

2006 UPDATE on **Bargaining** #1

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Social service workers set sights for talks

January 24, 2006

Community social service workers say wages, benefits and strengthening resources for social services top their demands for a new contract.

"We are serious about reaching an agreement that addresses all the issues, and hope that the employers are serious about wanting to reach a settlement," said Chris Mullen, Chief Spokesperson for the Union Bargaining Association (UBA).

Over the past four years, the BC Liberal government slashed a staggering \$383 million from the community social services sector - affecting seniors, women, children and people with disabilities.

The 13-union association representing nearly 15,000 workers in communities around BC meets Jan. 30 with the provincial government's agent - the Community Social Services Employers' Association (CSSEA). They are to set protocol for talks scheduled throughout February and March.

Workers in community social services provide a range of supports to: people with physical, mental and

developmental disabilities; children who witness and experience abuse; young offenders; women experiencing domestic violence; and people with drug and alcohol addictions.

Community social service agency and staff cuts coupled with contracting out have created a deepening crisis. The casual workforce has been decimated while new staff are not receiving sufficient job training. Most agencies are working short-staffed.

Low entry-level wages and overwork caused by the growing staff shortages have made it virtually impossible to attract new people to consider careers in community social services in BC. Existing staff are stretched to the limit, increasing the potential for burnout, job injuries and even more staff shortages in the longer term.

Members say restoring and strengthening the collective bargaining rights stripped from them in 2004 are top priorities which include successorship rights and the wage rates for new hires that were rolled back by nearly 18 per cent.

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B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union

Canadian Union of Public Employees

Hospital Employees' Union

Health Sciences Association of British Columbia

United Steelworkers of America

Professional Employees' Association

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International Union of Operating Engineers

Canadian Translators and Interpreters Guild

Construction and Specialized Workers' Union

British Columbia Nurses' Union

National Automobile, Aerospace, Transportation and General Workers Union of Canada (CAW-Canada)

Christian Labour Association of Canada

Community Social Services Union Bargaining Association

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