



\$10 CHILDCARE

is on the way to BC families p.7



Women's conference



Each one, teach one

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provincial

The Provincial is published up to five times a year by Solidarity Publications Ltd., 4911 Canada Way, Burnaby, B.C. V5G 3W3 E-mail: theprovincial@bcgeu.ca
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 Design & Layout: Chris Bradshaw
 Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the views of the publishers. We cannot guarantee the return of unsolicited editorial contributions.

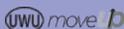
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Agreements provide a solid foundation to build on in future years

When I ran for president in 2014, my priority was to engage all members in creating a grassroots, democratic union that would be relevant to members' lives—both inside and outside the workplace—and would be a prominent voice in the labour movement in B.C. and across Canada. As I look back on 2018, I couldn't be happier, or more humbled, with what we've achieved and what we have the power to do moving forward into 2019 and beyond.

“The agreements that were ultimately ratified are a credit to your solidarity and hard work.”

In addition to the significant number of component and local elections that were contested—demonstrating the strength of our union's democracy—we had an extraordinary year in many areas. These include bargaining in some of our largest and most well-established sectors. Although our existing agreements for the public service, community health and community social services—agreements that cumulatively cover more than two-thirds of our 77,000 members—don't expire until March 31, 2019, we accepted invitations to bargain early. The reason is that for the first time in more than 16 years, we had the opportunity to bargain with a government that had demonstrated a commitment to making our province work for working people.

We were able to seize this opportunity because thousands of you engaged in the bargaining and ratification processes. You did this by giving your feedback in bargaining surveys, participating in bargaining conferences, representing your co-workers on bargaining committees, and working to educate your co-workers about the tentative agreements during the longest and most member-focused ratification process our union has ever run. The agreements that were ultimately ratified are a credit to your solidarity and hard work. They provide a solid foundation for you and our union to build on over the next three years.

It was also an extraordinary year for bargaining in one of our newer sectors—casinos. In May, 400 members at the Hard Rock Casino in Coquitlam started a 10-week strike to settle a first collective agreement. More than two years after voting to join the BCGEU union members ended up with an agreement that set a new industry standard for wages and working conditions. In June, 700 members at four casinos in the Thompson-Okanagan began what ended up being a historic strike for our union. They ultimately spent more than 19 weeks on the picket line before narrowly ratifying an agreement that delivered significant gains in wages and benefits. As I write this, members at two casinos in Metro Vancouver, the Grand Villa and Starlight, were preparing for a strike vote after rejecting a tentative agreement. The solidarity and resiliency of these members, all of them relatively new to the labour movement, has been an inspiration to me as I know it has been for many of you.

As we move forward into 2019, I know we're standing on a strong foundation built by members and activists dedicated to their co-workers and union.

BCGEU presents bold ideas to government committee

We're a union of smart, progressive members and great ideas. We know our input is valued and that's why your union participates in the public consultation process each year for the next year's provincial budget.

The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services leads the consultation. It's an all-party committee of the Legislative Assembly.

The committee holds public hearings across the province, and solicits written, audio and video submissions and online surveys. Once everything is received, the committee reviews it for budget consideration.

Our president Stephanie Smith presented our union's ideas at a public hearing of the Select Standing Committee in Mission B.C. on October 10. It reflects input from BCGEU's elected leadership on the priorities and challenges our members face living and working in B.C. communities.

We did a lot of internal research when we developed our presentation. What it shows is a strong fiscal and economic outlook for 2019. We know this will give the government the opportunity to continue the spirit of brave policy changes and investments which began in the 2018 budget.

Our priorities fall into four key policy areas:

- Address housing affordability and supply. Members across B.C. regularly tell us the housing crisis is one of their main concerns. The government has taken some steps to tackle the issue, but more work is needed. Our submission urges the government to expand and acceler-



news



BUDGET SUBMISSION – BCGEU president Stephanie Smith (centre-left) and BCGEU researcher Rob Duffy make a presentation to the B.C. government's Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services.

ate direct public investment in social housing, co-ops, and other forms of non-market, affordable housing.

“We know our input is valued and that's why your union participates in the public consultation process each year for the next year's provincial budget.”

- Budget for an effective poverty reduction strategy. BCGEU has long advocated for a provincial poverty reduction strategy. Our president Stephanie Smith has served over the past year as the labour movement's key representative on the Minister's Advisory Forum on Poverty Reduction. The BCGEU commends the government for launching such a strategy. The union's submission urges the government to take steps to rebuild vital public services and programs. This includes education, training, child care, social services, health and regulatory services that will determine the strategy's long-term success.
- Protect B.C.'s environment and natural resources. The economic, health and human impact of B.C.'s floods and wildfires are impossible to ignore. What's more, they're

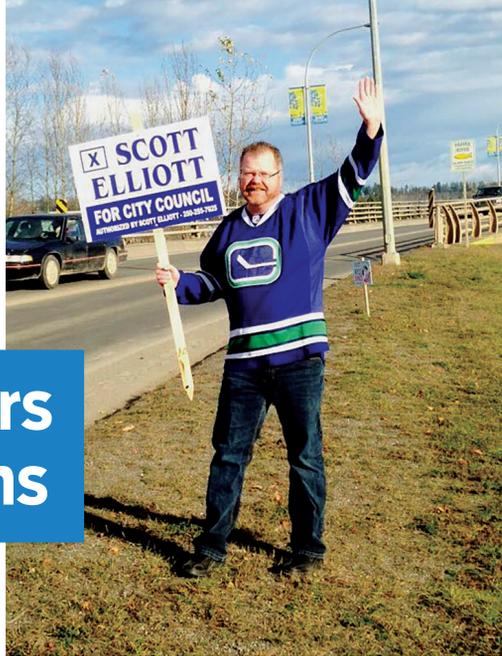
expected to get worse. The deterioration of our public parks and natural resources are also reaching crisis levels. Our submission urges the government to restore staffing and resource levels in the key ministries and agencies responsible for protecting B.C.'s environment and natural resources. These include the BC Wildfire Service, BC Parks, Emergency Management BC, and the various offices and agencies responsible for analysis, compliance, and enforcement related to environmental protection and natural resource management.

- Restore funding to the justice and corrections systems. Beginning in 2002, budgets for B.C.'s justice system, courthouses, jails and legal aid offices were slashed. The result in 2018 is a system where access, timeliness, staff and public safety, program effectiveness, and the human dignity of clients all continue to suffer. Our submission mirrors the campaign work the union has done for the last several years, especially through the Prison Safety Now campaign. It calls for additional resources and the restoration of the funding necessary to rebuild a functional, effective, and safe system.

You can find the BCGEU's full submission to the standing committee at: bit.ly/BCGEU-budget-submission



Big wins for BCGEU members in local elections



LOCAL GOVERNMENT CANDIDATES — BCGEU member Scott Elliott (left) was re-elected to city council in Quesnel. Member Raj Patara ran as a candidate for school board in Abbotsford.

Saturday, October 20 was a great day for many BCGEU members running in local government elections.

Fourteen were elected and many were incumbents: Zeb King in Central Saanich, Rob Douglas in North Cowichan, Glenn Pollock in Port Coquitlam, Korleen Carreras on Pitt Meadows School Board, Preet Rai on Abbotsford School Board, Scott Elliot in Quesnel and Mohini Singh in Kelowna. Elliot, Carreras and Douglas topped the polls in their communities.

Others were elected for the first time and we congratulate them on entering public life: Chantel O'Neill on Nanaimo School Board, Ryan Stewart on Burnaby School Board, and our own president emeritus, Darryl Walker, who was elected Mayor of White Rock.

Candidate Sharmarke Dubow of Victoria is a former refugee who gained international media coverage when he was elected in the first election he was able to vote in.

Despite running good campaigns, not everyone was successful. These BCGEU members — people like Priscilla Omulo in Port Coquitlam, Mack McCorkindale in the City of North Vancouver, Rob Bottos in Coquitlam, Raj Patara in Abbotsford, and Louis de Jaeger in Chilliwack — were diverse, incredibly hard working, and brought fresh ideas to their communities. We hope they consider running again in the future.

The time and effort it takes for working people to run for government office can be daunting. Candidates in most communities aren't able to work full-time during the campaign period because of the need to attend events, talk to voters, and raise funds. All this amounts to lost income.

The BCGEU is incredibly fortunate to have members who are willing to do the hard work necessary to become winning candidates for local government.

Days on the campaign trail are long, beginning early to talk to commuters or parents dropping their kids at school, and ending with all-candidates' debates that go late into the evening. Campaigns are also expensive. Candidates need to raise funds to pay for leaflets and lawn signs.

We know that candidates who campaign hard, who sacrifice their time, attend public events and knock on voters' doors are more likely to be elected.

The BCGEU is incredibly fortunate to have members who are willing to do the hard work necessary

to become winning candidates for local government.

Our union works with the rest of the labour movement to support candidates we know and trust. Local labour councils around the province conducted an endorsement process to identify progressive candidates they believed would act on the issues that matter for working people.

Labour councils take this process very seriously, spending hours reading candidate questionnaires, interviewing candidates, and considering candidates' positions on key issues for labour, such as affordable housing, inclusive schools and keeping services public.

We congratulate all the candidates and look forward to working with some of them during the next four years.





Acknowledging risk among wildfire fighters

It's tough, dangerous work, but someone's got to do it. Every summer, more than 1,100 BCGEU members put their lives on the line as frontline wildfire fighters. They're dedicated superheroes, the first responders who protect the lives and property of British Columbians, our infrastructure and natural resources.

Did you know B.C.'s wildfire fighters don't have the same benefits as other firefighters under the *Workers' Compensation Act*? It's shocking. At present, they're specifically excluded from the firefighters' occupational disease "presumption" for more than a dozen types of cancer under Section 6.1 of the *Workers' Compensation Act*.

This situation is clearly unfair, and it needs to be changed.

Your union is moving the issue forward. We've produced a detailed report making a case for changes to the *Workers' Compensation Act*, and sent it off to the Minister of Labour. It relies on current academic research and catalogues the significant workplace exposures to cancer-causing substances these workers face. Our report indicates there's an elevated cancer risk to wildfire fighters.

The research on the long-term health impacts of being a wildfire fighter is

rather limited, but it's clear that B.C.'s wildfire fighters are regularly exposed to many known carcinogens, often at levels above occupational exposure limits. These substances include benzene, formaldehyde, crystalline silica, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. Given these exposures, there's reason to expect that wildfire fighters will experience health impacts that are significantly different from structural firefighters.

Wildfire fighters are exposed for long periods to wood smoke without respiratory protection. They also regularly attend vehicle fires, dump fires, structure fires and fires where all manner of debris or garbage are burning.

At the same time, structural firefighters in B.C. are attending fewer fires. When they do, they wear respiratory protection equipment more consistently than ever before. They also follow strict decontamination procedures.

These trends stand in stark contrast to wildfire fighters, who don't wear any respiratory protection or follow decontamination procedures. They're also expected to face more exposure to toxic smoke as populations grow and climate change gets worse. That's why we believe the ongoing and increasing risk to their long-term health deserves to be acknowledged.

Changing the Act to extend the cancer presumption to wildfire fighters would put them on equal footing with other firefighters at a negligible additional cost to government, given the small number of wildfire fighters overall.

Our union has been advocating to make this change happen for wildfire fighters as soon as possible. We've told the government that more effort — including research and monitoring — is needed to better understand the long-term health impacts of being a wildfire fighter. This has to be done to ensure workers understand the hazards they face, and to find effective ways to protect them from harmful health consequences.

This fall, BCGEU president Stephanie Smith met with labour minister Harry Bains on this issue. The minister said he was persuaded by our research, and will be working to close the legislative loophole that excludes wildfire fighters from the firefighters' occupational disease presumption.

This is extremely encouraging news, but our work is not done until the legislation is amended. In the coming months, the BCGEU will continue to work to assist minister Bains and support the government as they work close the loopholes in the *Worker's Compensation Act* and give wildfire fighters the protection they deserve.



BCGEU employment assistance workers meet with minister

Six BCGEU members who work for the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction met with the minister, Shane Simpson, in a highly anticipated meeting in October.

The members were from BCGEU Component 6 — social, information and health services, and Component 12 — administrative services.

A meeting with the minister was important so that he could hear firsthand the issues facing workers on the front-lines in the hope they will be addressed by the government. Calls for such a meeting were made by members across B.C. during our ratification meetings held last summer for the public service agreement.

Simpson heard about overwhelming workloads, staffing shortages, unnecessary duplication of tasks and problems with work performance measures, the current service delivery model and computer software.

“Our goal was to remind the minister that our members’ clients have complex issues and the existing staff cannot handle the present volume of work. Time and time again we hear how disheartening and frustrating it is for our members to not be able to provide the highest quality service to those who need it,” said Judy Fox-McGuire, the vice-president of the BCGEU’s social, information and health component.

This meeting was another step toward resolving the ongoing issues through



REPRESENTING EAW's: Front row: Christina Logan, Dawn Crawford, Shane Simpson, Leanne Salter, Harbinder Gill. Back row: Stephanie Smith, Kathy Manner, Sue Frith, Judy Fox-McGuire

collaboration between BCGEU members and government.

“Our members shared with the minister their passion for helping clients and the pride they take in their work. At the same time, they’re worried clients aren’t getting consistent, dignified and fair service. The result is diminished morale. We need to find solutions to guarantee better client service and better working conditions,” said BCGEU president Stephanie Smith.

Our goal was to remind the minister that our members’ clients have complex issues and the existing staff cannot handle the present volume of work.

“The minister assured us he wants to change the culture of the ministry and we believe it will happen. He also indicated he wants to hear our ideas, and our creative solutions to problems. We’re urging BCGEU members to share their thoughts with their BCGEU local so we can convey them to the minister,” said Fox-McGuire.

The BCGEU supports the report *Holding Pattern: Call Wait Times for Income and Disability Assistance* released last April by B.C.’s Ombudsman Jay Clarke.

The report made nine recommendations aimed at improving services. It confirmed what the union has been pointing out for years regarding the long wait times and inadequate service levels.

Clarke’s recommendations include:

- Reporting wait time statistics to increase transparency on the ministry’s progress in addressing this problem
- Hiring more employment assistance workers (EAWs) to reduce wait times and provide adequate levels of service
- Phasing out the use of limited service techniques used to reduce the amount of time EAWs spend on each call, which results in reduced service levels for people seeking assistance

“Implementing these recommendations would go a long way to addressing the issues our members raised with the minister,” said Fox-McGuire.



This is beginning to happen. The government recently announced a much needed wage increase for early childhood educators (ECEs) along with a support fund for training and learning opportunities.

In 2019, ECEs will earn an additional \$2,000 per year, and an additional \$4,000 per year in 2020. It's a positive step in the right direction.

The province also recently announced funding for 22,000 new licensed childcare spaces over the next three years, more good news for families with young children on waiting lists.

"I've worked on improving our childcare system throughout my career, and I've never been more hopeful that affordable child care will be a reality in B.C.," said Andrea Duncan, vice-president of the BCGEU's community social services component. "It will take some time, but it's going to be life-changing for B.C. families."

It's been a long road for parents and ECEs struggling with limited resources. But with the leadership being taken to make child care affordable, we'll see more kids in quality care and more parents in the workforce. This will benefit all British Columbians.

The BCGEU is the lead union representing more than 1,500 early childhood educators and childcare providers in 48 certifications across the province.



(l-r) BCGEU president Stephanie Smith, Lynell Anderson from CCCABC, MP Jenny Kwan.

\$10-a-day childcare is on the way

Imagine what it would be like to double your rental costs or pay a second mortgage each month. That's long been the situation for some B.C. families struggling with the monthly expense of child care. The BCGEU has a lengthy history of calling on provincial governments to tackle the affordability crisis in child care. Our most recent action began in 2016 when we launched a campaign called Can't Afford Child Care to support the \$10-a-day plan.

"Our union has been working hand-in-hand with the Coalition of Childcare Advocates of BC for years to improve child care," said BCGEU president Stephanie Smith. "From our joint projects to support front-line workers, families and communities affected by the crisis, to calling on government at every level to invest in quality, affordable child care, I'm really proud of the work we've done together."

Our joint efforts might finally have paid off. The BC NDP made \$10-a-day child care a central plank of their campaign during the 2017 provincial election. Since forming government, they've taken steps towards making good on this promise.

In November, they took another big step with the launch of a universal childcare prototype project. For the next

16 months, the project will provide full-time care to 2,500 children at a maximum of \$200 per month, per child. The project is underway at 53 childcare sites in urban and rural communities across B.C. The goal is to model what a high-quality, affordable, and universal childcare system would look like.

"This prototype project is the first step towards implementing \$10-a-day child care. It's exciting, but we also know quality care depends on quality educators," said Smith. "As government continues to build a universal childcare system, our union looks forward to seeing further improvements in compensation and training for early childhood educators so they have what they need to do the work that they love."



B.C. premier John Horgan and MLA Katrina Chen at the childcare announcement.



BCGEU donates building to Cranbrook Food Bank Society

The communities we live and work in provide members with a living wage and a broad range of supports for our families. So, it's only fitting that the BCGEU give back to the community, where possible. And that's what happened in a big way this fall in Cranbrook, when the union donated a building to a local non-profit service group.

The converted house, located on 8th Avenue in Cranbrook, was built in 1924 as a private residence. The BCGEU became part-owners of the property through a partnership with the United Labour Mutual Holding Society (ULMHS) and became sole owners when the partnership with ULMHS ended in 2013.

The Cranbrook Food Bank Society had used the building as a distribution centre for some time when the BCGEU assumed ownership and continued to rent the building from the union.

When the BCGEU began looking at options for the property, the union leadership decided to donate the building to the food bank society, which has



PICTURED: (L to R, standing): Deanna Kemperman (Cranbrook Food Bank Society), Brian Smith, Paul Finch, Gerry Oviatt, Stephanie Smith, Elaine Gordon (local chair, BCGEU), Kari Michaels; (L to R kneeling): Sussanne Skidmore, Tracie Rallison, William McKerrow

served the local community for at least 15 years. The property was assessed at a market value of \$112,000 in 2018.

“When it came time for the BCGEU to decide what to do with the property the two immediate options were selling it or developing it,” said BCGEU president Stephanie Smith. “The provincial executive quickly rejected both of those options. Either would have meant displacing the food bank society and we weren’t about to do that. So, instead, we decided to donate the building to the society.”

“We sure appreciated the BCGEU coming forward and donating it to us,” said Gerry Oviatt, president of the Cranbrook Food Bank Society in a

local media interview. “It’s really nice to have. It’s been a real bonus for us.”

The building is fairly large for a converted home, built across two lots and includes an extension. But even with a warehouse facility in a Cranbrook industrial park, Oviatt said the food bank will need more space going forward. However, the BCGEU donation means the society now has new options to help it better serve Cranbrook residents.

“There’s days we’ve actually run out of resources and space to handle what we’re doing right now,” said Oviatt. “But it’s a great thing and we like to make it public, to make sure the BCGEU is recognized for donating it to us.”

STRIKE OVER: Interior casino workers return to work with improved benefits and wages



We did it! The almost five month-long strike is over and nearly 700 BCGEU members working in Gateway Casinos in the Thompson-Okanagan have ratified a new contract with their employer. Even better news is they're back to work.

The BCGEU represents staff across Gateway's four casinos: Playtime Casino in Kelowna, Lake City Casino in Vernon, and Cascades Casinos in Kamloops and Penticton. Members work in table games, as slot attendants, cashiers, in the count room, kitchen, security, guest services and maintenance.

"I'm so impressed by the solidarity and courage of our members," said BCGEU president Stephanie Smith. "They should be proud of what they achieved by sticking together throughout the bargaining process, especially over the past 19 weeks on the picket line."

The four-year deal includes an average 23.5 per cent wage increase over the life of the agreement and improved benefits, especially for part-time workers. Still, there's lots of work ahead to further improve working conditions at the casinos. We're looking forward to rolling up our sleeves and getting to it.

"While our members have gone back to work, the ratification vote was close. This means there's more to be done in all four of these workplaces. This work began as soon as the picket lines came down," said Smith.

Our union doesn't take job action lightly, but we welcome the friendships made with community members during the job action.

"On behalf of our members, I want to thank our friends in the communities of Kamloops, Kelowna, Penticton and Vernon, and our friends in the labour movement for their support during the strike," said Smith.



BCGEU members, activists and supporters showing solidarity on the picket lines at Gateway Casinos in the Okanagan this summer.





Reconnecting with members to win a stronger collective agreement

One worksite's story



Worker solidarity. It's necessary for a robust labour movement and strong workplaces. Sometimes refreshers are a good idea to remind us all why unity is important. A divided worksite is never a good thing, especially when it's time to negotiate a new collective agreement.

We faced such a situation at Willow Manor, a residential care and long-term mental health facility in the Fraser Valley. The staff joined the BCGEU in February 2008. Since then, care aides, nurses, activity workers, food service workers, housekeepers, and administrative staff have enjoyed the protection of a strong collective agreement.

But over the years, the worksite had become divided between care staff and support services. With workers heading into bargaining, we knew it was time for us to reach out, reconnect and rebuild solidarity. We feared a fractured worksite would have difficulty facing the employer and pressing for better employment conditions. We didn't want them entering negotiations feeling powerless.

That's why our staff team stepped in to lend a hand at the beginning of their bargaining process. Using organizing principles, we set up worksite visits, trying to meet with as many workers as possible. They helped identify natural worksite leaders. These are the people workers would go to for advice or information, people who can bring their co-workers along for actions or important initiatives.

We identified Willow Manor member leaders from both support services and care staff. We worked with them to set up communications with other workers so there was a network for information and action. When bargaining reached an impasse, BCGEU staff and member leaders made plans to communicate with co-workers about the possibility of a strike vote.

Over the course of one weekend, leaders reached out to almost every worker. Based on these conversations, they estimated they'd get a successful strike vote. Colleagues



encouraged workers to talk to each other, get the information, and stand together.

During the lead-up to the vote, members told us they'd never felt more included in the process. Taking the time to build a group of worksite leaders in an organized worksite always increases engagement and reminds members they're the union at their worksite. The efforts paid off. As predicted, the strike vote came in with 100 per cent of staff in favour and 90 per cent of the staff taking part in the vote.

A strike vote can send a powerful message to the employer about the strength of the unit. In the case of Willow Manor, the bargaining committee and the employer reached a tentative agreement soon after. The members ratified the agreement in early October with 83 per cent approval.

Going from a divided worksite to a connected, empowered group takes a lot of organizing work. With a little bit of help from BCGEU staff, our members at Willow Manor were able to build a strong network of worksite leaders and achieve a solid collective agreement.

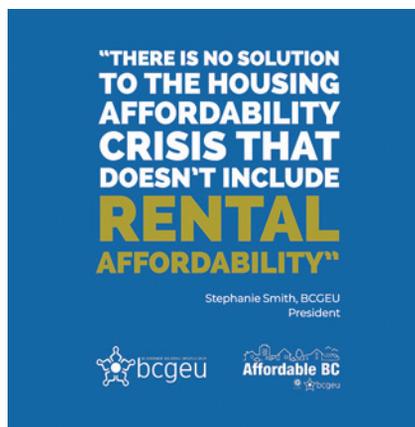
Taking the time to build a group of worksite leaders in an organized worksite always increases engagement and reminds members they're the union at their worksite.



Promise kept. The BC NDP government was elected in 2017 on a vow to make life more affordable for British Columbians. This fall, they reduced the annual allowable rent increases following an outcry by the BCGEU and other community groups to cap rent increases to the rate of inflation.

The annual allowable rent increase formula was originally put in place in 2004 by the B.C. Liberal government. The formula permitted rental increases at a rate of 2 per cent plus inflation. This policy caused rents to skyrocket and contributed directly to the current housing crisis by imposing upward pressure on land values, affecting both homeowners and renters.

In September of this year, the provincial government announced the



rent increase for 2019 would be 4.5 per cent, the largest annual rent increase since 2004. British Columbians, including thousands of BCGEU members, took immediate action.

You signed petitions, called your MLAs, spoke to the media and took to the streets. The BCGEU even launched its most suc-

cessful online petition to date, asking the government to lower rent increases. The petition followed a submission we made to the BC Rental Housing Task Force on this issue earlier in the year.

In the end, the government listened. They heard your collective voice and accepted recommendations to change the rent increase formula.

Within a month of the original announcement, the government lowered the allowable rent increase to 2.5 per cent as a result of the collective power of our communities.

This is a major victory for working people and stands as an example that by working together, we can dream of building affordable communities in B.C. Join the movement to build an Affordable BC at: www.affordablebc.ca



Participants from the B.C. Federation of Labour's young workers' school at this year's Camp Jubilee.

Young workers learn and lead at Camp Jubilee

There was a record turnout for the B.C. Federation of Labour's young workers' school at Camp Jubilee this year. One hundred people, including 13 BCGEU members, attended at the camp's Burrard Inlet location.

Camp Jubilee offers a retreat-like environment for workers aged 30 and under to learn about the labour movement and network with other young workers.

The BCGEU also helped facilitate the event. Executive vice-president Kari Michaels, herself a young worker, co-facilitated a workshop titled, *Stepping into Leadership*.

"It was great to meet so many other young workers who arrived at the camp enthusiastic to learn, and left feeling empowered to continue to build the union movement," said Michaels.

BCGEU staff also co-facilitated another workshop with the BC Labour

Heritage Centre. Participants collaborated to produce a video exploring why labour history matters for young workers. It was screened at the B.C. Federation of Labour convention in Vancouver in late November.

BCGEU local 702 member, Jessica Humphries, participated in a workshop entitled Labour History through an Equity Lens, which asked participants to create art projects to initiate the group's discussion.

Humphries made a hanging mobile, modeled after Métis artist Jamie Black's Red Dress Project, which represents the more than 1000 missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Participants found the workshop's discussions to be both moving and enlightening.

We'll be sending more young workers to Camp Jubilee in 2019.

Watch your email inbox or check the BCGEU member portal next summer for expressions of interest to attend.



Each one, teach one

New member facilitators trained



New BCGEU member facilitators collaborate with staff representatives to train new stewards.

“Each one, teach one.” This is an old African American proverb that originated amongst slaves defying their masters by secretly teaching each other how to read. The idea is that once having learned something, we each have a responsibility to pay it forward. The notion is now a basic tenet of worker and popular education. We’re also happy to tell you it highlights the BCGEU’s approach to steward education.

We’ve been busy in recent months training up a new group of 11-member facilitators to co-present our new steward fundamentals course alongside staff representatives. They, in turn, will train new stewards.

We know the key to the success of any course is having co-facilitators drawn from the membership.

“Member facilitators bring their experiences, stories and enthusiasm to the table,” said Colleen Nelson, a librarian in Courtenay with the Vancouver Island Regional Library and one of the new member facilitators.

“We bring the steward’s perspective and knowledge to the course. I think it’s important that stewards see how critical their role is to the strength of the union and the role of member facilitator highlights this.”

Member facilitators are peers who’ve faced the very same challenges that course participants do as new stewards.

Trace Bilawchuk, a corrections officer in Victoria and another new member facilitator, believes his frontline experience helps to establish common ground with participants. “We’ve been there,” Bilawchuk said.

The 11 new member facilitators are set to put the “each one, teach one” proverb into practice as they begin co-presenting the steward fundamentals course across the province in the months to come.

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Then click: BCGEU Edge. Scroll down and click Perkopolis.



BCGEU women turning up the dial

It couldn't have gone any better. That's the feedback we heard from many of the attendees at our recent region one women's conference held in Victoria in November. We presented a new theme for the event, which was entitled, *From #MeToo to Now What? Building a workplace culture of consent to end sexual harassment*. It brought together 85 female members to unpack the issues of sexual harassment and bullying in the workplace. Our conference featured provincial decision-makers, front-line workers, union activists and special guests.

The powerful #MeToo movement has shone a light on the pervasive issue of sexual harassment and bullying in the workplace. Thousands of women around the world have bravely spoken their truths and found out they weren't alone. The region one women's conference planning committee wanted to build on this momentum. Our objective was to use it to support our members to turn the dial on sexual harassment and pivot toward meaningful change in our workplaces and in our communities.

The pushback against harassment, bullying and unsafe workplaces for women has been building across many generations. The #MeToo movement was originally founded in the early 2000s by Tarana Burke. Her idea was empowerment through empathy, and the understanding that we all have a role in supporting survivors, in calling out injustice, in building community, and in standing in solidarity.

Our conference tackled some big questions, including an examination of what the movement means for our workplaces and where do we go from here? How do we translate the growing social movement into long-term systems change that gets at the heart



of harassment and bullying in the workplace? And, what role do we all play as allies, coworkers, union activists, and friends?

How do we translate the growing social movement into long-term systems change that gets at the heart of harassment and bullying in the workplace?

There were many take-away messages. Julie Lalonde, an advocate for women's rights and a sexual assault prevention educator, encouraged us to harness our "righteous rage" and "embrace our inner buzzkill" to call out injustice when we see it.

Panelist Dr. Lisa Gunderson, an educator and equity consultant, stressed the need to expand the tent of feminism and to remember that people of colour have a different experience of rage due to the prevalent racism and classism.

Natasha Tony, an IATSE member who specializes in equity issues and workplace harassment, made the call for workplaces to be safer for everyone and to not leave it up to women to hide in "safe spaces" or resort to whisper campaigns for change to happen.

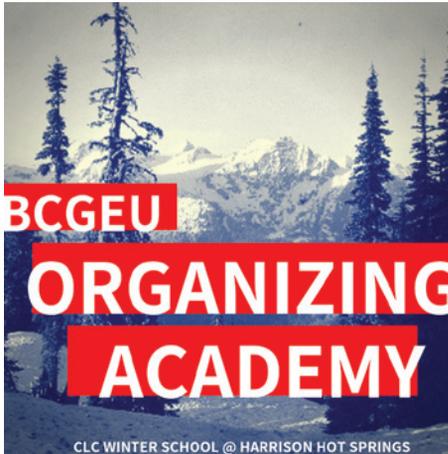
A powerful group of activists, including Sage Lacerte of the National



Ambassador for the Moose Hide Campaign, encourages men to stand up against violence towards women and children. They shared inspiring stories of organizing against exploitation in the trades and the retail industry, of breaking stigma, and of empowering ourselves and others to challenge oppressive systems.

The conference closed with a beautiful travelling song from the Lekwungan women's drum circle. We left inspired, charged up and ready to take on the hard work of building better workplaces, stamping out harassment and building a strong network of support.

More women's conferences using this theme are expected to take place in 2019.



ORGANIZING ACADEMY SET TO LAUNCH

Participants to apply organizing methods to jumpstart their locals

It's almost here and we're so excited. The BCGEU will launch its brand-new organizing academy at the 2019 Canadian Labour Congress Harrison Winter School in January. Over four weeks, we'll put 120 leaders from BCGEU locals across the province through the learning paces. They'll explore in-depth the fundamental principles and practices of organizing, and how they can apply this approach to jumpstart workplaces and union locals.

A collaboration between BCGEU learning and the union's organizing department, the academy will build on the methods introduced in two other new courses, local leadership and steward fundamentals, along with the hard work and successes of the union's on-the-ground organizers.

BCGEU's leadership eagerly approved the organizing academy as part of its commitment to empower members through worksite-based grassroots organizing, which will enhance member servicing. Academy participants will learn about responsive and inclusive

engagement methods, such as how to have organizing conversations, identify and support other leaders, and conduct campaigns that matter. This teaching approach is rooted in discussions with members. Participants get to hear about the real-life issues people care about and build the necessary worker power to tackle them.

"We've been doing a lot of work on leadership development for activists—from the STEP UP! course and stewards training to the new local leadership curriculum—but this is really the biggest commitment we've made so far," said BCGEU president Stephanie Smith.

"Our goal is to turn local leaders into great organizers so we can engage more members and build even stronger locals. Over the last few years, your union has added thousands of new members and we want to continue that trend to keep building the power of our movement."

The organizing model emphasizes building worker power at the grassroots by:

- Developing strong relationships through face-to-face contact with members;
- Identifying and recruiting natural leaders;
- Using tools like mapping, power analysis and campaigning;
- Creating alliances with allies; and
- Directly engaging workers in the fight for better wages and working conditions.

The organizing model developed first in the United States and spread elsewhere in response to declining union membership. Over the years, the rate of unionized workers in Canada and other industrialized countries has dropped significantly. Stagnating wages, precarious work and inequality has grown, creating a crisis for workers and their unions. In response, unions like the BCGEU have sought out new strategies and tactics, broadly known as the organizing model. The model marks a return to the grassroots approach of union organizers in the early part of the 20th century.

B.C. FEDERATION OF LABOUR CONVENTION 2018

Executive VP Sussanne Skidmore elected secretary-treasurer

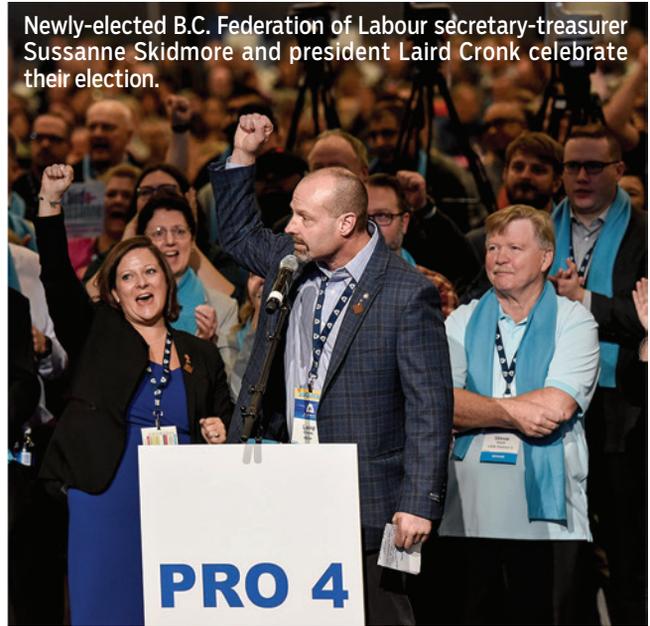
Delegates at the B.C. Federation of Labour's 58th convention elected our own BCGEU executive vice-president Sussanne Skidmore to the position of secretary-treasurer of the

federation. Sussanne ran with Laird Cronk, who was elected president. Sussanne's contributions to our union have been enormous throughout her 20-plus years as a BCGEU member. Sussanne has served in nearly every

elected position in her union local, from steward to executive, and has been a BCGEU executive vice-president since 2014. We can't wait to be at the table with her at the B.C. Federation of Labour.



BCGEU president Stephanie Smith nominating Laird Cronk for the position of B.C. Federation of Labour president.



Newly-elected B.C. Federation of Labour secretary-treasurer Sussanne Skidmore and president Laird Cronk celebrate their election.



(this row & next) BCGEU delegates on the floor at the B.C. Federation of Labour convention.



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