Tentative agreement!

At long last, one contract for all
Bill 23 makes this round of bargaining the last in which the community and facilities subsectors will bargain at separate tables.

More spaces for seniors
Five pilot projects given go-ahead.

Breakthrough developments for LPNs
Government announces 89 new training seats.

We're voting on a tentative agreement in the facilities. We've got a community settlement and legislation that says next time it will be one contract for all.

Milestone agreement signed
It took more than two years for HEU and the Nisga'a Valley Health Board to iron out this distinctive collective agreement that recognizes Nisga'a beliefs and customs while protecting the rights of Nass Valley health workers.
COMMENT

It's time to make some choices
by Chris Allutt

THERE ARE momentous times for health care workers in British Columbia. We're voting on two tentative agreements in the community and facilities sectors; there's a new law that takes down the wall between facilities and community, and we are going to the polls on May 16 to elect a new government. It's a time to make choices.

The results of these votes will affect HEU members and all workers in this province for some time to come. While the two tentative agreements are not all we wanted, we have good reason to be very proud of them.

The new community agreement guarantees parity with the facilities sector. BCE is the first place in North America where it is acknowledged that health services and support workers in community health should be paid the same as workers in acute and long-term care. This is such an important achievement, because this union and its members have fought for it persistently over many years. Along with this recognition, there is a process set in place to correct this injustice, with real wage increases that will eventually bring these health care providers up to the same wage level as their counterparts in the facilities.

In hospitals and long-term care facilities, our new contract ensures employment security provisions and ensures the continued operation of the joint employer/employee-run Healthcare Labour Adjustment Agency and the Occupational Health and Safety Agency.

We made a breakthrough with the agreement to add up to 300 more Care Aides, LPNs and rehab assistants in extended and long-term care and with new contract language on no more unsafe manual lifting. (Counseled with effective organizing among our nursing team members, we will be able to make our workplaces safer. Both contracts contain no concessions or rollbacks and provide important pay equity and benefit improvements.

On the wage front, the general wage increases are indexed indeed. The key question facing our Provincial Bargaining Committee and Provincial Executive was whether higher wages were achievable, even if we escalated job action. Our assessment was that more job action would have put the rest of the package at risk.

And it is the entire package, not the last few weeks of the current NDP government, that we can be very proud of.

HEU members have another vote to cast in the provincial election. For HEU members the choice is between those who will represent our interests in Victoria and those who won't.

The likely winners, Campbell Liberals, will be acting for the province's business interests. That's why we'll need effective advocates for workers and the public health care system.

Although this round of bargaining for our two collective agreements is tough, we want to hammer out a couple of components we can be proud of: But a government that has no strong opposition may try to clawback some of the gains we have made.

So, again, I strongly recommend a vote for the NDP.

Guardian

"It's hard to dole out to all those who need it." — Tony Blair

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Campbell said right things, but...

I read the interview done with Gordon Campbell in the latest issue of the Guardian, where he answered the questions like a finely tuned NDP candidate.

He said, between the lines, the true Campbell is slipsier than ever. For example, asked about short and longterm plans, he responds about making sure services are there, but then talks about the doctors knowing the nurses are behind them to provide support. Not beside, behind. Hierarchy gets payeronal best! No change there!

In regard to funding, Campbell's plans to cut corporate tax and lift corporate tax would mean a 3.4 per cent cut to the health care budget in B.C.

You don't have to be an accountant to see that the numbers just don't add up. He claims he will not cut the health care budget, but he certainly makes no commitments to increase it, either. He's support public services by an "active, vibrant private sector and investment in private sector jobs." That means non-union, minimum wage jobs. Again, no change there.

These jobs are not the ones that support families or communities. It is fairly-paid union jobs which support families, and not just by $100. It is our union dollars that enable me to support charities, my children's education, to even pay a mortgage and to have some income left over to spend in community businesses.

They are also the wages that support taxes that pay for health care and education and I have no problem with that.

Gordon Campbell did not tell the truth when he states he never said he would be in the top employment security agreement. He did. He was very clear about that! If he truly believes that HEU frontline workers are necessary, it is because our union and our members have educated him. Unfortunately, his labour critic Kevin Krugler clearly hasn't gotten the message. He is a true and tireless all-over-paid ticker cleanser. That doesn't sound like the Liberals' values.

Lastly, I want to comment on his statements in regard to patient care in the public sector and privi-

tized "front-line services"—our jobs.

Read very carefully his response to keeping seniors' care. He says, "I just don't agree with them that we need to privatize it all," key word being all. So be careful, sisters and brothers, that snide who shed their skin is still poisonous when he bites.

BARR BURKE

HEU website draws raves

I want to compliment HEU's communications staff for the timely postings to the union's website during job action.

Last Wednesday night (April 9) at 10 p.m. I phoned the human resources coordinator for the Capital Health Region to tell him that because progress was being made at the bargaining table we were backing off our plans. The Royal Jubilee Hospital for April 5. The HR guy told me he was at the last minute confirming the same information on the HEU website.

The HABC site didn't come near to HEU's in specific, detailed and timely information.

Why go to

ARLETA KESSLER

Regional President

Regina

Expand equity principle

Pay equity principles are at the core of the union movement. As a 10-year HEU member, I stand behind these principles. If a woman is doing the same work as a man and is not being paid the same then that is something that needs to be rectified immediately. When community sector health care workers are making less than their counterparts doing the same work in a facility, they need to be paid the same as well.

This is not just an issue of wage equity but is an issue of issue of social and social equality.

The problem is that these principles seem to apply to everybody in HEU except for those of us employed in management. HEU maintenance personnel aren't among the most highly skilled anywhere in North America. As a multi-skilled tradesperson I not only need to know all aspects of the installation and construction of support systems and equipment that I am responsible for I also need to know every aspect of the servicing, repairing, troubleshooting and maintenance of the equipment.

It has taken many years of training and education to acquire these skills. Add to this the understaffing of most maintenance departments and you have severe workload issues.

My counterparts doing similar work and with less training and a lot less responsibility are making 20 to 30 per cent more with benefits superior to those offered in health care. A critical shortage of tradespersons and engineers will soon become even more severe than that experienced in nursing. If this wage disparity is not addressed then the health care industry will be losing its most skilled and experienced maintenance personnel.

The B.C. Hospital Maintenance and Trades Workers Association helped the HEU bargaining committee secure evidence of this wage disparity and skills shortage. We are not asking for special treatment, just fair treatment, after all, is that not the guiding principle of our union?

DAVID PELLERIN

Plumber, fire sprinkler fitter, gasfitter, construction specialist, Surrey Memorial Hospital

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 10, MAY 1992

The Hospital Employees' Union is the B.C. Health Services Division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees
An arbitrator has ruled that some HEU members in the Capital Health Region and some BCGEU members in Victoria are entitled to backpay due to the violation of their contracts. The arbitrator found that the employers failed to pay the agreed-upon rates, which led to the loss of income for the affected members. The arbitrator ordered the employers to pay the backpay to the affected members. The arbitration process is expected to continue for other affected members in different regions.

The ruling has implications for other bargaining units across the province, as it sets a precedent for the resolution of similar contract disputes. The affected members and their unions are expected to seek backpay for similar violations in other regions.

The arbitrator's decision is expected to be appealed by the employers, who are likely to contest the ruling on the grounds of procedural and substantive errors. The appeal process is expected to take several months.

The arbitration process is a crucial tool for resolving contract disputes and ensuring that workers are fairly compensated for the work they perform. It is a complex and time-consuming process that requires the involvement of skilled negotiators, arbitrators, and legal experts.

The ruling is a significant victory for the affected members, who have been fighting for fair compensation for their work. The union is expected to press for similar outcomes in other regions, and the employers are expected to resist any further compensation awards.

The arbitrator's decision is a reminder of the importance of collective bargaining and the need for strong unions to protect the rights of workers.

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WHAT WE'RE UP TO

In April and, as we go to print, are still waiting for the employer to respond. This will be the first collective agreement for the more than 200 HEU community social service members at NABAB who work at residential homes and in a wide variety of vocational programs that support persons in the development of life skills through employment training, support, placement, recreation and other therapeutic opportunities.

Contracts blossom at for-profits

HEU members at several independent, private for-profit seniors' housing and care facilities have just wrapped up bargaining or are in the midst of talks. Newly certified members at Langley Gardens began negotiations at the end of March for their first contract. HEU care providers at Arbutus Manor in Vancouver began bargaining in November 2003 for a new agreement and are still at it, while health workers at Surrey's Bear Creek Lodge are moving to a strike vote, the first they've had to take since they unionized nine years ago.

Also in Surrey, HEU members at Imperial Place, a facility with a history of fractious labour relations, began mediation for a new collective agreement in February after members voted 100 per cent in favour of job action – something that's likely to occur if the process lags and the employer remains uncompromising. And HEU care providers at Courtyard Gardens in Richmond have a new contract as a result of a settlement handed down by an independent arbitrator early in March. While some independent small operations are part of large corporations, Langley Gardens is owned by CPNC, one of British Columbia's largest and fastest growing private, for-profit companies, and Imperial Place is operated by Oregon-based Holiday Retirement Corporation.

What's that you say?

'When a management type at Nanaimo Regional General Hospital used a less than respectful term for one of the local executive members, the local faced the issue head on. HEU members on site Darrell Wilkins promptly penned a letter to the employer with a reminder that the proper
title of one of the local doctors was vice-chairperson/Chief of Department, not your little union lady,' and a request that the perpetrator of the condescending remark, and other management team members, be instructed to avoid the use of offensive language immediately.

continued from page 3

The unions had proposed bargaining dates in March, but were turned down by the employer because one of its negotiating team was out of town. The unions have once again suggested meeting dates.

Shepherd's staying put for awhile

by Dale Fuller

MAUREEN Shepherd considers herself lucky to be living in the sunny Okanagan and working as a transportation worker at Cottonwoods. Kelowna General Hospital's extended care site. And she's so proud of the achievements of the Kelowna local during her 16 years as chair that she's postponing her retirement until the current round of collective bargaining is a done deal and a new nursing team utilization initiative at Cottonwoods is up and running.

Shack was working at RGH since she arrived in Kelowna from Great Britain 26 years ago. Trained as a registered nurse, Shepherd headed straight to Kelowna General to apply for a job. They hired her to work at their Strathcona Manor, not as an RN but as a Care Aide. "In those days you had to go to Vancouver to do some upgrading if you'd been educated elsewhere," she says. "I had two small kids; it was out of the ques-
tion."

When the hospital opened Cottonwoods in 1978, Shepherd started work-
ing there.

One day, very soon after beginning at Strathcona, she was bashing a resident who somehow came around and said, "Come on, we're having a sti-in." The issue? The uniformity of orders getting more money for performing the same work as Licensed Practical Nurses. This was Shepherd's initiation into trade unionism. "I was petrified," she remembers. "But I saw HEU strength, and I knew I wanted to be part of that. It was exciting once I got over the fear."

And she is indeed fearless. She has garnered the respect of union members and management alike. But it's been a long road and a lot of work between those two.

With encouragement from her local's executive, she became part of the essential services committee and before long she was serving as a shop steward.

Shepherd has high regard for the education that HEU offers to its activists. "I learned that I was not by myself, and that gave me all the courage I needed," she says.

One thing she is very proud of is the improvement in labour relations at Cottonwoods during her tenure as chair of the Kelowna local. "It was scary when I walked into my first labour-management meeting. We were dealing with 400 grievances," Shepherd recalls. "Now I can even call up Murray Ramsden, the CEO of our regional health board and say, 'Murray, we need to have coffee.' And he'll come over and we'll talk."

A hard-working local officer, Shepherd expects a lot of her executive. "I tell people, 'Be prepared, your time is not your own when you stand to be elected.' We are a good strong local and what makes us strong is the dedication of our members and our executive," she says.

Her plans to retire after 26 years as a B.C. health care worker and 16 straight years as chair of her local, were put on hold because she decided that there are just too many exciting things happening right now.

"We've been working for a long time on expanding utilization of the nursing team and it looks like that is about to happen," she says. "Nancy Kirkpatrick, the new director of residential services at Cottonwoods, has some great ideas about our LPNs and Care Aides. I want to be part of that when it finally gets going."

To make that happen, talks are progressing between the facility, the unions, the College of LPNs and the regional health board.

"We've got a good rapport with Nancy," laughs Shepherd. "I just tell her she doesn't work fast enough – get on with it. I have to retire!"

There was also no way she was going to retire in the middle of negotiations for a collective agreement. "The bargaining association was depending on the locals to mobilize around the bargaining demands. I know how to do that. Couldn't leave with that coming up."

When she does finally retire, she wants to get involved in advocating for women who traditionally had no union to represent them – those who work home and raise kids.

In the meantime, she is happy to be a member of HEU. "I wear my union jacket with pride. To me it means we are all working together."

• BALANCING IT ALL is a regular Guardian column about the challenges facing women activists.

KELOWNA LOCAL CHAIR Maureen Shepherd enjoys her job of driving Cottonwoods residents around on their outings in the Kelowna area.

4 GUARDIAN • SPRING 2001
WHAT WE'RE UP TO

by: Polinsky also asked for an apology in writing.
Upon receipt of the letter, one of the hospital's doctors apologized and agreed to fol-
low up on the inappropriate behaviour. The written response
said there was "no recollection of such a reference."

Lots are Joining HEU

In February, 71 new mem-
bers to our union.
Our community sector gained
the most members of late. In
February, 15 health workers at
the Family Resource Centre and
Adult Day Care in Vancouver
joined, followed in March by
16 mental health workers at the
Community Mental Health
Units in Osprey who moved from
CUPF to HEU. And in April, six
staff working at UBC's Health
Day Care in Vancouver came on board.
Also in March, the seven
office staff of the Northern
Interior Regional Health Board
(St. John Hospital) in Vander-
hool, and three health workers at
the Logan Lake Medical
Clinic joined.

Plus, in HEU's independent
sector, 30 health workers at the
private, for-profit long-term
facility, Berwick-on-the-
Lake in Kamsack, have boosted
our membership. And one new
member at Williams Lake's
Public Library joined HEU's
nurses sector.

Checking out the hotel myth

For the last 18 months sight-
ing groups and the media
have trooped out a flurry study
done by the Fraser Institute
to "prove" HEU members are over-
paid compared to hotel workers
who perform the "same" work.
Now HEU's set to fight back
with a comprehensive 10-
month study by SFU professor
Marjorie Cohen. Her report
points to inaccuracies in the
original Fraser Institute "study."
And she presents detailed find-

ings on the nature of "non-
medical" work in hospitals,
strongly refuting claims that
the work of HEU members in
housekeeping, laundry, food
service and trades is compara-
bly to that performed in hotels.
Look for a feature article on
Cohen's study in the next
Guardian.

He's our pick
At his February meeting,
HEU's Provincial Executive
endorsed the candidacy of
Ghislain Généreux to replace
Geraldine McGuire as CUPF's
national secretary-
treasurer. McGuire will be step-
downing at the
labour organiza-
tions' next national convention
in November 2001. She has ser-
viced in that capacity for 10
years. Généreux is currently
president of CUPF Quebec.

GENÈREUX

NEW REGULATIONS

New regulations are roadmap to change, says HEU

While the public may be increasingly focused
on health care bargaining, HEU says health profes-
sions regulatory changes proposed at the end of
March in a government report shouldn't be over-
looked because, if implemented, they will have a pos-
tive impact on efforts to ease B.C.'s nursing shortage.
"This is a road map for government to follow
to break down the professional boundaries that prevent
trained care providers from working to their full
capacity," says secretary-business manager Chris
Allum. "It will also promote greater cooperation
among health professionals and open the door to
improved access to a broader range of health care
services for British Columbians," he says.

Allum points to specific recommendations made
in the B.C. Health Professions Council report cover-
ing Licensed Practical Nurses, which he says will be
"a catalyst for broad-based solutions to help ease our
acute shortage of nursing staff."

For the first time ever, the report calls for the legal
recognition of procedures that LPNs are trained to
perform including drug assessments, administering
medications, simple dressing changes, bacterio-
ology and urinary catheterization. Another break-
through, says Allum, is the recommendation that
LPNs would no longer have to work under the direct
supervision of a physician or a registered nurse.

Allum says HEU will continue to press govern-
ment and employers to implement utilization of LPNs
as a practical solution to the nursing shortage.
The Health Professions Council -- an independent
government advisory body -- released the report after
six years of study to implement recommendations
from B.C.'s 1993 Royal Commission on Health Care.

HEATHER STEVENS

with Lydia Stephens

and add their signatures
to the historic collective agreement between HEUs Nisga'a Health Care
local and the Nisga'a Valley Health Board

NISGA'A, HEU SIGN CONTRACT

HEU new collective agreement with the Nisga'a Valley Health Board is an important milestone in the
monitoring relationship between organized labour and
First Nations.

Reached after more than two years of bargaining,
this first agreement blends traditional contract pro-
tections with others that recognize unique Nisga'a
beliefs and customs.

"This is a proud day for our Nisga'a members and
for our entire union," says HEU secretary-business
manager Chris Allum who went to New Aiyam for
the signing ceremony. "We've just signed a col-
lective agreement, but also demonstrated that unions
can play an important role in both supporting the
truce process and working with First Nations to
strengthen health care and other public services."

HEU has been a strong supporter of the First
Nations treaty process.

Nisga'a leader Joe Gosnell spoke at the 1998 con-
vention. HEU also represents First Nations health
care staff who work for the Graham Health Authority,
the Skidegate Band Council and the Metis
Health Centre in northwestem B.C., and the St.
Mary's Band in the Can Kooenees.

Announcement of 600 non-profit beds welcomed

HEU applauds Victoria's announcement giving
the go-ahead for pilot projects for five new non-profit
seniors' care facilities around the province, thereby
creating 600 new beds and reducing the long wait-
ning lines for seniors to receive the care they need.

"We're extremely pleased that this long-awaited
announcement has finally been made," says secre-
tary-business manager Chris Allum. "Together with
seniors and community groups, our union has
worked hard to press government to expand the role
of non-profit organizations in developing and oper-
at ing seniors' care facilities in B.C.

"Three years ago," says Allum, "government
almost made a tragic mistake by relying on private,
for-profit corporations to build and operate all new
long-term care facilities in the province. So the go-
ahead for the projects represents an important victo-
ry for non-profit organizations and for our seniors."

Allum says HEU supports a bigger role for non-
profit organizations in providing seniors' care.

"There's real value in these groups being more
involved because they build a sense of community
and they offer a wealth of ideas," he says.

HEU, notes Allum, engaged in the lobbying effort
because its strongly opposed to for-profit seniors'
care. He also says one unexpected outcome of the
debate on the issue is that the B.C. Liberals have
also embraced the not-for-profit model for develop-
ment of new seniors' care facilities over reliance on for-
profit corporations.

S P R I N G  2 0 0 1  •  G U A R D I A N  5
PRESIDENT’S DESK

Democracy goes beyond voting day
by Fred Maxin

ALTHOUGH democracy is an extremely difficult system to establish and maintain, it is far better than the alternatives. The democratic system only works well when people participate and ensure that elected leaders are continually accountable. Given the complexity and variety of issues that politicians have to juggle, if we want decisions to reflect the collective will, our lobbying and activism must continue beyond voting day.

This spring we are experiencing several models of democracy that require us to study the detail behind the headlines and news bytes and express our opinions. HEU members and our bargaining partners are voting on the proposed terms of settlement for our community and facilities collective agreements. We get to hear full reports directly from the members of our Provincial Bargaining Committee and Provincial Executive, who are recommending acceptance, to ask questions, to challenge, to question, to study the consequences and to cast an informed ballot regarding our terms and conditions of work over the next three years. 2001 is not an election year for HEU, but this ongoing accountability is fundamental to our union remaining strong.

In the provincial election in May, we get to elect the members of the new B.C. legislature. If we value democracy, which is extremely fragile at the best of times, we have a tremendous responsibility to put in the effort to become knowledgeable and to get out and vote. That means attending all candidates’ meetings, reading this month’s Guardians carefully and dialoging with our co-workers.

If you believe the media and the polling firms, the election is already over. A low voter turnout cannot guarantee that result. We must elect a government that best represents our issues, not the media. People who feel that their ballot cannot make a difference should remember the events in Florida during last November’s U.S. presidential election.

Another important element of democracy is the right to assemble and protest. Demonstrations across the country on April 21 against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) meetings in Quebec City provide an alternative to a world run by and for multinational corporations. In conjunction with the provisions of NAFTA, under the FTAA we are losing the ability to protect our environment, our water, public services such as health care and education, and accountable governments.

The People’s Assembly supports fair trade that includes social justice, not unfettered free trade whereby we are only valued as consumers and peasants in a corporate globalization plan. That’s why we cannot allow Jean ‘pepper mout’ Chrétien and his cronies to silence us. From AFEC in Vancouver, to the MAI in Indo-Pac., to the Battle in Seattle, to the WTO in Washington, to Quebec and beyond, we must be committed to action if we are to leave our world better than we found it.

Democracy is a matter of choices. Solidarity is a matter of working together for the betterment of all. Freedom is our ability to build on this to make a difference.

VOICES

Why lock chaos into place?
by Marjorie Griffin Cohen

Deregulation of electricity markets in California and Alberta has resulted in brown-outs, huge price increases for electricity users, and possibilities of future shortages that could send prices sky-high. Are people in B.C. prepared for the same? There are mighty forces that want to see an integrated electricity market for the continent – a move that would mirror what has happened to natural gas prices. Unless Canadian governments take strong and firm action to prevent this, we could lose the advantages of having B.C. Hydro in the public sector.

While the current focus in B.C. is on gas prices, there are good reasons to worry about a similar pattern emerging for electricity prices. The main difference between these two industries now is that gas markets are controlled by the private sector in B.C., while electricity production and distribution are still a regulated public monopoly. This has ensured stable, low prices – an asset that could draw businesses looking for a predictable energy supply to B.C.

The deregulation and privatization of electricity are occurring rapidly throughout North America, and many argue that B.C. must move in the same direction. But a debate about whether electricity should be deregulated could become irrelevant if a U.S. proposal for the international remittance of energy succeeds at the World Trade Organization’s negotiations on services, the General Agreement on Trade in Services.

The U.S. submissions to the WTO simply assume that deregulation is beneficial to everyone because it lowers prices and ensures a reliable supply, a false assumption as the California experience shows. In B.C., where electricity supply is reliable and costs are low, any international regulatory changes that could force the privatization of the public monopoly should be a high political priority.

The U.S. proposals specifically call for measures that will provide secure access to energy outside national boundaries by creating rules that would extend and lock in place the deregulation agenda – including having all government energy monopolies eliminated.

The federal government appears to have little interest in hearing provincial concerns on energy – B.C. and Quebec are in a prime position to make energy deregulation an issue. They should seek to protect their citizens and industries from losing an U.S.-style deregulation. B.C. must also re-examine its electricity export policy.

The hunger for export markets is clouding its vision of how to manage energy in the public interest.

* Marjorie Griffin Cohen is a research associate with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and was formerly on the board of B.C. Hydro.

ENTHUSIASTIC HEU MEMBER Dawn Greer stands outside Para-Med’s Vancouver office where she works as a client services coordinator.

From airport to ballot box
by Dale Fuller

Dawn Greer knew that a strike vote was imminent when she flew to California to be with her ILF Father. She booked her return flight without knowing when the vote would be held, but as luck would have it, HEU members were voting on the very day she returned. And yes, her plane landed leaving her with just barely enough time to grab a cab and say, “Take me to the Biltmore Hotel.” She ran in, cast her vote and went home.

“Get a piece of paper in the ballot box.”

And Greer was active in SEIU (Service Employees’ International Union). Local 250 as an organizer and steward. She worked at Kaiser Permanente hospitals in Vallejo and Martinez as an X-ray technician.

She moved to Canada six years ago and she began working with mentally-challenged adults. Last November she began work as a client services coordinator for Para-Med Home Health Care (Vancouver).

At Para-Med she is responsible for coordinating the needs of clients who require varying levels of care.

“I do a lot of juggling,” says Greer. “Some of the seniors, disabled or mental health patients we serve may need just two hours a week of personal care or help with housekeeping and some may need as much as two hours a day seven days a week.”

She organizes the schedule of the home support workers, making sure they work their full allotment of hours and that they don’t get assignments too geographically separated from their families. She maintains a list of regular full-time and part-time workers and can usually submit the hours they are available every three months, and the regulars have a set amount of hours they work.

She matches up the clients’ needs with the home support workers.

“Any things can change for a client; they may not need us anymore, or may not need us one week,” says Greer. “And that can cause a whole chain reaction.” She has to know which clients are more flexible, who doesn’t mind having their schedule changed.

That’s when she calls on the experience and knowledge of the home support workers, who usually know their clients very well. “They know all their idiosyncrasies. I rely on them, and they rely on each other too. You have to be able to push a client here – absolutely necessary”.

ON THE JOB

B.C. and Quebec are in a prime position to make energy deregulation an issue

By Marjorie Griffin Cohen

Deregulation of electricity markets in California and Alberta has resulted in brown-outs, huge price increases for electricity users, and possibilities of future shortages that could send prices sky-high. Are people in B.C. prepared for the same? There are mighty forces that want to see an integrated electricity market for the continent – a move that would mirror what has happened to natural gas prices. Unless Canadian governments take strong and firm action to prevent this, we could lose the advantages of having B.C. Hydro in the public sector.

While the current focus in B.C. is on gas prices, there are good reasons to worry about a similar pattern developing for electricity prices. The main difference between these two industries now is that gas markets are controlled by the private sector in B.C., while electricity production and distribution are still a regulated public monopoly. This has ensured stable, low prices – an asset that could draw businesses looking for a predictable energy supply to B.C.

The deregulation and privatization of electricity are occurring rapidly throughout North America, and many argue that B.C. must
They’re off and running

Election strong voices for Medicare the best outcome

Health care? Or tax cut? You may soon decide.

Health care reform is not only the most important issue in the election, but it is also the most complex. A strong health-care plan will be the deciding factor in many races.

A Liberal led government would be a strong health-care plan. It would provide accessible and comprehensive health care for all Canadians.

A Conservative government would cut health-care services and increase taxes.

Under the NDP, HEU members have made impressive gains.

The NDP government has made significant strides in improving our health-care system. They have implemented new policies that have helped reduce wait times and improve patient care.

The NDP has also introduced a universal health-care system that provides coverage to all Canadians, regardless of income.

A strong health-care plan is essential for the prosperity of our country. It is important that we vote for a candidate who understands the importance of health care and is committed to making it a priority.

A simple question

A simple question is held in a critical role for working people. The International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Employees, (IUE) has been in existence since 1894, and their mission is to advocate for the rights of workers.

The IUE has always supported the rights of workers, and has been involved in many strikes and protests. They have been a strong voice for workers rights and have advocated for better wages and working conditions.

A strong health-care plan is essential for the prosperity of our country. It is important that we vote for a candidate who understands the importance of health care and is committed to making it a priority.

Get registered to vote

There will be special registration events throughout the province for the first five days after the election. These events will be held in libraries, community centers, and other convenient locations.

It is important to register to vote as soon as possible. Voting by mail is also available for those who cannot vote in person.

Does your vote matter?

You might think that your vote doesn’t matter, but your vote does make a difference. Your vote can help elect a candidate who will make health-care reform a priority.

Heinrich von Staden

Heinrich von Staden is an independent candidate running for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in the federal election. He is a former union organizer and has worked in the health-care sector for many years.

Get involved

Get involved in the election process. Contact your local candidates and let them know how important health care is to you. Vote in the upcoming federal election and make your voice heard.

plus another 6 that matter to HEU members

Land Claims

Most provinces have made progress on settling the land claims of the last century. This is an important issue for many First Nations and their communities.

Hydro

Hydro is a public-cost natural resource. The IUE has been involved in many hydroelectric projects, and has advocated for fair compensation for workers.

Environment

The environment is a critical issue for working people. The IUE has been involved in many environmental campaigns, and has advocated for clean air and water.

Election Toolkit

Get involved in the election process. Contact your local candidates and let them know how important health care is to you. Vote in the upcoming federal election and make your voice heard.

Child care

Child care is an important issue for working people. The IUE has been involved in many child care campaigns, and has advocated for affordable and accessible child care.

Education

Education is a critical issue for working people. The IUE has been involved in many education campaigns, and has advocated for quality education for all children.
Health care workers have a huge stake in the outcome of the B.C. election. We've prepared this "toolbox" to pinpoint issues, compare positions and offer analysis so that HEU members have all the tools when it comes time to vote. Read on, and check out our comprehensive election site at <www.heu.org>.

### Setting the post-election agenda

**Chris Allnutt**  
HEU secretary-business manager

With B.C.'s major media having all but sworn Gordon Campbell as premier, many union members feel they have no say in the election outcome.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Between now and May 16, we have an opportunity to make our mark on the post-election agenda.

Our assessment is that a re-elected NDP government would best protect Medicare and the interests of working people. But whatever the outcome, we must use this election to make the new government responsive to challenges on health care's front lines.

**Fred Mutin**  
HEU president

### Examine the record — carefully

The Liberals would like to reduce this election to the NDP record on fast ferries.

But the record is a lot longer and it includes a decade of increasing health care funding, employment security, a progressive labour code and a unified bargaining unit for all facilities and community-based workers.

The Liberals promise deep tax cuts that will compromise health care spending. They oppose employment security, the labour code and recent legislation that brought down the community facilities "wall." Examine the record carefully — and make your vote count on May 16.

### Ten years of progress for working women

**Mary LaPlante**  
HEU financial secretary

A decade of NDP government in B.C. has been a decade in which women have made broad social and economic progress. Low wage redress and pay equity for women on the front lines of health care and community social services, pay equity legislation for the private sector, protected access to abortion services, a universal child care program — these are concrete gains that are worth protecting.

Women make up more than half of B.C. voters — let's make issues of equality and fairness front and centre in this election.

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How to register  
* four key health care issues  
* six other key issues  
* comments from Ujjal Dosanjh, Gordon Campbell, Jim Sinclair  
* critical ridings  
* HEU/CUPE candidates  
* links  
* in their own words
They're off and running
ELECTING STRONG VOICES

According to pundits, the B.C. Liberals have this election in the bag and Gordon Campbell will finally assume the premiers mantel. A Liberal landslide is guaranteed – right? But there's more at stake for HEU members and for Medicare than just who wins and loses the May 16 vote. Rather, the outcome needs to be looked at in terms of how many strong voices are elected that will support Medicare and advocate in the legislature for the needs and views of frontline health care workers.

HEU members play a pivotal role in any provincial election. We bring to the campaign trail a strong record of activism to improve conditions for health care workers and a passion to defend and improve our public Medicare system. We've been able to link our own brand of activism with support in the political arena. We've made gains because we've elected politicians who share our vision for change.

But if we believe the pundits, there aren't going to be many strong political voices speaking out with us. So before you vote, let's look at the last 10 years of NDP government. Let's balance that against what's ahead under a Liberal regime.

Under the NDP, HEU members have made impressive gains. For example, we've enjoyed the highest compensation increases for health workers anywhere in the country. Our 1992 pay equity agreement is an example of what can be done when strong voices are elected to the legislature.

A simple question

"Every election is a critical time for working people. The impending B.C. vote is no exception. Gordon Campbell's Liberals, backed by every major media outlet and the entire business community, are determined to win. Ujjal Dosanjh and the NDP are committed to building on 10 years in office. Ultimately, it comes down to a simple question. Which leader - Ujjal Dosanjh or Gordon Campbell - do you consider best suited to advance the needs of working families? We believe the choice is clear. We're supporting Ujjal Dosanjh and the NDP."

Jim Sinclair, President, B.C. Federation of Labour

plus another 6 that matter to HEU members

Land Claims

Make it right
More progress has been made on settling the long-standing land claims of B.C.'s First Nations in the last 10 years than in the previous hundred. The landmark Nisga'a Treaty and many more framework agreements are about justice and respect for First Nations while delivering economic stability to many parts of British Columbia.

But Gordon Campbell's Liberals fought tooth and nail against the Nisga'a Treaty and even went to court to stop it. Can we afford to throw our 10 years of progress?

Hydro

Power for the people - not profit
As a public owned crown corporation, B.C. Hydro has protected consumers from the massive price hikes affecting Albertans and Californians in their deregulated markets. In fact, hydro prices have been frozen for seven years while $2.5 billion in electricity profits have been used to offset federal cuts to health and education.

The Liberals have back-peddled on their plans for B.C. Hydro privatization. But they can't decide - or won't say - what plans they do have for B.C. Hydro.

Environment

A healthy future?
Balancing environmental sustainability with economic growth is a tough job but over the last 10 years, the NDP government has taken many measures to achieve a healthy future. B.C. has doubled its parks and protected areas safeguarding 13 percent of the land base. Fresh water exports are banned and legislation protecting drinking water passed. The Liberals business backers want to gut the Forest Practices Code and reduce environmental assessments for new mining.

Good for business? Bad for the environment.
“I wasn’t happy with the Health Labour Accord [employment security agreement] in 1985. That’s just the way it was. I am not tearing up any agreements.”

HEALTH LEADER
GORDON CAMPBELL

“For me, there is no room for private health care in B.C. The Liberals don’t believe in that. That is the defining difference between us and them.”

NDP PREMIER
UJJAL DOSANI

HEU/CUPE members are proud to run

Colleen Fitzpatrick
North Coast
HEU/CP members of union activists make her a strong NDP candidate in a solid labour riding.

Erda Walsh
East Kooteney
The former NDP MLA and HEU/CP member from Cranbrook

Regional Hospital, was a city councillor before winning in provincial politics.

Roger Kishi
North Vancouver—Lonsdale
NDP candidate Kishi is a dedicated HEU member and social justice advocate who’s active on several municipal committees.

Ruth Adams
Delta South
HEU/CP Hospital member and NDP candidate Adams is a local shop steward and a member of the hospital’s Diversity and Health & Safety committees.

Jeanne Grant
Richmond Centre
HEU Care Aides Grant is eager to use her extensive labour background to represent working people as an NDP MLA.

Kimberly Molvar
Cariboo North
Molvar, an HEU member and local union president, is running as an independent.

Ken Landgraf
Columbia—Musselborough
NDP candidate Landgraf is a long-time CUPE activist/leader and community volunteer in the Tri-Cities area.

Simon Challenger
Fort Langley—Alberni
As the NDP candidate, CUPE local 23 president Challenger will use his trade union experience and knowledge.

Get registered to vote

There will be special registration centres throughout the province for the first eight days after the election is called. They will be set up in shops and other convenient areas. After the eighth day, registration is permitted only in conjunction with voting. Qualified voters may register while casting their ballots. To register while voting, a voter must provide two pieces of personal identification showing their name, current address and signature.

s for Medicare the best outcome

settlement is the most comprehensive plan in Canada. B.C. is the only jurisdiction in North America where long-term care workers enjoy the same wages and benefits as their hospital counterparts.

Also unique in North America is last month’s groundbreaking community contract that will put an end to the community wage
ghetto. Thousands of community social services workers will also move forward because their settlements are linked to the community wage.

Let’s go back seven years and remember the unparalleled employment security provisions that B.C. health care workers won. It helped us avoid the upheaval, job losses and wage rollbacks our counterparts elsewhere in Canada faced.

You won’t read this in your local newspaper, but over the last decade, our NDP government has been the strongest defender of public Medicare and the hardest critic of privatization anywhere in Canada.

Will there be strong voices to defend Medicare post-election in the Liberal camp? Campbell and crew learned their lesson in 1996 when the Liberal leaders health care politics contributed to his electoral failure. Remember the attacks on our employment security agreement? Or the montages about funding cuts and the flattening of private health care?

All that’s changed now. With the middle-of-the-road approach that he’s taken recently, the Liberal leader is staggering a different tune. He says he’s committed to maintaining health funding, is now opposed to private clinics and talks respectfully about the roles played by HEU members. We say we don’t have to worry about privatization, and his line on training for LPNs and Care Aides sounds progressive.

But there are three key reasons why a Campbell government may not stack up to be a strong voice defending health care workers and Medicare. First is his campaign to make B.C. Income tax levels the lowest in Canada. Despite the contrary analysis of a wide array of economic experts, Campbell claims tax cuts will increase, not decrease government revenues, and safeguard health funding.

Even his business allies acknowledge that deep tax cuts will have to be paid for through spending cuts. It’s hard to figure how health care could avoid that, especially when other tax cutting premiers like Mike Harris and Ralph Klein have inflicted huge cuts in their provinces.

Second, go down the Liberal bench a few spots. Scrath the surface, strip away the veneer and what do you find? A number of MLAs who have trouble putting Campbell’s “reform” for first-line health care workers into practice. Like Kamloops MLA Kevin Kruger and his infamous “toilet cleaner” remarks. Will these MLAs be speaking out strongly for Medicare in the next sitting of the legislature?

Finally, let’s not overlook the powerful business groups who bankroll Campbell’s campaign. These interests have no trouble spelling out their agenda: that HEU members are overpaid, that health care services should be privatized, key public services downsized and environmental protections relaxed.

No matter which party forms government, HEU members will still be fighting for public health care. But our voices will be stronger if there are MLAs elected on May 16 who have a proven commitment to Medicare, working people and a fair and just economy and society.

Does your vote matter?

You bet it does! A few votes in ridings across B.C. can mean the difference between winning and losing. We need to ensure that strong voices are elected to speak out for health care after the election. How close was it in 1996?

Razor thin in a number of contests. HEU member Erda Walsh won Kootenay for the NDP by 468 votes. And Liberal Kevin Kruger of toilet cleaner fame won his Kamloops riding by 368 votes. Surf HEU’s website election tool kit at <www.heu.org> for all the information you need to make your vote count for health care.

Pay equity:

Close the gap.

Women have laboured tirelessly for pay equity and the government listened.

The new pay equity legislation makes it illegal for private and public sector employers to compensate women and men differently for work of equal value. It’s a positive step for women.

The Liberals have been very critical of the legislation but silent when it comes to putting forward their own solution. And private industry claims it can look after its own. Who do you think the Liberals listen to, women or industry?

Child care:

Caring for Kids.

The B.C. government has taken important steps towards a child care guarantee for every B.C. family. The Child Care B.C. program provides before and after-school care for kids from kindergartens to age 12. Parents save up to $1,100 per child per year.

But is access to child care and family homes for low and modest income families at risk from the deep tax cuts promised by the Gordon Campbell Liberals?

Education:

Everyone’s right.

Reduced class sizes in grades K-12, 6,000 new teachers, frozen tuition fees for post-secondary students, expanded student financial assistance — these important investments in British Columbians will pay off in the new economy.

The B.C. Liberals won’t commit to the tuition freeze and encourage "vouchers" and charter schools that would undermine public education. And with a dramatic tax cut being the Liberals’ first priority, how secure is our education investment?
Tall tax tales
Gordon Campbell and his Liberals are promising tax cuts if they form the next government. They say the economy will flourish to the benefit of us all. Marc Levy, research director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, takes a close look at some "tall tales" surrounding the issue of tax cuts.

Tax rate or wage rate? While taxes rose modestly over the 1990s, incomes in Canada were stagnant. From 1989 to 1997, average family incomes declined by 5.2 per cent in B.C.

Personal taxes in B.C. are among Canada's lowest. A family of four with an average income of $55,000 pays 23.4 per cent of their income in total federal and provincial taxes, less than in every province but Alberta.

Our taxes are in line with other industrialized nations. Canada's tax revenues as a share of GDP are in the middle of OECD countries. And taking labour markets, social programs and taxes together, most Canadians get a better deal in Canada than in the U.S.

Tax cuts are not a very potent tonic to economic ills. While tax cuts do have a stimulating effect, they are likely to be modest.

Tax cuts do not lead to increased government revenues. Tax revenues grow primarily because of economic growth, which tends to boost revenues whether tax rates are going up or down. In particular, tax cuts for the wealthy will have less of a stimulative impact than tax cuts for low and middle income earners.

Tax cuts deliver most of the gains to the well-off. While "tax rage" is being sold to the general public, those at the middle or bottom of the income ladder are unlikely to receive a tax cut of any significance. Moreover, because taxes are the means by which we support social programs, cuts to these programs will represent the true cost of tax cuts.

THE POST-ELECTION HEALTH CARE AGENDA

The key issues B.C.'s new government will have to take on to modernize Medicare

Mike Farnworth, NDP, responding to charges that HEU members are overpaid "Is it cheap to say doctors and nurses should be well paid and everybody else should do it?"

Kevin Krugler, Liberal MLA, referring to housekeepers and cleaners at Royal Inland Hospital, "The B.C. Liberals recognize the importance of HEU workers to the public health care system."

Gordon Campbell, Liberal leader, "I believe health care workers deserve every penny they get from the public funds in the HEU a huge week of taxpayers' money."

Colin Hansen on HEU's pay equity plan

There are the top issues that will dominate the post-election debate about health care and the future of public Medicare. Use them as talking points to engage candidates during the election campaign, to find out where they stand.

Keep it public
Post election, Medicare will continue to face threats from proponents of two-tiered care. And Ottawa's upcoming inquiry into public health care could spark more privatization. A new government must move to combat the privatization threat, set up private surgical clinics, reduce out-of-pocket health care costs. Ending doctors' fee-for-service payments is another element in a plan to modernize - not privatize - Medicare.

An affordable drug plan
Prescription drugs are the fastest growing health care cost. And with more care based in the community, people pay out-of-pocket for drugs that are covered during a hospital stay. B.C. needs to shore up our Pharmacare drug plan, and maintain reference-based pricing - which has saved $200 million in five years - to limit the huge profits of drug companies. And the next government must advocate strongly for a national drug program.

Broad-based solutions to the nursing crunch
Wage increases are only a partial answer to the nursing shortage. B.C. must press forward with an innovative, broad-based plan to harness the skills and potential of a wide range of nursing staff including RNs, LPNs, Care Aides, and home support workers. It means new roles, expanded training, and easing barriers for foreign-trained nurses already resident here.

Caring for our seniors
With an aging population, B.C. needs a comprehensive elder care strategy. One that reduces pressures on hospitals and provides seniors with the quality of care they deserve. That means building more non-profit care beds, expanding home support, and fast-tracking other progressive housing solutions. It must also recognize that tens of thousands of seniors - mostly women - live in poverty.

Keeping people healthy
Health promotion should be a top priority. That means looking at "health care" in new ways. Where government policies to promote a clean environment, social housing, jobs and decent incomes are just as important as having the latest cutting-edge medical technology on hand. Shifting resources to keep people healthy instead of treating them when they're sick is crucial for the future of Medicare.

Build it up, don't tear it down!
There may be a post-election move to curtail the health ministry. One new ministry would deal with acute care only, the other with continuing and community care. Such a move would be a setback for progressive health care reform. Instead, a new government should press aggressively to break down barriers to more closely integrate hospital and vital community services like home support.

Tax cuts aren't all they are cracked up to be
Support social programs, cuts to these programs will represent the true cost of tax cuts.

HEU video takes on tax cuts, too
The 20-minute video, called Health Care or tax cuts?, is based on the front-line experiences of Ontario health care workers who have battled against the devastating impacts of Mike Harris' tax cuts, concrete proof that Gordon Campbell's pledge to wield the same axe to tax levels in B.C. has profound implications for our health care system. Call Gill Paquette at 604-742-8814 for your free copy.

Get help at <www.heu.org>
Jenny tells the story of her name

by Jenny Zhang

On July 5, 1962, a girl was born in Beijing, China, daughter of an army journalist. Her black eyes were twisting and her lovely face looked up a red and cute. A journalist named the girl Xiao Hong. Xiao means "little," Hong means "red" and Zhang is the family name. The journalist was my dad and the little girl was me. One day, I asked my dad why he named me Hong. He said that he was serving in the Liberian Army — the successor of the Red Army. He told me that I was the offspring of the Red Army. He also said that Hong means happy. I was quite surprised when my dad gave me so many explanations about my name. From this I could feel how much he loved me and how many expectations he had of me.

After finishing grade 12, I went to medical college. There was another girl in the college whose name was the same as mine. This caused confusion. I asked my dad to change my name for me. He gave me a new name — Xue Hong. Xue means "snow." In my deepest heart, I dreamed of greater knowledge, more education and true freedom. I was just like a poor little bird born in a cage eager to fly.

After graduating, I went to work in a hospital and went to university to take English courses. There are many nice stories in the English texts. I was so impressed by those stories that I was encouraged to read more. One of my favourite novels was Love Story by Eric Segal. I was so moved by the story that I read it over and over, and each time I was in tears. I identified with Jenny.

As time passed, China started to open to the world. We had more and more foreigners around. I had an opportunity to work for an American company in Beijing as an interpreter. When I met the American manager and his wife, I was trying to introduce myself. I knew it was hard for them to pronounce my Chinese name, and I thought of Jenny in the novel. As that moment all of a sudden thought of the novel and said, "My name is Jenny." Now, the lucky little bird, got a chance to fly. I came to Canada — one of the best countries in the world. My eyes totally opened. For the first time in my life, I got to know the western world and a developed country. I learned the meaning of freedom and human rights. It is necessary for me to have an English name, easier to pronounce. Every time someone says, "Hi, Jenny," I feel good. In this free country, I am not a "little red girl" anymore. I will be able to do what I want to do. I am working hard on my English, my education and my job. I am looking forward to the day when I get my Canadian citizenship identification with my full name on it. My name is Jenny Xue-Hong Zhang, I like my name.

• This is an excerpt of an essay written by Jenny Xue-Hong Zhang for her class in VGHIS45 program. Zhang is a building maintenance worker at that facility.

Health board attempts IS integration

HEU staff writing in information systems at Richmond Hospital know how important the union's quest for better care is for all in their recent experience with the employer's Information Technology Department. "The technological support demonstrated here for safety and ease of use for the health care setting is something we are very excited about," says Ken Allin, president, Richmond Health Care District. The Vancouver/Richmond Health Care District has been working to integrate its information systems with those of Richmond Hospital, a plan that would have2 employees access to hospital staffs placed under the community sector contract.

The Health Board's IT project illustrates the need for role contact for all workers in hospitals, long-term care facilities or community health," says HEU secretary-treasurer Ken Allin. "The plan is to hold a forum to determine how to include Vancouver Hospital and Mental Health Services Centre in their IT exercise. Affected boards are forming an ad hoc local sub-committee to develop an information system alert campaign to impacted workers are involved in any further integration efforts.

Privatization saps democracy, says CUPE report

CUPE's third annual report on privatization — Dollars and Democracy — looks at the role played by the federal government in pushing privatization and in so doing undermining democracy. CUPE's research demonstrates, moreover, that privatization does not save the taxpayer money. It takes a close look at the expenditure of corporate interests into public services like education, health care, electrical utilities and child care. The federal Liberals, following in Brian Mulroney's footsteps, have been aggressively pushing the privatization of these public services. The first step on this road was to cut transfer payments to the provinces, undercutting their ability to adequately fund their important public programs without raising taxes — a highly unpopular option, curtailing other government services or approaching the private sector to "partner" with them in providing public services. The latter choice accounts for the proliferation of public-private partnerships in the health care sector.

Especially vulnerable to private intrusion on public turf is long-term care. Private corporations see the looming hole in the senior population as a bonanza. Those corporations want to get in on the guaranteed stream of public funding that comes with long-term care, says the report, but new research actually shows public, not-for-profit long-term care provides better quality care for patients and better support to their families.

Dollars and Democracy highlights how public services are threatened by international trade agreements. "Federal negotiations are opening up trade deals that propel us down the road to even greater corporate control of vital public services," says CUPE president Judy Wilcox. "They're destroying the very things that make Canada such an attractive place to live and invest — the services that create the consumers wealth that makes us a great democracy." The report contains prescriptions and a plan for actions for renewing and strengthening public services and can be downloaded from the CUPE website at <www.cupe.org> or obtained by calling CUPE Provincial Office.
tentative agreement

HEU members in the facilities sector are voting on a tentative agreement, the community agreement has been ratified and legislation ensuring they'll be sitting at the same table next time around.

Community health care workers from St. James Community Service Society and their supporters marched from Oppenheimer Park in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside to their workplace to draw attention to the gap that exists between their wages and those of workers in hospitals and long-term care homes.

paid off with the passage of legislation that brings down the community/facilities labour relations wall and puts all health services and support workers at the same table next time around.

On April 5, after three months of intensive bargaining that included three days of limited job action in the facilities subsector, a three-year tentative agreement was reached for HEU's 45,000 hospital and long-term care members that includes measures to increase staffing in long-term care, guarantee access to training and make health care workplaces safer.

A week earlier, a tentative agreement reached for HEU's community subsector members includes a parity guarantee and better allowances and scheduling provisions.

And significantly, despite employer attempts to roll back vacation, injury-on-duty leave and the pay equity plan, there are no concessions in either tentative settlements.

"There's no doubt that the 50 per cent strike vote drove employer concessions off the bargaining table," says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt.

"But more importantly, union members were out in the community advocating for forward-looking measures in the agreement that would deal with the stresses and strains on health care's front lines," adds Allnutt. "As a result, we've made concrete gains meaning better working conditions for our members.'

We've made concrete gains meaning better working conditions for our members'

During the last few weeks, HEU members have capped years of bargaining history with remarkable new gains that provide economic security, improved career conditions and equal treatment for union members.

In a three-pronged effort, union members reached tentative settlements in both the community and facilities subsector that achieved the goals of wage and benefit equity for 1,000 community caregivers and about 5,000 members from 'non-levelled' long-term care facilities.

At the same time, hard work by union activists over many years.

During the last few weeks, HEU members have capped years of bargain

2000

Oct. 23-25 Activists set bargaining agenda at HEU's 15th Wage Policy Conference

Dec. 19 HEU and bargaining partners including BCGEU and UFCW present a progressive bargaining agenda called Five Steps Forward as community and frontline workers begin bargaining together for the first time.

2001

Jan. 10 Talks resume on a three-day-a-week schedule as both sides begin finalizing proposals

Jan. 11 Employers table "veto" concessions targeting vacation, hours of work and benefits for injured workers, but agree reaching a deal before March 31 is a priority.

Feb. 8 Testimonials from frontline care providers at the bargaining table open the bosses' eyes about impact of short staffing in long-term care. Later, HEU trusts members made special presentations on maintenance standards.

Feb. 20 Seniors' and disabled advocacy groups pledge support for union efforts to improve staffing levels in long-term care.

Feb. 24 HEU holds three days of regional job action conferences to take stock of bargaining and plan creative ways to press the bosses.

March 1 HEABC finalists tables compensation offer, but only for facilities caregivers.

March 2 Combined community/facilities strike vote was called, set for March 8-16.

March 9 HEABC tables compensation offer for community.

March 13 HEU strike vote: 90 per cent support strike action.

March 29 Groundbreaking tentative community agreement won, but strike notice issued for facilities.

March 30 B.C's LRB ruling means unions must re-serv vote for 2001 strike notice.

March 31 Facilities contract expires, unions re-serve strike notice for April 3.

April 2 Job action starts withSWG at some hospitals and long-term care facilities.

April 3 More job action in selected sites, Supreme Court rejects bosses' bid to overturn essential service orders to prevent job action.

April 5 Limited job action, tentative agreement reached.

April 11, 17-18 Community ratification votes.

April 26-May 3 Facilities ratification votes.

Our bargaining story

"We've made concrete gains meaning better working conditions for our members'
Kudos for creativity

HEU members attending the BC Federation of Labour and BC Federation of Business and Employers' Councils Conferences in late February dreamed up all kinds of interesting ways that they could get the bargaining message across back in the workplace. Now we can say that HEU isn't colourless — and tasteful — in its negotiations.

Voters at St. Vincent's Hospital in Vancouver were sure not to get lost with a colourful (and big) poster pointing the way to the polls.

A great way to show off stickers is in a cranky blue (HEU's colour) sweatshirt, like this community sector member did for the rally at Oppenheimer Park.

Union members plastered the union bulletin board with all the stickers and union merchandise they could find to boost the spirits and morale of HEU members in the Penticton Regional Hospital.

Sunwood local members from Langley's Maplewood House baked up a batch of cookies too good to resist and presented these tempting messages to their manager. They told him he was welcome to take them to the next HEABC meeting, too.

Children's and Women's local activists love those disposable white oval balloons. They're just perfect to stick to all the colourful stickers.

Frances George, Regional Hospital members welcomed the regional health board chair, CEO and a handful of Liberal hopefuls with a healthy serving of "workplace soup" during their specially-arranged tour of the facility. The "soup" was made from ingredients like employment security, compensation, respect and accountability.

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Other highlights in the tentative community settlement include increased benefits for casuals, higher overnight and live-in allowance minimums, and improved scheduling provisions. Casuals will be able to subscribe for benefits and pay for coverage.

The tentative settlement also fast tracks the overdues payment of five per cent in equity adjustments under the 1998-2001 community agreement.

Allnutt says that the timing of the contract settlements were not related to the dropping of the election writ, and the bargaining priorities of health care workers would have been the same regardless of which party was in power. "Could we have made the same gains under a different government? I'll take my cue from the Liberal's cool response to legislation tearing down the wall between community and facilities workers," Allnutt said.

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HEU produced three special videos earlier this year to support member education and mobilizing. Our "Throw Range" highlighted our past accomplishments, spotlighted efforts to win safer workplaces, and tackled the injury-on-duty concession demand. Thanks to HEU members who had starring roles!

1 - The 1990s: a decade of bargaining accomplishments
2 - No manual lifts!
3 - Adding insult to injury

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The tentative community and facilities deals deliver on priorities set by HEU members. And the breakthrough to win legislation to tear down the wall means that next time community and facilities workers will bargain once again.

Facilities settlement
- General wage increases of 5.5% in year one, 4.5% in year two, and 4% in year three.
- Equitable pay for non-unionized members.
- Improved benefits in all categories, including wages, hours, benefits, pension and language.

Community settlement
- Greater wage increases than other categories.
- Equitable pay for non-unionized members.
- Improved benefits in all categories.

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The wall tumbles down
Another major gain was won on the legislative front to put an end to the two wage rates in the community. On April 11, the NDP used its new majority to pass Bill 33 to tear down the wall dividing community and facilities workers.

Goldie Campbell and the B.C. Liberals were opposed to the move that Premier Vitali Donwll had publicly committed to last fall. But HEU chief bargainer spokesperson Chris Allnutt says the Liberals were disappointed with comments about Bill 23 from Liberal Colin Hansen, who said it was a "payoff" to HEU. "On the eve of an election, it was certainly a defining moment," he says. "It sure signals how we might have fared if we were bargaining under a Liberal government."
Mother's wish is granted

RANKS TO the efforts of a group of Guatemalan-Canadians—many of them HEU members from Tilbury Laundry Services—11-year-old Valeria Morales Clavijo of Guatemala will soon be able to walk.

Rolando Figueroa, one of the HEU members at Tilbury, is the president of an organization called the Fraternity to Help Guatemalan Children. Most of its 27 members came to Canada in the 1980s and 1990s as refugees from war and repression. They formed the group to help children caught in the consequences of the conflict in their country.

Since the formation of the Fraternity in 1994, they have been able to fund 19 projects. With limited funds, garnered mostly from membership fees, car washes and garage sales, they have been able, for example, to send school supplies to the village of La Quebrada and help build an orphanage to a school in another village in Huehuetenango.

"We receive many petitions for help," says Figueroa. "We study the projects and decide which ones we can help." In June 1999, they received a letter from Pilar Clavijo. Her daughter Valeria was suffering from a birth defect that twisted her legs inward and was preventing her from walking.

In Guatemala, says Figueroa, there are good doctors, but no equipment. Clavijo, originally from Colombia, and her husband are not well off. Not owning a car proved to be an obstacle to Valeria's medical treatment. "When Valeria was small enough, I carried her to the clinic—riding three buses each way. When I couldn't carry her anymore, it was just wasn't possible to continue her treatment," she says.

She began writing to international organizations, asking for help. When Valeria was seven, the Colombian government helped by sending her to Texas for an assessment. The doctors there said they would need $30,000 off the hundred thousand the treatment normally costs. "How could we afford $70,000" asks Clavijo.

She continued her search for help. One of her letters landed in the Fraternity's mailbox just when Figueroa was leaving for a trip to Guatemala. He was able to personally evaluate the situation, and he promised Clavijo he would try to help.

Following a suggestion from then health minister Penny Piddock, he contacted the Anastasia Foundation which brings children to Canada for medical treatment. They have the infrastructure in place to deal with immigration, housing with hospitals, fundraising, etc., and agreed to help.

Valeria arrived with her mother in early December 2000, and doctors Beau-champ and Ralegh operated on Dec. 27 at Children's Hospital.

Doctors say she will probably be walking in about five months.

"She will probably be walking in about five months."

After four to eight weeks of physiotherapy she returned to Guatemala with her mother, who had learned how to help her daughter once they returned home. Now Valeria is well on her way to being able to run and play with her little brother.

Figueroa says bringing Valeria to B.C. was very gratifying for the Fraternity, but it's not likely to happen again soon.

Although the Anastasia Foundation took on the responsibility of arranging everything and paid the money up-front, the Fraternity has committed to raising $10,000 to help pay for some of the costs. "But the smile on her face was worth it," he says.

On the web, now in Broadband: available across B.C. and all of North America, check out the new high quality webcasts by our new Broadband server at <www.workingtv.com>.

On community television: Good news for Lower Mainland viewers. Shaw cable has taken over from Rogers as of Dec. 1, but has agreed NOT to cut programming, including Working TV until September 2003. Watch this space for news on the campaign to keep community access television on Shaw.

Working TV

Glass ceilings

Women account for fewer than two per cent of top executive positions and even in those positions they earn less than men. The International Labour Organization estimates that at the present rate of progress it would take 475 years for parity to be achieved between men and women in top-level managerial and administrative positions.

Peppery condiment

East Vancouver's WILLE Food and Social Club turned down a request to rent its hall for a speech by Jean Chrétien during the recent federal election campaign because it didn't want to stir a pot. "The boy, the prime minister, travels in bad company," said membership secretary Tony Ray. "He deals with cops who beat up peaceful people who are sitting in the streets, and we don't want that type of thing happening outside our venue." A fine role model

With more than $200,000 in debts, the Credit Counselling Service of Ottawa was placed in receivership.

Not fitting

It was revealed that the 65-year-old Suesdes who were allegedly fitter than 30-year-old Canadians, part of the Canadian government's Participation fitness campaign during the 1970s, were made up by an ad agency and weren't based on any official statistics.

Futility of war

Responding to a U.S. State Department report that criticized Canadian courts for being soft on drug-related sentencing, B.C. provincial chief judge Robert Merziger pointed out that America has more drug problems than any other country, despite its tough enforcement policies. "If I want to listen to anybody, it would be a country that doesn't have a drug problem and that has solved their drug problem."
HEU people

Living in Sooke

Lilly Bunting worked as a care aide at Sumar Lodge, a long-term care facility for over 20 years – mostly on the third floor. She says, "I have a wonderful sense of humour that kept staff upbeat during some extremely hard times. She's enjoying her busy life in Sooke, where she lives with her husband.

No Hope at Sunset

Staff at Victoria's Sunset Lodge miss dietary aide Hope Crowe since her retirement in July of last year. She worked at Sunset for 12 years, but spent a total of 23 years as a food service worker in long-term care. When things went wrong in the kitchen, her co-workers always said, "Never fear, Hope is here." She spent a lot of time since retirement volunteering with the elderly. She remains active in the Pacific Rim local and chairs the health and welfare committee.

Circle dancer retires

Care aide Helen Bieles worked for Sunset Lodge for many years. If Helen ever missed a day of work, no one could replace her. With her full stick accomplishments in the day of her retirement – her 60th birthday, she could still dance circles around most 40-year-olds! Helen is now busier than ever, exercising daily, enjoying fast-paced walks, and keeping busy with her family. She stays in touch with her former co-workers, who miss her energy and commitment.

Retired after 33 years

Shirley Powers, a nursing aide, at G.R. Baker in Qualicum retired on March 30, 2001, after almost 33 years of service. She served as assis- tant secretary-treasurer of her local executive. Also a long-time member of G.R. Baker, medical records clerk Marilyn Hunsinger, is set to retire at the end of June. She served as warden in her HEU local.

Goldie enjoying retirement

Nancy Goldie, a 20-year member of HEU, recently retired from Richmond Hospital. She was a distribution aide there and served on the occupational health and safety committee. Goldie always went above and beyond her job requirements and was greatly missed by her co-workers. She looks forward to golf, gardening and tending care of her grandchildren.

Still playing accordion

Gerald Olen, who worked in housekeeping at Central City Lodge in Burnaby for 21 years, is going to miss his co-workers and the residents, but he’s moving to Courtenay.

An avid accordion player, he will continue to play at events in his adopted community, as well as play bridge and keep in shape with an exercise program.

Olen served as secretary-treasurer of his local for one year, and four years as conductor. He retired on March 30.

Fun, work on horizon

Donna Jamupsky was working as an administrative clerk IV when she retired on March 30, after 38 years at George Derby Centre. She plans to volunteer at George Derby and the SPCA. She also looks forward to traveling in Europe, swimming and just plain having lots of fun!

In Memoriam

Rothar Dave Williams, a retired member of HEU and a long-time service representative from Vancouver Island, passed away on Jan. 25, 2001.

After joining the staff of Juan de Fuca Hospital as a plumber in 1979, he quickly became involved in the union as a member of his local executive. It wasn't long before he was elected to the Provincial Executive as regional vice-president (1980). He joined the HEU staff after his term on the PE was over, and stayed until his retirement.

He is very much missed by his former co-workers and his wife, children and grandchildren.

Staff

Wendy Wilson has been working at HEU for two years in temporary positions in Provincial Office, and has just been appointed to a permanent position of secretary II. She worked as a casual at VGH in many different positions. Originally from Ontario, she holds a diploma as a health records technician and another in broadcast journalism.

Susana Esposito has worked as a temporary staff person for HEU Provincial Office on and off since 1994. She also started at Children's and Women's Hospital the same year as an administrative assistant for Children's Telethon Kickoff events. HEU recently hired Esposito on a permanent basis as a secretary.

June Power is the new accounting clerk in the Provincial Office. She comes to HEU from VGH where she also worked as an accounting clerk. She graduated in health care in St. Francis Xavier College in 1986. Earning her university degree in economics qualified her to work in her current role. She worked as a temp at HEU for six months last year.

HEU pay equity expertise to Hong Kong

In September Julie Eckert, HEU human resources coordinator, will be going to Hong Kong to lend her expertise to their Equal Opportunity Committee. She says she is very excited to try and convince their government that pay equity is a good idea. Hong Kong Hospital Authority – an arm of the government – has given the commission a window of opportunity to make the case that female health care workers in this former colony should be paid the same as males. Eckert is involved in the creation of HEU's classification system. It took her many years, and she gained a vast store of expertise in doing so. She was invited to participate in this exercise in Hong Kong based on that experience.

"I will be there for two months," Eckert says. "It's going to be interesting. Surprisingly there is some resistance from women in the unions there. They equate it with loss of job security." She will be looking at ways to apply our classification system and pay equity plan to the Hong Kong health care system. "I may even succeed in putting in the pay equity plan we wanted before we had to negotiate with HEARC," she says. "There isn't any equivalent to HEARC there, and I'm being given a free hand." She's looking forward to the experience and will keep in touch once she is over there.

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Better care for our seniors

Three months ago, the 46,000 members of the Hospital Employers’ Union made a commitment to British Columbians. When we began contract talks, we pledged to win higher staffing levels at B.C. long-term care facilities to ensure that our seniors received the care they deserve. We’re proud to say that we delivered!

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