and enforcement of hard-fought rights. We need to make sure they are well informed, have a role directly participating in the bargaining process by implementing open bargaining strategies, and helping to plan and strategize our campaigns.

- **Empowered Activists:** Our union is dedicated to building and supporting strong member involvement to tackle the issues we face at work. Organizing from the ground up is the foundation of our union's successes. We need a strategic approach to train and support activists to ensure we can take collective action to resolve the issues members face in the workplace and prevent our activists from burning out. Our union must be accountable for our members to succeed and grow their power.
- **Affordability:** Growing unaffordability is affecting all working people. We must continue to advocate for affordable childcare, health care, seniors care, and build on the successes of our campaign to fix the housing crisis. We have activists in all parts of the province who seek to be connected to leverage our power to protect existing affordable housing and ensure more housing is accessible to working class families. Our communities should be built for us to thrive in, not for the wealthy to invest in.

As an executive vice-president I have proactively sought out opportunities, locally, provincially, nationally, and internationally, to support our members. I build on the relationships with our union allies and community groups to strengthen workers.

So, will you help build our union's strength? If so, I ask for your support to serve as an executive vice-president to continue this work together.

I look forward to having many conversations about how we can continue to move our union forward.

👤 karilysa.em@gmail.com

📘 fb.com/karilysa.em

📧 @kari\_em

In Solidarity,

Kari Michaels

I respectfully acknowledge that our union organizes workers across Indigenous lands and is headquartered on the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.



Dear Delegates,

I am honored to put my name forward for Executive Vice President of BCGEU, and I ask for your support at our upcoming convention this June.

Covid-19 Pandemic has taken a toll on all of us and many of our members are facing extra-ordinary challenges. As a health care professional, I have expertise and experience to support you.

I have served in several elected positions in BCGEU, from a shop steward to executive. I sat on the Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association in the last bargaining and negotiated the 2019-2022 Collective Agreement. I am chair of Health Science Professional Sectorial Council and vice chair of Local 403.

I run for the Executive Vice President because I want to get better contracts for all BCGEU members. As we all know, our collective agreements govern our wage, benefits, and all aspects at workplace. My priorities will be: 1. to improve our collective agreements (CA) to measure up with the most sophisticated CA such as BC nurses' and 2. to ensure collective agreements are respected and honored.

Why do I have these priorities? With almost two decades of the Provincial Liberal party in power, we have experienced significant erosion in our living standard because the Liberal government imposed "net zero" and our wage increase rate significantly lagged the inflation rate. Some of our hard-bargained rights were taken away as well.

As it has demonstrated, the new government is committed to a re-set. Most of our members obtained improved collective agreements for 2019-2022. But the damage and regression caused by the liberal government has not been completely resolved and repaired in one collective bargaining. We still have a long way to go.

PING QIU

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

In the next round of bargaining, I want to have the following 3 items in all our collective agreements:

1) Cost of Living Allowance/Adjustment (COLA)

The annual COLA rate shall base on the adjustment in consumer price index (CPI), a weighted basket of goods and services typically purchased by Canadian households each month. It is corresponding with the inflation rate. Put in a simple way, if we want to maintain the same purchasing power and living standard, we need to have the annual COLA rate to be the same with the inflation rate - always.

Over the years every time we went to bargaining, we worked hard to get a raise.

For many years, the general wage increase had been under 1.5%. The average annual inflation rate had been 1.74% over last 10 years (2010 to 2019) according to the Bank of Canada. That means we have less purchasing power (i.e., we may buy less groceries with our current wage compared with 10 years ago). Thus, our living standard has been lowered. In our current contracts, most of us get 2, 2, 2 for three years, which is much better. But we still barely keep up with inflation because the inflation rate was 2.25% as of Dec 2019 according to the Bank of Canada. I want COLA to be built into all our collective agreements to ensure our wages keep up with inflation. Besides COLA we can bargain for general wage increases.

2) Equal Pay for Equal Work

The past Liberal government created significant pay inequities and employers refuse to correct them. For decades, some of BCGEU members perform identical jobs and receive significant less pay than members with other Union certification; the wage disparity is between 7% to 19%. This is completely an injustice! But we don't have clear and strong language on pay equity in our contracts. Our members have struggled with this issue and have been frustrated and angered by no solution.

In our civilized society, equal pay for equal work should be common sense. Ontario has passed legislation on this issue and there is language on pay equity in BC Nurses Collective Agreement. We must have pay equity language in all our collective agreements.

3) Union Representation in higher level management at workplace

In some worksites, we have ongoing and numerous grievances on harassment, bullying and unfair treatment of our members. Very often there are high staff turn-over rates in these worksites which, not only negatively affect members' health and well-being, but also the quality of services to British Columbians. Once one group of employees leave, a new group of employees are hired by the same problematic management. The new staff then face the same problems and start the cycle of grievances all over again. In a just system, the managers should be removed because they are the problem. But there is no clear language to hold management accountable and responsible for their misconducts. Our Union is only able to support members filing grievances over and over. We shall establish Union representation in higher level management. In Scandinavian countries, Union representatives sit on the board of directors of organizations. This will be a much more efficient way to deal with workplace issues.

Establish National Salary Standard

You may have noticed that the salary difference is very significant between provinces though you have the same education and perform the same job. As a Canadian citizen, we deserve the same compensation while we perform the same job with the same education regardless what province we work. This is equality in our country. I am committed to work with other Unions and allied groups to lobby Federal government to establish national salary standard. This will not only benefit working professionals but also help recruitment and retention in rural communities.

I am a registered social worker with a Master Degree in Social Work. I come from 28 years of mental health and substance use services in Lower Mainland. I have worked on the front line as a clinical case manager and now as a supervisor. I always value equality, social justice and inclusiveness.

I look forward to connecting with you. I seek your support to elect me as your next Executive Vice President.

You can reach me at 👤 PingforEVP@gmail.com.

In Solidarity,

Ping Qiu





As we are moving forward, I would like to thank every one of you who have been working during the pandemic, keeping our communities safe.

I acknowledge that I live, work and I am a member of the larger community on the unceded Coast Salish Territory of the traditional shared lands of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations.

My name is Masoud Aminzavvar (he/him) and I am honoured to run for the position of BCGEU Executive Vice- President. As a son, partner, father, BCGEU member, and Equity member I am concerned that the world we live in is more divided than ever. As a union activist involved and committed to the social justice movement for most of my life, I believe our strength comes from solidarity – and our power from negotiating strong collective bargaining rights. As a Union, we need to continue breaking down barriers for marginalized members, empowering our stewards, and evolving to meet the needs of our members. Our union has made progress since its inception and there is still much more work to be done.

In my 15 years as a BCGEU member and currently working in the DTES Vancouver, I have held a variety of positions at the local and component level. I have been a shop steward, an OH&S representative, a co-facilitator of OH&S workshops, a member of BCGEU's International Solidarity Committee, a member of our bargaining team and the chairperson of Local 803 - an immensely diverse local with more than 4,000 members. I continue to be a vocal advocate for Local 803 and our members in our triennial conventions, the CLC and NUPGE. These experiences of listening to members, being a leader for change (in and out of the Union), and prompting dialogue to support equality and solidarity - have moulded my advocacy.

# MASOUD AMINZAVVAR

## EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

As a member and the chairperson for Local 803, I have been successful in manifesting actions that serve as exemplary examples of rank and file organizing through activism, creating solidarity and power in the service of workers. For the situation of our workers to improve on the shop floor, we recognized that it would be necessary to change how the Local engaged with the membership; we had to re-organize, re-focus, and re-energize our members. Since becoming the Local's chairperson, we have held regular monthly meetings - based on the knowledge that improved member engagement would be crucial in addressing the issues we had been facing in the workplace. Our Local meetings are well-attended and members are connected to the Local like never before, owing largely to the work of activists who maintain connections (and affect change) at worksites. As Executive Vice President, I will maintain this dedication to improving member engagement for all who are represented by BCGEU. Representation matters.

As EVP, I would make it a priority to connect with those worksites that have been forgotten - places where our members need change but lack the tools to make a difference. With all the difficulties the pandemic has wrought, it is especially important that we make use of this time to support our members as best we can and move forward in a direction guided by a sense of collective responsibility towards one another. This means supporting our stewards, who are the core and foundation of our union, whose activism reminds us of what is important. It also means making priority to support young activists, who are the future of this Union. We need to provide them with the knowledge, support, and guidance they need to engage in activism and we must also listen to their voices now. The labour movement can only progress by opening its doors further, and our leadership must be an example of inclusivity and hope for young activists.


Our collective responsibility extends to the community we are a part of, which resides on stolen land. We must therefore recognize the role each and every one of us has to play in Reconciliation, making it our task to hold those in power accountable to these commitments as well. The implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples must be on the agenda of every dialogue we have with every level of government.

More than ever, it is our responsibility to inform our members about the challenges facing every component, and to support them with the tools to face the issues which affect their livelihoods: from workplace violence to unrealistic workloads, forced overtime, two-tier wages, and occupational health and safety hazards. Living and working in British Columbia also means dealing with precarity outside of the workplace, the cost of living continues to climb, affordable housing remains scarce, public transportation fails to support workers' needs, and the opioid crisis has ravaged our communities with grief. As a Union, we have a duty to recognize how these circumstances impact our members and must advocate for our members in their communities, with the vision of improving the quality of life for all British Columbians. As EVP, I will ensure than an awareness of these issues orients the priorities of our Union at every level.

Our awareness can always improve, and it should be strengthened through ongoing consultation. As the composition of our workforce changes, BCGEU must create dynamic opportunities for members to be involved at all levels. If our organizing model is not driven by values of inclusivity and diversity, then it will remain static and we will be incapable of growing in solidarity and power; we will be unable to respond to the challenges of our time, which include widening inequality, the joint threat of climate crises and inaction, and the continued erosion of workers' rights around the world. As a Union, we have a responsibility to our members, and to the labour movement at large, to be a force for solidarity, inclusion, and progress.

My friends, I look forward to speaking with you over the next few months. In the meantime, please send me your questions.

Masoud Aminzavvar

 masoudforevp@gmail.com

 604 649 5453



Friends,

In early 2020, I wrote a personal statement for the convention we thought that we were going to have in June. I outlined my accomplishments over three years as an Executive Vice President (EVP) and my hopes for the next three.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, all of our lives changed dramatically. It changed our union and the ways we work. Some of us work from home; others behind plexiglass, masks, or other barriers. While COVID-19 has forced us to be more physically distant, we also have to rely on each other even more to stay safe.

Occupational Health and Safety Committees are playing a vital role in reducing the spread of COVID-19 and Shop Stewards are working hard to keep people safe. As a union, we have advocated for stronger worker protections, from better PPE to a more responsive Workers Compensation Board. In the midst of this, we have also pointed out the disproportionate impacts that COVID-19 has had on certain populations. We have continued to advocate for accessible childcare, better senior supports, and a stronger response to the overdose crisis. A strong union has never been more important.

As we go into this convention, I hope to hear about the ways we were successful over the last year and the ways we could have done better for the membership. Most of all, I hope to be able to connect with each of you to talk about what kind of union that you want.

### About Me

Over the years, I have advocated tirelessly for students, for the environment, and working people. I worked for an environmental non-profit in my early 20s, where my coworkers and I launched a campaign to join the BCGEU to improve job security and fairness at work. We were successful and became members of Component 20, and the campaign taught me about the power of collective action to improve the lives of working people.

# JAMES COCCOLA

## EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

I later joined the BC Public Service and became a member of Component 12. Like other activists, I have held many roles, including Shop Steward, Local and Component Executive member, Article 29 Committee member, and Victoria Labour Council Executive member.

Since becoming an EVP, I have had an opportunity to lead a number of committees. With the Environment Committee, I've worked with activists to push the BCGEU to be a leader on climate change, developed plans for membership engagement, and worked to reduce our union's greenhouse gases emissions.

As co-chair of the Political Action Committee, I have helped to build campaigns that use modern tools and reach more members than ever. We need to continue to build on this work to achieve our goals and to defend against anti-union legislation.

I believe that a well-structured union with engaged activists is key to a healthy organization. To that end, I chair the Constitution and Structure Committee and work with other members of the Provincial Executive to ensure that our union structure is cohesive and fair. As co-chair of the Young Workers committee, I have helped to make sure that younger leaders have a voice in our union.

I am also the Chair of the Sierra Club of BC, a founding director of Constellation Media Society, and a new trustee to the Public Service Pension Board.

Over the next three years, my priorities will be to:

- Ensure that we can recruit and train new activists;
- Practice strong oversight of the union's resources;
- Fight for better workplaces and communities.

### Supporting Our Activists

Our volunteer activists conduct the day-to-day work of the union by representing members, solving problems, and keeping people safe. COVID-19 has shown us just how important these roles are. Over the past term, I have traveled to every area of the province, visited worksites in all Components, and recruited new activists.

Over the last term, we have made it easier for people to get involved by implementing the new Step Up course; revamping Steward courses; and creating the new Organizing Academy course. I am very proud that, when COVID-19 hit, we were able to move our courses online faster than most other unions.

We are lucky to have such a dedicated and talented group of activists working to make our union stronger. I hope that we continue to recruit activists and become a more inclusive union by reducing the barriers to participation in our structures.

### Strengthening Collective Bargaining

Building our activist base helps our membership, but it also strengthens our collective bargaining ability. By recruiting and training workplace leaders, we are building our capacity to fight for fair collective agreements and push back against aggressive employers.

We also need to be looking at other ways of becoming stronger in negotiations. Over the past four years, we've been at the forefront of negotiating tactics - utilizing shareholder pressure, leveraging community support, and getting creative on the picket lines. Over the next term, we need to build on our tactics by investing in research and bringing in more members into the bargaining process.


Strong financial controls are also key to our success. Solid stewardship has ensured that if worksites need it, they can go on strike and count on financial support from the defence fund.


### Fighting for Justice


Our efforts to build better lives for our members can't be solely limited to the worksite -- we need to be active and effective in our communities. Over the last four years, we have waged a strong campaign on housing, advocated for democratic reform, and organized workers into our union.

As one of BC's largest unions, we can make positive changes for all people in this province. From affordable childcare to environmental stewardship, the BCGEU needs to keep pushing a progressive agenda.

Feel free to connect with your thoughts about the future of our union!

 jcoccola@gmail.com

 250-514-5518

 fb.com/JamesCoccola

In solidarity,

James Coccola

I acknowledge that the BCGEU conducts its work on Indigenous lands and its headquarters is located on unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh nations.





# DOUG KINNA

## EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

Dear Members

This statement was written on the unceded Coast Salish Territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxw̓7mesh (Squamish) & Səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh). It is my desire to continue to work with you to build on our ever expanding, outward looking and diverse union. With this in mind, I ask for your support at the upcoming June convention where I am seeking re-election as one of your Executive Vice Presidents.

Covid 19 presented us with many challenges and difficulties this past year. We all felt it, we were either personally impacted or knew someone who was. As a union we reacted quickly in order to maintain services to members across the province. Some of these changes were not always comfortable or preferable but given the restrictions we had to adapt. I am hopeful that by fall we will be able to return to regular servicing enhanced by technology necessitated by the pandemic,

My BCGEU activism started over 23 years ago, from a belief that workers organized and empowered are a dynamic and unstoppable force for fair wages, gender equality, Indigenous cultural rights, workplace safety and stronger communities.

Many of you know how I feel about activism. Activists fulfill a critical role in our union. The BCGEU has a long history in the labor movement and has improved the lives of workers and their families for the past 100 years. Our union's strength is built on the determination and organization of its activists. This is coupled with a commitment from its executive to fulfill their roles by representing and advancing these interests at the local, provincial and federal levels.

The role of Executive Vice-President is a key component in maintaining the Union's mandate to protect members' job security, wages, promote safe working conditions, promote equity and human rights and participate in Indigenous reconciliation. Our work is to continue to protect and reflect the rights of all workers throughout the province of BC.

As a past member of the Public Service Union Management Steering Committee on Employment Equity I helped introduce fair hiring practices for all equi-

ty-seeking groups. There is still much work to be done within the BCGEU itself to recognize and address hidden barriers to full participation in our union. We must continue to address and develop pathways to facilitate those who are wanting to fulfill their potential in the union and within their communities.

Reconciliation requires taking action to address the decades long history of colonialism and racist practices that have resulted in Indigenous alienation and disenfranchisement. It is crucial for the BCGEU continue to adopt policies and initiatives that begin to address disparities and work toward building relationships and trust with our Indigenous members and their communities. We were one of only two unions in Canada that made a submission to the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls National Inquiry.

Through participation in organizations such as the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, First Call Coalition for Families, Metro Vancouver Alliance, Greater Victoria Acting Together and Technical Advisory Committee for SafeCare BC the BCGEU continues to stay connected and unified with the larger community. I have been afforded the opportunity to be involved with all these organizations by bringing forward issues identified by our members. By playing an active role in community organizing we demonstrate that union concerns are community concerns and that we speak with one voice.

At the provincial level we successfully lobbied the provincial government for changes to the Workers Compensation Board. The Patterson review was implemented as a means of shifting WCB to a more workers centered approach and away from practices implemented by the BC Liberals. This remains a work in progress and we will continue to push for needed changes to the Act.

As chair of the Provincial Executive Occupational Health and Safety Committee we continue to focus on; violence in the workplace, exposure limits and carcinogens, ergonomics, mental health, addictions and psychological health and safety.

There is an emerging and much needed awareness on how these issues affect our members and their families. By making the employer more aware, we achieved some gains in the worksites as well as at the bargaining table.

### My commitment to you

- Work toward full equity for all BCGEU members in our union and in our communities.
- Work with members' in all areas to provide

greater representation, policy development and recommendations to the President and Provincial Executive.

- Continue demonstrating fiscal responsibility to the members by continuing to ensure that dues are not casually or unnecessarily spent.
- Liaise with members in collaboration with the Executive Committee to ensure the BCGEU remains a member driven union.
- Establish closer relationships between the Executive Committee and the rank and file members, Stewards, OH&S reps and Local executives.

### Formal Committees and Appointments

BCGEU

- Chair of Provincial Executive OH&S committee
- Chair of Provincial Executive Resolutions committee
- Vice-Chair Provincial Executive Finance committee
- Co-chair Provincial Executive Trinket Task Force

Ad-hoc committees

- Election of full-time officers
- Review of Area 03 and 04 boundaries

BC Federation of Labour

- Occupational Health and Safety
- Community and Social Action
- Precarious Work working group

Community involvement

- Board member of Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives BC
- Board member of Metro Vancouver Alliance
- Greater Victoria Acting Together
- BC Poverty Reduction Coalition
- First Call Coalition for Families
- Technical Advisory committee for SafeCare BC

Convention Committees

- BC Fed convention resolutions committee
- NUPGE convention resolutions committee
- CLC convention resolutions committee

*Experience, leadership, honesty;* these are my qualifications and commitment to you and why I would like your support to continue as an Executive Vice-President of the BCGEU.

As the Convention draws near, I look forward to creating opportunities to discuss the issues and concerns that are important to you. Please contact me directly at [doug.kinna@shaw.ca](mailto:doug.kinna@shaw.ca) or online at [fb.com/douginna](https://www.facebook.com/douginna)

In Solidarity  
Doug Kinna



# BINNY SIVIA

## EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

agenda of the union towards causes that do not necessarily benefit majority of our members. Though some of these are worthwhile social causes, the resources dedicated to them could be better used to support our members.

The membership services have a lot of room for improvement. We need to focus on bargaining strategies to make some real gains for our members. Public service members in our province are some of the lowest paid in all of Canada. We can and should blame the previous governments for the shortfall but we also need to do some self reflection. I assure you that as your EVP, I would lobby on behalf of our members for appropriate resources to be specifically dedicated for bargaining staff members.

I work as an Environmental Health Officer for Fraser health and I have been working in this

role for over 12 years. I have been a steward for past 10 years and I have also held elected positions in the local and component executives. I have some understanding of the workings of the union and I have spoken to members from almost all components. The lack of faith in the grievance processes seems to be a reoccurring issue within our membership. Many grievances languish for years without resolve. Our members deserve better.

If elected as your EVP, I pledge to represent all members to the best of my abilities, whether they work direct government or healthcare or in a Credit Union, whether they work in lower mainland, Island, North or in the Kootenays.

CONVENTION 2021

OUR RIGHTS  
OUR VOICE  
OUR UNION

bcgeu

RIGHTS VOICE UNION  
MEMBERSHIP AND SERVICE EMPLOYEES UNION CONVENTION 2021

**BCGEU CONVENTION 2021**

In March 2020, the provincial executive made the decision to postpone the union's triennial convention, originally scheduled for June 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Convention has been rescheduled to June 2021. However, due to current restrictions resulting from the pandemic, the BCGEU will be holding a hybrid convention with most delegates attending convention virtually.

How many delegates will get to go to Convention?

**Our Rights, Our Voice, Our Union**

**JUNE 9 - 12, 2021**

Our union is 80,000 members strong and still growing. Convention brings us together to share our common values of respect, dignity, equity and justice for all. By working in solidarity, we can expand the scope of our values to reach even more workplaces in the future.

Workers have a right to organize and have their voices heard. This will be the resounding message at convention.

**For more information, visit [convention.bcgeu.ca](https://convention.bcgeu.ca)**



