

# 2006 UPDATE on **Bargaining** #4

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## Shift proposals a step in the wrong direction

February 7, 2006

Despite the growing staffing crisis, the BC government's bargaining agent wants to turn back the clock in community social services.

A package of proposals containing more than 17 concessions put forward this week by the Community Social Services Employers' Association (CSSEA) includes:

- a return to 24 hour live-in shifts
- widespread use of split shifts
- eliminating the minimum 4 hours for scheduled shifts
- the right to assign shifts to regular workers

"We want to move community social services into the 21st century," said Chris Mullen, Chief Spokesperson for the Union Bargaining Association (UBA). "The employers are heading in the wrong direction. Instead of working with us to develop a more mature relationship and ensuring that government properly funds the sector, they want to squeeze more out of frontline workers."

A return to 24-hour live-in shifts would see employees working 96 hours a week for a flat rate that ends up being below minimum wage. Getting rid of those sweatshop-like conditions was a key factor in driving community social services workers to hit the bricks in an 11-week strike in 1999.

Split shifts and no minimum call-in could see workers brought in for an hour or two here and there. The employers also want to schedule workers for extended shifts of up to 16 hours a day and to assign extra shifts to regular employees without concern for health and safety.

Even a CSSEA negotiator admitted that variable shifts have a detrimental effect on workers' health.

"We have a very clear direction from our members to address burn out, workload and work/life balance issues," Mullen said. "Treating workers fairly is compatible with providing quality public services and a healthy and stable workforce is essential to meet the needs of the people, families and communities throughout BC who rely on the services our members provide."

The UBA called the shift proposals unacceptable and regressive. "The employers have refused to explain how their proposals will do anything positive to recruit new people into the sector and to retain long-term employees."

Bargaining continues this week in Vancouver.

For more information visit the UBA website at [www.respectbc.ca](http://www.respectbc.ca)

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**Canadian Union of Public Employees**

**Hospital Employees' Union**

**Health Sciences Association of British Columbia**

**United Steelworkers of America**

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**Community Social Services Union Bargaining Association**

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