

Griffin Becker
Son of Dorothy Becker, local 703
Region 3

I envision unions being a body of people that work collaboratively as a moral compass striving to make business leaders and government accountable to the working people. As a young man accruing debt to obtain the necessary education and training to acquire a living wage, I wonder how I will be able to afford to live in B.C. My desired line of work will lead me to a union job with most likely a city or municipality, which is one of the contributing factors for my choice of careers. I believe in the ability of unions to make a difference.

I've watched my Mother, a BCGEU member, find it harder every year to be able to provide for her family as the wage increases have not kept up with the rise in the cost of living. In my research I have discovered that the BCGEU has been working to make a difference in the affordability of living in B.C. so that this province's working people can stay living here.

The BCGEU has undertaken finding ways to make housing affordable in B.C. They have been working with experts and CUPE and in the fall of 2017 developed a document called "Affordable BC Plan". The Plan can be summarized by its three main recommendations:

1. Reforming property taxes to target speculators and raise funds for affordable housing
2. Amending legislation to protect renters and better regulate real estate transactions
3. Investing in new affordable public housing

Along with this Plan, BCGEU started a petition to prevent high rent increases and recently the current NDP government capped rent increases to the rate of inflation. This is definitely a large step in the right direction.

The BCGEU has also developed policy proposals such as "What Can Local Government Do?" This document is intended to help municipalities understand how they can contribute to housing crisis solutions. BCGEU has been holding rallies to get information out there and to put pressure on the government to address these issues. One such rally was held in Burnaby to bring attention to and try and stop the "demovictions" in that community. With continued pressure from BCGEU, its members and local residences, the Burnaby City Council has asked city staff to create a new bylaw that protects people that have been "demovicted". The new bylaw will ensure that the tenants will have to be offered somewhere to live with established affordable rates, before being forced from their current home.

There are many ways unions can contribute to making lives better not just for their members, but for all workers. Presently in B.C. we are experiencing a housing crisis, and this is forcing people to move away to afford a place to live. Unions are using their collaborative power to change government policy and already there is an upswing in rental vacancies in Vancouver and other cities with more changes on the way. Unions help to educate and unite people and put a voice to the workers as we stand united.