

BC's Community Social Services Workers

Unions reject government's proposal on service changes

The Union Bargaining Association has rejected a proposal by the provincial government, Community Living BC (CLBC) and the Community Social Services Employers' Association (CSSEA) that would dramatically change the service model.

Group home closures, layoffs and longer shifts?

UBA members were particularly concerned about the impact of several proposed changes:

- Closure of 100 residential group homes for developmentally disabled adults;
- Downgrading group homes to unregulated "community residences";
- Increased use of extended hour shifts;
- Lay-off of workers where an employer moves to a family home model;
- Exclusion of many workers from significant parts of the collective agreement.

CLBC is desperate to cut costs by closing group homes. In the family home model, workers in community living services would have to support one or two individuals with developmental disabilities in the worker's own home.

They would receive an unspecified and non-negotiable payment. The current average is a little more than \$2,000 a month for each individual; from this sum workers must provide round-the-clock support, meals, transportation, household amenities and pay for respite care. Individuals residing in a family home would be able to fire the care provider who would then be laid-off.

Another proposed option suggested by CLBC/CSSEA is for community living workers to become a "roommate" to an individual with developmental disabilities, such as sharing an apartment. In exchange for reduced or free rent, workers would be expected to support one or two individuals around the clock.

Rejected employer proposals recycled

CLBC/CSSEA is also recycling bargaining proposals rejected by workers in the last two rounds of negotiations to turn the clock back on livable hours of work. "Community residences" converted to group homes with three or fewer individuals residing in them would be exempt from hours of work provisions of the collective agreement and even basic employment standards.

Community social services workers went on strike for 12 weeks in 1999 to get rid of 24 hour live-in shifts and 96-hour work weeks.

Workers who choose not to become "family home providers" or a "roommate" or work in a "community residence" would be laid-off.

The fight against union-busting continues

CLBC has asked the Labour Relations Board to define "family home provider" in the Community Services Labour Relations Act in the broadest possible terms, including any "other unknown models". Hearings are set for April at the LRB.

>>>See next page for more news

We Are...

The 13 partner unions of the Union Bargaining Association. Collectively we represent more than 15,000 community-based social services workers in BC. Everyday we work to strengthen communities and build social solidarity. Contact us at: info@respectbc.ca

Community Living BC is in crisis

CLBC is in crisis, operating with a deficit and ignoring a growing list of more than 3,000 individuals waiting for services. Its "residential options review" has been a failure with only a very small number of individuals currently receiving residential services in a group home indicating an interest in moving. CLBC's only plan for these folks depends on concessions from the frontline workers.

CLBC continues to claim that the "residential options review" is not about saving money but it clearly is. Providing services in a "family home" is one-quarter the cost of doing so in a staffed group home. CLBC is pitting individuals and families currently receiving services against those on waitlists, claiming that the savings are necessary to meet the need.

The campaigns working group is organizing membership meetings in May in Victoria, Powell River, Vernon, Prince George and Castlegar. Meetings in other communities around BC will follow. Watch your union bulletin board and the next issue of NewsFlash for details.

Community social services members successfully bump employer demands

Community Social Services members have won a victory on bumping rights.

The employers' association had claimed that their version of bumping language had been signed into the collective agreement last year. However, mediator Vince Ready has determined that the language tabled by the Union Bargaining Association stands.

The new Article 13.4 language gives members significantly enhanced bumping rights.

A worker displaced as a result of a layoff will have the right to bump any junior employee, provided that the bump does not result in a promotion to a supervisory position and that the first employee is qualified to perform the work. It includes the ability to bump into a position with more hours or into a position outside your own grid level.

For example, a night worker in a residence will now be able to bump four grid levels up to a Residential Worker level, because a night worker's qualifications will be recognized as comparable.

Workers continue to be protected against loss of seniority in bumping situations.

The employers had been demanding that an employee could bump up in hours, but not into a higher grid level or a promotion. Their language would have restricted career options and job security.

Hundreds of non-provincially funded CSS workers to get wage increases

Community social services employers have been told to make good on their agreement to give non-provincially funded workers general wage increases in the same amount and on the same dates as general wage increases for provincially-funded employees. The BCGEU launched the challenge.

This is a win for hundreds of members who work in non-provincially funded positions through Community Social Services Employers' Association agencies, under the collective agreement.

The first 2.3 percent wage increase payment is retroactive to April 1, 2006. Members will receive an additional 2 percent wage increase in each of the next three years of the agreement, as well.

CSSEA had agreed to the increases as part of the collective agreement reached last March 31, 2006. The employers then reneged on their position, and did not provide the wage increases as agreed.

In his award judgement, mediator Vince Ready described the collective bargaining that had led to this agreement as "at times, difficult and intense". He noted that supporting these non-provincially funded positions "are important in the sector because...they allow an employer to continue to provide programs that are important to a community, such as daycare."

Stay tuned for our new improved website to be launched in mid-April www.respectbc.ca