

Working Together • Standing Together • Leading Together

p 8

# GUARDIAN



THE VOICE OF THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION • WINTER 2008 • VOLUME 26 NUMBER 4

## CONVENTION 2008







## HEU elects a new president

Ken Robinson, a diet technician from Kelowna General Hospital and chair of the Kelowna Amalgamated local, became the union's 9th president at this year's biennial convention in Vancouver.

A member of HEU for the past 20 years, Robinson has held several positions on the Provincial Executive, including his most recent position as first vice-president. He replaces HEU's longest-standing president Fred Muzin.

JOSHUA BERSON PHOTO

# Strong, united, ready for action

**E**quipped with new policies and a two-year strategic directions plan, delegates attending HEU's 26th biennial convention in November emerged a strong, united force, ready for action.

A top priority for the union will be preparing for the next round of public-sector bargaining in 2010, which covers more than 90 per cent of HEU's membership in health care and community social services.

A key focus will be holding occupational and sectoral conferences later this year, and producing a major public awareness campaign to make sure politicians and British Columbians understand the diverse nature of HEU members' jobs and the true value of their work.

Delegates also backed ongoing campaigns to improve seniors' care, promote a living wage, and enforce members' collective rights in the workplace.

Over the last two years, the union has invested heavily in programs designed to educate members about their rights in the workplace and train strong networks of shop stewards

and health and safety advocates. That work has been highly successful and will continue with new resources to help members hold employers accountable for ensuring fair and safe working conditions.

Convention delegates also pledged to carry on their fight against privatizing public health care. That includes continued efforts to deal with the fallout from the first round of contracting out in B.C.'s hospitals – problems with cleanliness and food quality, low wages and high staff turnover – as well as combating the threat of a second round of contracting out in such areas as information technology, payroll and supplies.

HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy says the union will continue to expose issues related to staff shortages, extreme workloads and the impact of a growing recruitment and retention crisis, which are at the core of deteriorating service quality throughout the province's

health and social services sectors.

Convention delegates were also committed to a plan that encourages HEU members to engage in political action, both between elections and at the ballot box.

"Our 43,000 members and their families

**A TOP PRIORITY will be preparing for the next round of public sector bargaining in 2010, which covers more than 90 per cent of HEU's membership in health care and community social services.**

can have a significant impact in May's provincial elections," says Darcy.

She says that despite *Bill 42*, the government's "gag law" restricting third-party advertising in the three months leading up to election day, "HEU members will not be silenced. They will make their voices heard on government's record in health care and social services, in every way they can. And on May 12, they will make their mark at the ballot box."

## heard on the plenary floor

HEALTH CARE workers have a vested interest in the environment. If the earth is sick, everyone is sick. And we're the ones looking after them. • B.C. HAS the lowest number of care beds for seniors in Canada... Think about that, my God! • IT'S A question of what kind of a society do we want to have. • COUNTRIES ALL over the world are turning to the public sector to prevent a global economic breakdown. • WE HAVE the power to affect change. • WHATEVER STRUGGLE you take on... you have the weight and the force of Canada's biggest union behind you.





JUDY DARCY

## A busy year ahead

Happy New Year, everyone. We have some major challenges ahead of us in 2009, to be sure. But I am excited and heartened by the remarkable consensus that emerged, right across our membership, during our 26th biennial convention.

Throughout the week-long deliberations, delegates brought the very best of themselves to every discussion on the convention floor. We adjourned a stronger and more unified force – ready to campaign to improve our working and caring conditions, and to begin our preparations for 2010 bargaining.

We have little more than a year until our collective agreements in facilities, community health and community social services expire. Between now and then, our top priority will be making sure that politicians, the public and every employer understands the true value of the work we do throughout every area of health care and community social services

**Our top priority now is making sure politicians, the public and employers understand the true value of our work in every area of health and community social services.**

– whether it's in direct patient, resident and client care or in the full range of technical, clerical or other critical support services that are essential to delivering these quality public services.

For too long, our government has refused to recognize the real sustainability crisis in health and community social services. They've ignored all the symptoms – crushing workloads, excessive overtime and severe staffing shortages. In the next round of bargaining, what has become a full-

blown retention and recruitment crisis must be addressed.

Over the next few months, we will focus on documenting every unfilled vacancy, enforcing our collective agreement language around workload, enforcing health and safety regulations, exercising our professional responsibility language, lobbying politicians and decision-makers, and getting our message out to the public.

And thanks to our *Bill 29* court victory, we will no longer be forced to bargain with one hand tied behind our back. This time, we'll be able to negotiate on issues related to contracting out. And in the meantime, we can use the *Bill 29* settlement language to make sure government's proposed "shared services" schemes don't result in lost jobs, lost collective agreement rights, and privatized services.

In 2009, we'll be holding occupational and sector conferences to bring members together in specific job families. We'll be carrying out a major public awareness campaign about the diverse occupations within HEU. And throughout 2009, we'll be making a concerted effort to ensure that health authorities and politicians recognize the need for action on critical staff shortages.

There's no question about it. It will be a challenging year and a very busy year for HEU. But we have the tools, the resources and the collective determination to put our issues front and centre and make gains for both HEU members and the public that we serve.

# voice.mail

### A huge thank you to all HEU members

The delegates at HEU's November convention approved an extensive Strategic Plan to guide the union for the next two years, and elected a new Provincial Executive. There will be many challenges ahead including successfully completing the current round of bargaining with the Big 3 multinationals, the provincial election next May, and major bargaining in 2010.

What will sustain HEU members will be our solidarity through the tough times. It has been my privilege to represent you as your president for over 15 years, and I want to thank HEU members for their tremendous support, constructive criticism when needed, encouragement and friendship. I will continue to be active in social justice causes, and hope to see many of you on the frontlines.

As a collective, we succeed

when we act as one. I would encourage you to keep in contact with your Local Officers and Provincial Executive members on a regular basis, and share with them your continued honesty, knowledge and solidarity.

**FRED MUZIN**

*HEU past-president  
Burnaby*

### The P3 threat hurts workers and patients

I am writing this letter on behalf of my fellow Trades and Maintenance committee members to thank you for the privilege of serving in this capacity for the last two years, and to alert you to some very serious concerns that have recently come to our attention.

P3 health care facilities are a threat to HEU members and the quality of service delivery for all British Columbians. Each and every one of us needs to play a part in educating the public about the current fiscal mentality of the Liberal government – a government that's putting us on the brink of compromising patient care and safety in our work sites.

In fact, these buildings will no longer be "ours" as taxpayers, but the property of a large corporation. In my town, the hospital is a jewel of the community and so are the people who work in it.

All of us are busy supporting ourselves and our families, but we also have the responsibility as taxpayers and union members to fight. Take one hour out of your schedule and go to your union meeting, write a letter, speak out about what's wrong in your workplace.

Apathy is hurting our province. Everyone, including myself, needs to do what we can within the limits of our obligations and belief systems. The public needs to realize that HEU members don't just care about themselves and their jobs, they care about our number one priority – the patient.

### 2006-08 TRADES AND MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS,

*Jonathan M. Jinjoe  
Sandra Giesbrecht  
Randy Dowhaniuk  
Ralph Jones  
Dave Yardley  
Margie Anderson*



**A SPECIAL GIFT** This year's convention banquet honoured B.C. MLA Jenny Kwan and former MLA Joy McPhail for their stamina in fighting the passage of *Bill 29* – which the newly elected Liberal government rammed through the legislature in the middle of the night on January 28, 2002. HEU commissioned the above cartoon from Bob Krieger as a special gift for the two women who were the only members of the Opposition at the time.

Used with permission. All proceeds to the Food Bank.



## DO YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH WorkSafeBC?

Has your claim been denied? Have your benefits been discontinued? Do you have general questions about your compensation claim?

If so, call HEU's WCB hotline at **604-456-7186** or toll-free at **1-877-438-5550**.

The union has trained advocates who can answer your questions. They provide advice and representation for HEU members through both levels of appeal – at the WorkSafeBC's Review Division and at the Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal (WCAT).

It's important to remember that WorkSafeBC has strict deadlines for appealing decisions. Members are strongly encouraged to call the hotline as soon as possible to seek assistance and ensure those deadlines are met.

Ottawa crisis forces Harper government to back down • 5

Déjà-vu? CMA president retraces Campbell's private health care tour • 7

Ontario farm workers win right to unionize • 10

U.S. workers mobilize in unprecedented numbers to put Obama over the top • 11

Union activist Nancy Luis shares her belief in the power of art to create change • 13

UFCW CANADA PHOTO



## Union takes problems on seniors' care to the province's Ombudsman

A delegation of HEU nursing team members and staff met with B.C. Ombudsman Kim Carter in mid-December to detail the union's concerns about how staffing shortages, a lack of long-term care beds, and ongoing privatization in the long-term care sector are damaging quality care for B.C. seniors.

HEU met with Carter as part of her province-wide, systemic investigation into problems with seniors' care, announced this past August. The union's presentation included a new research report, *Quality of Care in B.C.'s Residential Care Facilities*.

Backed up by evidence-based findings, the comprehensive report outlines the problems and the solutions required to improve working and caring conditions for the province's seniors. And it paints a clear picture of how the population of seniors living in B.C.'s residential care facilities has changed dramatically from the 1970s.

Seniors entering into care today have far more challenging and complex care needs. They need both a higher level and a higher standard of care than they are getting from the provincial government.

HEU's research and policy director Marcy Cohen says the two-hour meeting was very positive and at times, very emotional.

"The Ombudsman was deeply moved by our members' stories about

the problems they encounter delivering care. One story was particularly poignant. This was from a member who talked about having to steal time just to be able to sit with a dying resident who didn't have any family to provide support and comfort," says Cohen.

HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy, who led the delegation, says much of the meeting was devoted to talking in very concrete terms about how the combination of low-staffing and crushing workloads is depriving seniors of the basic care they need and deserve.

"In our long-term care facilities, front-line staff have just minutes each day to assist residents with toileting, bathing, dressing and meal times," says Darcy.

Statistics show that current staffing hours in most facilities vary between two and 3.2 hours of care for each resident per day. This can be even lower in private, for-profit facilities.

HEU is calling for government to boost these levels to a minimum of 3.2 hours of care per day as a first step. In the longer term, this needs to be raised to the 4.1 hours most researchers say is required for quality care.

The union also told Carter that access to care has been severely hampered in recent years because of bed and facility closures.

"Basically, the provincial government has created a tragedy of huge proportions because they have not

yet replaced the long-term care beds they've closed since 2001," says Cohen.

"That means that those seniors who are lucky enough to find a bed are arriving into care with much higher needs, often directly from a hospital."

The BC Liberals abandoned their first-term promise to build 5,000 new, not-for-profit, long-term care beds by 2006. Earlier this fall, they revised the target to 5,000 "spaces" (which includes assisted living and supportive housing, with little or no care components), eliminated their commitment to a not-for-profit care model and pushed back their timeline by two years.

"That broken promise has put the entire health care system under immense strain," says Darcy. "Far too many of our frail elderly are receiving care in inappropriate settings, like hospitals, when what they really need is a bed in a long-term care facility."

HEU recommended the Ombudsman urge government to meet its original commitment, which was a commitment to working with



HEU's nursing team launched the union's "Stand UP for Seniors' Campaign" at November's convention.

PATTY GIBSON PHOTO

the non-profit sector to build badly needed, public residential care beds.

That means increasing the ability of non-profit societies to design, finance and build new residential care facilities. "The alternative, which is privatized facilities, will always put profit above care," says Cohen.

"Low wages in the private sector are causing high staff turnover and more unfilled vacancies, as care staff gravitate to those facilities with superior wages and benefits," she says.

The Ombudsman has not yet confirmed when her much anticipated report will be released. In the meantime, five provincial governments – Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Alberta and Manitoba – are now committed to increasing funding for front-line staffing in the long-term care sector.

Front-line staff in the union's delegation included Jacqueline Zilkie, an LPN working in Kaslo; Carolyn Unsworth, an acute care aide working at Queen's Park in New Westminister; and Heather Davis, a recreational care aide who works in Maple Ridge.

HEU represents more than 20,000 members who provide direct resident care and support to B.C. seniors in long-term care, assisted living and home support.

ESTHER SHANNON

## B.C. Care Providers deliver ultimatum

Following hard on the heels of the November closure of 71 beds at Zion Park Manor in Surrey, the B.C. Care Providers Association (BCCPA) has a warning for the provincial government. Unless funding for long-term care residential services is increased by February 1, members will begin restricting admissions to their facilities.

"A vast majority of members have advised that, like Zion, their current funding and staffing situation is so dire, they are prepared to take radical action in hopes of bringing about positive change," says the association.

While the majority of BCCPA's members have voted to limit admissions, others will close beds so

health authorities can adequately fund existing beds.

Government health regulations require the use of "admission screening procedures" to prevent placing people who cannot be safely and adequately cared for.

BCCPA wants a fair province-wide contract and funding levels that will allow members to increase staff, and meet the costs of delivering complex care.

Under current conditions, facilities are forced to run deficits; contract out services; cut staff, programs and services, or a combination of all of the above. Providers say they fear a potential care crisis as more staff are leaving the sector for better pay and working conditions.





## COFFEE BREAK

### They said what?

#### On B.C.'s lobbyist law:

"But what do we have here in B.C.? A toothless law, political insiders who think they can do whatever they want and a premier who couldn't care less."

Michael Smyth (the Province), Oct. 10

#### On Campbell's ferry strategy:

"Instead of temporary political posturing, Mr. Campbell, you should be looking for a long-term strategy to put BC Ferries back on a steady course as part of the highways system."

Editorial (the Province), Oct. 31

#### On government advertising:

"The government's new 'Best Place On Earth' TV ads don't even go through the motions of providing a public service... These are pure political propaganda at taxpayers' expense."

Tom Fletcher (Kootenay Advertiser), Nov. 12

#### On gold-medal arrogance:

"It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that bling. That could be the new 2010 theme song for the B.C. government after yesterday's discovery that Premier Gordon Campbell has been handing out gold medals to Olympic construction workers."

Michael Smyth (the Province), Nov. 21

#### On spending priorities:

"And although he vowed last month to rein in avoidable government spending, the Premier yesterday

showed no sign that he's planning to abandon the awards. Or to end government promotional advertisements. Or cut back on government travel."

Justine Hunter (Globe and Mail), Nov. 21

#### On government's plan:

"People have misunderstood what we were doing. English can be a difficult language. If a horse is tied up, he's tied fast, and if he's running down the road, he's fast also."

Small Business and Revenue Minister Kevin Krueger (On the Island - CBC Radio), Nov. 7

#### On the Premier's image:

"The Liberals have a significant problem. They have built their public presence around Gordon Campbell... Now it appears Campbell might be dragging down his party."

Paul Willcocks (Prince Rupert Daily News), Nov. 17

## Drug costs higher in private facilities

HEU wants B.C.'s health minister to stop health authorities from raising drug costs for residents of long-term care homes. The chief operating officer of the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) Mike Conroy told the *Globe and Mail* in December that his organization would be reviewing drug costs in publicly run long-term care homes to determine whether their residents should pay

more for prescriptions and vitamins.

VIHA's move was in response to reports that a newly opened private facility in Duncan is charging residents \$200 to \$400 more each month for medications than at Cowichan Lodge, a public care facility in that community that is in the process of being shut down - despite overwhelming opposition from the community.

HEU's secretary-business manager Judy Darcy says it is an outrage that excessive drug costs in private facilities would be used to justify charging seniors more because they live in public, non-profit care homes.

"Minister Abbott needs to send a clear signal to health authorities that higher drug charges for seniors will not be tolerated by his government," says Darcy.

## Know your rights

## Your union stewards: Who they are and what they do

**T**he union's shop steward base has grown by 60 per cent in the last two years - a clear indication that HEU members are generating momentum at a grassroots level to enforce their collective bargaining rights in the workplace.

As a union member, you have many collective agreement rights that your union has won at the bargaining table.

Although reading and interpreting the "legal" language in a collective agreement can be confusing, it's important to know your rights and understand how your union works. After all, you are the union.

Collective agreements for facilities, community health and community social services are available to view or download on the HEU website at [http://www.heu.org/collective\\_agreement1/](http://www.heu.org/collective_agreement1/).

### Get to know your shop steward

The majority of workplaces have skilled, HEU shop stewards or site representatives. It's valuable to know who they are, where your local union office or bulletin board is located, and how to contact a union representative if you need assistance.

If you do not have a shop steward or site rep at your workplace, contact your local chair.

Attending union meetings will also give you an opportunity to meet shop stewards, your local executive, other union sisters and brothers, and learn about issues related to your work site.

Your shop steward is there for you.

Shop stewards are trained by the union, and are well-

equipped to help you with issues that may arise with management or co-workers. They advise members, assist with conflict resolution, can help you understand provisions in the collective agreement, and, if necessary, will file a grievance on your behalf.

### Defending your rights

There are several steps involved in the grievance process, which can be lengthy if the issue goes to arbitration. If you are filing a grievance, Step One is the most important part of the process, as there are usually time

deadlines involved. During Step One, you notify your employer in writing that you are grieving an issue.

For more information on grievances, check the next issue of the *Guardian*.

Your shop steward may consult with your HEU servicing representative for additional advice and guidance. And if you have a grievance that's unresolved, your HEU servicing representative will conduct any negotiations with your employer at labour-management meetings or trouble-shooting/arbitration hearings.

### Getting involved

Interested in learning more about your union or becoming an activist? HEU's education department conducts a series of courses and workshops throughout the province each year - such as Union Activism, Know & Enforce Your Rights, and Introduction to Occupational Health and Safety.

Talk to your local executive or shop steward about these training opportunities, and check your local union bulletin board or HEU's website for more information and application forms.

## <<newsbites>>

### Believe it or not, we're dead last in support for child care!

Canada, one of the world's wealthiest countries, ranks dead last among 25 developed nations in its support for early childhood care.

UNICEF's recent report - *Education for All* - says early childhood education programs compensate for disadvantage; reduce child poverty, and address inequalities based on gender, race and religion.

The United Nations body used 10 benchmarks to measure commitment to early childhood education. One looks at whether a country has a national early education plan with a priority for disadvantaged children.

In 2006, Canada was to implement a \$5 billion national child care plan, which was quickly abolished by the newly elected Conservative government. Instead, Prime Minister Stephen Harper introduced a controversial \$100-a-month taxable payout for parents - a policy that didn't expand Canada's child care infrastructure or come close to meeting a family's child care costs.

Canada also does not provide parents with a year's paid leave following the birth or adoption of a child, nor does it provide subsidized and regulated child care for children under three - two other benchmarks UNICEF used to judge a country's commitment to its children.

### UN appoints Maude Barlow as water rights advisor

The United Nations has appointed well-known Canadian activist Maude Barlow as their first senior advisor on water issues. Barlow, who is also chair of the Council of Canadians, has said she plans to use this role to enshrine water as a basic human right and to convince the Canadian government to join the international community in renouncing water privatization.

In a press release, Barlow





# Ottawa in crisis: how the coalition strategy forced the Harper government to back down

Canadians had barely digested the results of the October federal election – another Conservative minority led by Stephen Harper – when the country was jolted into a full-fledged parliamentary crisis.

The kinder, gentler, more co-operative approach that Harper promised he would bring to his second term disappeared in a nano-second when he tabled his now infamous economic update on November 27.

Not only was the update devoid of a coherent financial stimulus package, one that every other country in the Western World had committed to, it included plans to end pay equity, suspend federal civil servants' right to strike, cut off financing for political parties, cut back on services, sell off federal assets, and continue down the path of "restraint" and "surplus budgets" when economists everywhere were calling for major financial stimuli to fend off a deepening recession.

Within days, the Liberal and New Democratic parties had formed the basis for a coalition government, supported by the Bloc Québécois, and were ready to vote down the Harper Conservatives.

The rest is history. At least for the moment.

Labour and other progressive forces rallied to support the coalition. Harper escaped the impending non-confidence vote by asking for, and receiving, the Governor-General's permission to "prorogue" Parliament (a fancy word for shutting it down) until January 27. The federal Liberals replaced Stéphane Dion with a new leader – Michael Ignatieff.

And Canadians of all political stripes were left to sort out what had happened, why it had happened, and where it may be headed in the new year.

In a pre-Christmas interview with the *Guardian*, B.C. Federation of Labour President Jim Sinclair declared the coalition strategy an overwhelming



JOSHUA BERSON PHOTO

Right across the country, labour and other progressive forces threw their support behind the proposed Liberal-NDP coalition government. On the day Canada's governor-general "prorogued" Parliament, rallies – like the one pictured above in Vancouver – drew thousands to take a stand for a coalition that represented 62 per cent of Canadian voters.

success, regardless of what the future may hold.

"Because of the coalition, Stephen Harper was forced to backtrack. And that's because politicians, and the people, had another choice," says Sinclair. "Within five days, he reversed his attack on women and pay equity; he reversed himself on funding for political parties, and he backed down on taking away the right to strike from public-sector workers.

"He was forced to realize that his bullying tactics had been soundly rejected and that he couldn't run a minority government as if he had a majority."

In addition to those immediate victories, Sinclair points out that in the weeks that followed, Harper continued to reverse himself on other key issues – the most dramatic being his sudden willingness to spend \$30 billion plus on a long-overdue economic stimulus package.

"Harper's done a 180-degree turn-around as a result of the coalition," he says. "And I am absolutely convinced that if he hadn't seen the cliff, if he hadn't seen his own vulnerability, his arrogance would not have allowed him to change course.

"Now the question is, will Stephen Harper get out of his ideological straight jacket and do what's necessary to help Canadians during this period? Of course, the jury's still out on that one."

Throughout the rapid-fire events that led up to the proroguing of Parliament, many Canadians were genuinely confused about such issues as the role of public financing for political parties, the role of the Bloc Québécois and the overall legitimacy of a coalition government.

Asked for his perspective on those issues, Sinclair is quick to point out that the coalition government represented 62 per cent of Canadian voters,

**"Harper's done a 180-degree turn-around as a result of the coalition. I am absolutely convinced that if he hadn't seen the cliff, if he hadn't seen his own vulnerability, his arrogance would not have allowed him to change course."**

while Harper's Conservatives stood at 38 per cent. And he questions Harper's motivation for attempting to weaken the Opposition by eliminating public financing for Canada's political parties.

"It's a system that with few excep-

*continued page 14*

said the appointment was "a wonderful opportunity to advance a more democratic and transparent method of policy making around water at the global level," calling water "a commons, a public trust and a human right."

Activists around the world have mobilized against some governments and multinational corporations who want to remove water resources from public hands through privatization and free trade agreements.

## B.C.'s Supreme Court hears case on illegal billing

In December, patients who were illegally billed for publicly insured health services took the provincial government

all the way to B.C.'s Supreme Court.

The group has asked the Court to order government to enforce its own laws, which prohibit doctors and clinics from charging patients for services that are covered by Medical Services Plan (MSP).

In one of the cases, a patient paid \$6,000 out of her pocket for medically necessary nasal surgery, while her surgeon was also paid by MSP. Another patient was charged \$450 for an appointment with a specialist at a private clinic after the same specialist told her a normal appointment would require a six-month wait. Both incidents violate B.C.'s *Medicare Protection Act*, as well as the *Canada Health Act*.

In October, the BC Nurses' Union released Freedom of Information findings that revealed a "hands off" government policy in cases of unlawful charges by doctors.

The documents indicate that government's response to the extra-billing complaints was to request refunds from physicians or encourage patients to request those refunds themselves. If the request was refused or ignored, no further action was taken. In only one of the cases cited were the illegal fees refunded to the patient.

Other documents show that government's extra-billing calculations and reports to Health Canada only include cases that come to the Ministry's atten-

tion through direct complaints – ignoring violations that are disclosed in media reports, by physicians during investigations, or in public statements by private clinic owners or medical directors.

The Court action is the latest step in an ongoing legal effort, that began in 2005, to force the B.C. government to uphold provincial and federal medicare legislation.

## Colombia trade deal taints Canada's reputation

Canada's reputation as a country that respects human rights was deeply tarnished in November when Prime Minister Stephen Harper signed a free trade deal with Colombia, a country



# Seniors' care – who's minding the store?

In the face of mounting privatization in the long-term care sector, research is showing that the quality of care provided to B.C. seniors is threatened by for-profit providers.

At a November public forum on seniors' care – Who's Minding the Store? – researchers presented evidence from several large-scale studies into care at 14,000 nursing homes across the United States. Those studies show that for-profit facilities are more likely to reduce staffing levels in order to boost their profits, leaving vulnerable seniors to cope with inferior care and weakened health and safety standards.

Dr. Margaret McGregor, a health services researcher and family physician living in Vancouver, told participants that a 2005 study on long-term care in B.C. confirmed the American research findings. It also found that staffing levels in for-profit homes are lower than those found in non-profit facilities. As a result, residents living in for-profit facilities receive less assistance with their daily needs, and are more likely to be hospitalized due to inadequate care.

The forum also heard that a *Vancouver Sun* investigation into patient complaint levels in non-profit and for-profit facilities, between 2003 and 2008, found there were significantly more verified complaints about care coming from for-profit facilities.

Dr. Charlene Harrington, a leading U.S. researcher on long-term care issues, noted that almost 70 per cent of the U.S. nursing home system is owned by for-profit companies, and that the \$190 billion industry is dominated by chain providers.

Privatization, she says, is the number one cause for care problems in American nursing homes. Poor regulatory oversight and weak enforcement follows as a close second.

Referring to research from more than 70 studies, Harrington says staffing levels in the for-profit sector are 15 per cent lower than those found in non-profit facilities. In a comprehensive 1999 study, government regulators were found to have charged for-profit companies with 34 per cent more service violations than their non-profit counterparts.

However, companies suffer little for violating regulations. Of the 16,000 facilities surveyed in 1999, regulators found that 31 per cent caused harm to residents in their care. Of those, four per cent were fined while only two per cent were stopped from accepting new admissions.

In addition, Harrington pointed out that some chain-based providers try to protect themselves from liability

by setting up a complex web of separate companies for management, assets, and pharmacy or therapy services.

She pointed to low wages and subsequent high staff turnover in U.S. for-profits as one method used to increase their profit margins. That's because high turnover translates into a constant stream of new workers starting at entry-level wages.

In Canada, 30 per cent of long-term care homes are now operated by for-profit providers. Given the American experience – where Harrington says people have fought with little success to build stronger services with more oversight and accountability – it's an alarming trend.

Who's Minding the Store? was sponsored by the BC Health Coalition, Canadian Doctors for Medicare, and the B.C. Association of Geriatric Care Physicians. Information shared at the forum was also presented to B.C.'s Ombudsman, who is currently conducting an investigation into seniors' care throughout the province.

**In Canada, 30 per cent of long-term care homes are now operated by for-profit providers.**



KEN ROBINSON

PRESIDENT'S DESK

## Collective action can create positive change

I am extremely excited to be writing my first column. It was a privilege and honour to be elected president of this great union at

November's convention.

In the closing weeks of 2008, we saw a lot of changes in national and world events that will continue to affect our lives in 2009. While delegates to our 26th biennial convention were busy focusing on policies – and electing a new Provincial Executive – to guide our union through the next two years, our American neighbours were voting for a new vision and progressive leadership under Barack Obama.

Then, a few weeks later, while delegates to the B.C. Federation of Labour convention were dealing with the many issues affecting workers throughout B.C., Stephen Harper's economic update, which was really a disguised attack on workers and an agenda to sell off our nation's assets, sparked a parliamentary crisis in Ottawa.

Suddenly, Canadian politics became very exciting and empowering.

At the B.C. Fed convention, and across the nation, labour rose up to support a coalition government. It was as if the desire for change that swept Obama to victory, had spilled over and people saw the potential for a new government that could bring Canada closer to Obama's policies, instead of continuing to tie us into George Bush's agenda.

At both conventions, I was struck by the solidarity that was created. In the midst of these events, and a deepening economic crisis, workers were banding together and recognizing their collective power.

We need to build on that solidarity as we head into the May 12th provincial election. We need to recognize that we can make choices, and that our votes as well as our collective actions can create positive changes.

In 2009, that solidarity begins by supporting our HEU sisters and brothers employed by Sodexo, Aramark, Compass – who are currently bargaining for a second contract – and by supporting the living wage campaign, because all workers deserve a living wage.

We are 43,000 members strong. Together, we can hold our employers accountable on workload and health and safety issues; we can help elect progressive members to B.C.'s legislature in May, and we can lay the groundwork for 2010 public-sector bargaining.

If you are wondering where to begin, the first step is attending your local union meetings. It's here that you will find others who share these goals and are ready to work together to improve their jobs, their lives and their communities.

It's an encouraging way to start a new year. I wish you and your families all the best for 2009.

**If you are wondering where to begin, the first step is attending your local union meetings.**

## <<newsbites>>

where more union activists are murdered than in the rest of the world combined.

While Harper insists that worker protections have been written into the trade agreement, there is no reason to think Colombia can be counted on to honour this or any other commitment to labour and human rights. In Colombia today, any worker who tries to organize or join a union, or who engages in industrial disputes or fights privatization, risks being threatened, abducted, beaten or killed.

A 2008 Amnesty International report on Colombia says the

country remains a place where "millions of civilians, especially outside the big cities and in the countryside, continue to bear the brunt of this violent and protracted conflict. Their voices are increasingly silenced because their stories would vividly and convincingly undermine the official account."

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay and U.S. President-elect Barack Obama have expressed concern over free trade with Colombia. But Harper is siding with President Bush, who is pushing for a free trade

deal with Colombia before he leaves office.

A Canadian Labour Congress campaign is calling on the Opposition to put the deal on hold until those responsible for killing civilians, including unionized workers, have been prosecuted and minimum International Labour Organization (ILO) standards on the rights of workers are enforced.

### **B.C. government fails women again, says UN**

Once again, the B.C. government has caught the critical eye of the United Nations

Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). For a second time, the UN body has singled out the province for the ongoing negative impacts its 2003 cuts to civil legal aid have had on low-income women.

In its recent report on Canada's compliance with the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW says the committee is concerned "that financial support for civil legal aid has diminished and that access to it has become increasingly restricted, in particular in B.C., conse-

quently denying low-income women access to legal representation and legal services."

Access to justice is a key human rights concern. Reducing access to civil legal aid hurts low-income women, especially immigrant women, women with disabilities, older women and Aboriginal women.

The CEDAW also instructed the Canadian government to launch a review of failed law enforcement to investigate cases of missing and murdered women across the country in the past 20 years. The review would include women from Vancouver's

# Gord and Rob's excellent adventure

Canadian Medical Association president Robert Ouellet is retracing Premier Campbell's European private health care tour. But haven't we seen this movie before?

**B**ritish Columbians who remember Premier Gordon Campbell's discredited European "health care solutions tour" might have wondered if they'd stepped back in time when the newly elected Canadian Medical Association (CMA) president announced he was about to embark on a similar, "fact-finding" mission.

Robert Ouellet, who also owns five private, for-profit clinics in Québec, has said that he plans to use the findings from his European research in a spring report to Canadian governments.

The following commentary by the Canadian Doctors for Medicare shines a light on the real lessons we can learn from our friends across the Atlantic.

DR. ROBERT OUELLET, PRESIDENT OF THE Canadian Medical Association, is setting out on a "fact-finding mission" to learn about European health care systems, specifically their private insurance and their for-profit delivery systems.

But if he really looks at European health care systems, what is Dr. Ouellet going to find?

He will find that with few exceptions, European nations spend more on publicly-funded care than Canada. In Canada, governments pay for 70.2 per cent of all health services compared to 83.6 per cent in Denmark, 79.9 per cent in France and 87.1 per cent in the United Kingdom. This is because many European systems cover more services including medications, dental services, eye care and home care.

He will find systems with less emphasis on unproven, high-tech diagnostics and specialty care and more emphasis on robust primary care networks and... community-based access to family doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners. He will find that few countries in the world pay their physicians as much as Canada, which is why they can afford to have more doctors.

Are these the lessons the CMA is setting out to learn? Or are our medical leaders simply looking for another way to promote more commercialization in health care, by twisting the ways in which private insurance and corporate for-profit delivery would meet their own agendas?

And where do the European models fall short in terms of helping Canadians with the problems we face?

Europe has little to teach us about improving access for geographically dispersed Canadians in a huge land – and even less about providing health care to First Nations people, who have among the worst health outcomes in the country for complex reasons, none of which would respond to health care commercialization.

Furthermore, greater involvement of the private sector would do nothing for Canada's rural communities, nor for the four million Canadians, many of whom are lower-income, who do not have a family doctor.

Access to primary care is among the best [ways] to promote healthy living and prevent diseases such as type two diabetes and certain cancers. Community-based care can also reduce Emergency Room queues and hospital wait times considerably.

Last year, the Health Council of Canada reported that 41 per cent of people with chronic illness seen in Canadian emergency rooms had a problem that could have been addressed by a family physician, had one been available.

Introducing alternative networks of private-for-profit care would further jeopardize those who do not have access to a family doctor. With roughly one family doctor for every 1,000 Canadians, how can any approach that encourages doctors to spend precious time providing boutique services to the wealthy possibly improve access for the vulnerable or even the middle-class?

What's more, for-profit delivery costs more than non-profit delivery. Can we really expect Canadians or provincial health authorities to swallow higher billing costs from the private sector in the midst of an economic downturn?

What is needed instead is a made-in-Canada approach to training health professionals for communities in need. Our medical education system is beginning to re-orient itself towards social accountability rather than simply continuing to train more specialists for urban centres.

Canadian medical schools are working to increase their enrolment, with UBC doubling its numbers in the past five years, [while] enormous work is being done to recognize the credentials of internationally trained physicians.



Initiatives at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine and elsewhere are designed to train doctors for rural communities, and to work in inter-professional teams. Changes to admissions policies that select students more likely to choose generalist careers can also help.

But the impact of commercialization on medical education can be extremely detrimental... The Canadian Federation of Medical Students has stated that with increased privatization, "practices may face disincentives to provide the time and resources necessary to deliver quality training

for future health care practitioners. This would come at a cost not only to the quality of education achieved by Canadian health care graduates, but would impact the quality of health care delivered in the future to Canadians."

We hope that the president of the CMA can appreciate that Canadians want solutions to problems like wait times and doctor shortages that are consistent with Canadian values.

Perhaps he will focus on the lessons he can learn from Europe that reinforce Medicare, rather than find ways to advocate for more private-sector involvement, an option Canadians keep rejecting but that is offered to them over and over by those who have something to gain.

ROBERT HUISSH, UNIVERSITY OF MONTREAL  
DANIELLE MARTIN, CHAIR  
CANADIAN DOCTORS FOR MEDICARE

## With few exceptions, European nations spend more on publicly-funded health care than Canada.

Downtown Eastside and northern B.C.'s Highway of Tears.

In another unusual move, the UN Committee asked that Canada report back on the status of the review within the year.

Finally, the CEDAW called on Canada to "establish minimum standards for the provision of funding to social assistance programs, applicable at the federal, provincial and territorial levels, and a monitoring mechanism to ensure the accountability of provincial and territorial governments for the use of such funds." It also asks

that Canada "carry out an impact assessment of social programs related to women's rights."

This, too, is to be reported back to the CEDAW within the year.

## P3 audit practices put wolf in charge of sheep

Given the provincial government's appetite for privatization, it's past time for B.C. Auditor General John Doyle to assume responsibility for auditing the province's public-private partnership projects (P3s). A good project to start with would be a

value-for-money audit into the costs of building the Abbotsford Regional Hospital and Cancer Centre.

Capital costs for the privately financed Abbotsford hospital P3 rose from \$211 million to \$355 million while the annual service payments payable to the private consortium that financed the hospital doubled to more than \$40 million. There was only one bidder on the project.

A scathing report released in December by Ontario's auditor general revealed that the costs of the Brampton Civic Hospital could have

been much lower if it had been publicly financed, rather than built as a P3 using more expensive private credit.

In B.C., the provincial government has placed its privatization agency – Partnerships B.C. – in charge of value-for-money audits of P3s, a practice that has been widely criticized.

Now that the construction of the Abbotsford hospital is complete, HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy says British Columbians are owed an independent audit of its costs.

"British Columbians

deserve the same care and attention to their public finances as Ontarians," adds Darcy. "It's not good enough for Partnerships B.C. to audit its own performance," says Darcy. "That's like putting the wolf in charge of the sheep."

In a 2006 report commissioned by HEU and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, forensic auditor Ron Parks recommended that B.C.'s auditor general prepare independent reports on P3s and "adopt a greater degree of skepticism" with regard to P3 projects.



# introducing your 2008-2010 provincial executive



**KEN ROBINSON**  
President



**JUDY DARCY**  
Secretary-Business Manager



**DONISA BERNARDO**  
Financial Secretary



**VICTOR ELKINS**  
1st Vice-President



**CAROL KENZIE**  
2nd Vice-President



**SANDRA GIESBRECHT**  
3rd Vice-President



**KELLY KNOX**  
Senior Trustee



**JACQUELINE ZILKIE**  
Senior Trustee-Elect



**LOUELLA VINCENT**  
Trustee



**CAROLYN UNSWORTH**  
Regional Vice-President – Fraser Valley



**BRIAN NORRISH**  
Regional Vice-President – Fraser Valley

## new delegates speak out!



### Nimfa Torrente

Care Aide, Windsor Woods local – FHA

“It’s been really overwhelming, but I’ve learned a lot. It has opened my mind about politics. I’m becoming more of an activist... I’m just so happy to be here. I’m glad I came.”

### Sharon Delany

Program Assistant, Richmond local – VCHA

“The political background, the process of resolutions and amendments has been a learning experience. It gives me a better understanding and knowledge of the Provincial Executive and what they do for us, and the roles of regional officers – who’s there and who to ask questions of. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience.”



### Samantha Biggins

Food Service Worker, Compass, 4673 Local – VIHA

“I’m thrilled about passing the environment policy... It’s horrifying what goes into our environment from our workplaces – plastic, Styrofoam – everything is packaged.”

### Brian Uddenberg

Staffing Clerk, Nanaimo Regional General Hospital – VIHA

“I’ve enjoyed being part of the process, although I didn’t like the politicking. I’m not a fan of gamesmanship. The best part was listening to other people’s stories. Coming here, that’s what I hoped for – hearing other people’s experiences, stories and their victories.”



### Jennifer Massey

Residential Care Worker, community social services, Kardel local – VIHA

“The convention has been eye-opening – how it’s run; how things work on the floor. I’m still trying to understand the complexities of it all. It’s interesting to see how democracy works

when delegates vote down a resolution that the committee has recommended. People are passionate and they want their voices heard. It’s freedom of speech.”

### Judy Geeraert

Support Services (housekeeping, laundry, dietary), Prince George – NHA

“The convention was really well-organized and very informative. It was an excellent learning experience.”



The union’s out-going delegates, reminded of positive change in the

# DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

by

anyone’s standards, reaching consensus in a room filled with hundreds of people is an

awesome, if not impossible, challenge.

But that’s exactly what happened during HEU’s 26th biennial convention, held November 3–7 in Vancouver.

For the first time in the union’s more than 60-year history, the convention devoted several hours of plenary time to discussing a comprehensive strategic directions paper, presented by the Provincial Executive.

In addition to adopting a range of policy resolutions and constitutional amendments brought forward by union locals, delegates discussed the document, section-by-section, over the course of the five-day convention. Changes were made, based on their feedback and advice, and on the final day the revised document was adopted with overwhelming approval.

“It was a hugely successful approach,” says HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy. “It gave members a real opportunity to roll up their sleeves and participate in the strategic planning work of the union. It encouraged delegates to go beyond ‘pro’ and ‘con’ positions and to share their knowledge and ideas with one another about how to move HEU forward over the next two years.”

“The result,” she says, “is a strategic planning framework that forged unity and consensus right across the union.”

## our five point plan

1 Invest

in our members

2 Defend

our collective rights

3 Build

our bargaining power

4 Strengthen

public health care

5 Engage

in political action

## heard on the plenary floor

WE STAND for our members. We stand for our patients. We stand for every member of Canadian society who has a right to universal public health care. • I WISH we had every member geared up

• I KNOW that the people in this room can make a difference... If we do nothing, we are guaranteed to fail. • EDUCATION NEEDS to be a priority. People have no power without tools. • CLEAR LA roots up. • CONSULTATION ONLY works when the other side is listening. • NOW IS the time to start taking action, not in 2010. • WE’VE GOT to put more pressure on the employer to honour our c make us stronger. • HEU SHOULD always remember what holds us together and not let the employer tear us apart. • LOW WAGES from the private sector make it hard to survive... We’re suffering worked to death, because that’s exactly what’s happening... manage the workplace properly! • NO ONE person is happy in their job, if their co-workers are unhappy in theirs. • WE NEVER had ove needed to look after our citizens. That’s what it’s about, not making sure corporations get what they need. • IT’S SHAMEFUL that this government has left our seniors out to dry. We need to get out





**MARGIE  
ANDERSON**

Regional  
Vice-President –  
Interior



**BECKY  
JACOBSON**

Regional  
Vice-President –  
Interior



**RHONDA  
BRUCE**

Regional  
Vice-President –  
Interior



**DEBBIE  
LAWRANCE**

Regional  
Vice-President –  
Vancouver Coastal



**BEV  
TRYNCHY**

Regional  
Vice-President –  
Vancouver Coastal



**JIM  
BARRETT**

Regional  
Vice-President –  
Vancouver Coastal



**PAT  
SHAW**

Regional  
Vice-President –  
North



**KIMBERLEA  
STUPARYK**

Regional  
Vice-President –  
North



**CAROL  
BUNCH**

Regional  
Vice-President –  
Vancouver Island



**JACKIE  
WOODLEY**

Regional  
Vice-President –  
Vancouver Island

ing president **Fred Muzin**, in his final address to convention  
HEU members of their power and responsibility to create  
their workplaces, their communities and around the world.

# CTION

The plan focuses on five  
priorities:

### Member development

HEU will build on important  
gains made in 2006 bargaining  
that increased members' access  
to career development and skills  
training opportunities. At the  
same time, HEU will develop a  
union-wide program to streng-  
then membership confidence in  
their collective rights, encourage  
activism and leadership at every  
level of the union, and cre-  
ate mutual respect and  
support within HEU's  
diverse membership.

### Collective rights

HEU will equip members with  
the training and tools they need  
to enforce their collective rights  
in the workplace. That means  
building an even stronger net-  
work of skilled shop stewards  
and health and safety represen-  
tatives, and establishing effective  
joint occupational health and  
safety committees in every  
workplace.

### Bargaining power

HEU will intensify its efforts to  
raise the profile and value of our

members' work in all occupa-  
tional groups, while fostering  
mutual support and solidarity  
across the union, throughout  
the labour movement and in  
the community. The union will  
also continue to support an  
expanded *Living Wage Cam-  
paign* and its demands for eco-  
nomic justice for low-waged  
workers.

### Public health care

HEU will continue to take a  
strong stand in defence of pub-  
lic health care, advocate for bet-  
ter seniors' care and fight priva-  
tization in all its forms. To this  
end, the union will advance

**“More than 2,600 workers  
have joined HEU since the  
union’s 2006 convention.”**

positive public solutions in all  
privatization campaigns, put P3  
projects under greater scrutiny,  
and expose the impact of priva-  
tization on quality resident and  
patient care.

### Political action

HEU will hold a political action  
conference in January 2009 to  
provide local activists with the  
tools and skills they need to  
campaign at the local level, and  
increase participation by HEU  
members and their families at

the ballot box. The union will  
also continue to build an effec-  
tive political action network to  
educate politicians and deci-  
sion-makers – between elections  
– on issues important to our  
members.

In other convention busi-  
ness, HEU delegates elected a  
new Provincial Executive and  
adopted close to 50 resolutions  
and constitutional amendments.  
They covered a range of union  
policy issues as well as topics  
related to the environment,  
homelessness, temporary for-  
eign workers, and global justice  
issues.

Several guests brought soli-  
darity greetings, includ-  
ing CUPE's national presi-  
dent Paul Moist and  
national secretary-trea-  
surer Claude Généreux,  
who pledged the full sup-  
port and backing of Canada's  
largest union in any future  
struggles facing HEU members.

Delegates also welcomed  
50 new groups of members, rep-  
resenting more than 2,600 work-  
ers, who have joined HEU since  
the last convention in 2006.

For more details on the  
convention's proceedings, mem-  
bers should contact their local  
executive members and conven-  
tion delegates.

by **Patty Gibson**

PHOTOS BY **JOSH BERSON**



**DARCY**



**MUZIN**



**BERNARDO**

**Judy Darcy** “The fact is that HEU members are central to  
any forward-looking solutions to the challenges we face in  
delivering care. We've got a year-and-a-half until our collec-  
tive agreements in facilities, community health and commu-  
nity social services expire in March 2010. And I say our  
preparations for bargaining must begin right here and now.  
We have to make sure that every single employer under-  
stands – and that politicians and the public understand –  
just how serious the recruitment and retention crisis is,  
and how critical the situation is on the frontline.”

**Judy Darcy, Secretary-Business Manager**

**Fred Muzin** “My 22 years on the Provincial Executive  
have been a privilege that has provided me with growth  
and opportunities that I never envisioned possible. Only  
one person out of 43,000 gets to do this job. It is a rare  
honour. As I move onto other work, rest assured that I will  
never be far away from you. My hope is that HEU remains  
committed and active in the constant struggle for social  
justice – you have an incredible ability to truly make a  
difference... I wish you well.”

**Fred Muzin, President**

**Donisa Bernardo** “We must educate our members on  
the importance of voting for politicians who support our  
aims and objectives. Central to this is protecting public  
Medicare. It's not just about protecting our jobs. It's about

protecting our public health  
care so all British  
Columbians can access the  
medical care and services  
they need when they need  
them. This should never be  
dependent on the size of a  
person's wallet.”

**Donisa Bernardo,  
Financial Secretary**

## ...and the winner is:

**This year's convention gavel went to the Cowichan Lodge  
local for leading a community-wide fight to stop the  
closure of the non-profit seniors' home in Duncan. Convention  
awards were also presented to both the Kelowna and Vernon  
locals for their campaigns against P3s in the Okanagan.**

**HEU's first Social Justice Award was presented to out-  
going president Fred Muzin, and retiring assistant secretary-  
business manager Zorica Bosancic became the second person  
to receive the Mary LaPlante Sisterhood Award.**



PHOTO BY **PATTY GIBSON**

and gung-ho... If that was the case, we wouldn't have the political mess in this province that we do. • **THIS UNION** needs to focus all our resources on anti-privatization and political action.  
**LANGUAGE** is a powerful tool to mobilize our members... and it's a great equalizer for us all. • **WE NEED** more time mentoring, nurturing and encouraging new members, and work from the grass-  
contract in terms of giving people time off for union leave. • **WE SHOULD** look for bargaining partners who have similar goals and needs. Building alliances – like the health coalition does – will  
g too much working for private companies. • **WE NEED** to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Big 3 members to get them a decent living wage. • **WE HAVE** to make sure our people aren't being  
vertime before Campbell came in. • **WE NEED** to get information out to the public that their health care dollars are being wasted and services sold to the highest bidder. • **WE CAN** afford what's  
t and fight for our seniors. • **P3S ARE** the biggest threat to our health care system in the coming years. • **IN THIS COUNTRY**, we should not have a wait list for anybody.



## Fatal farm accident prompts call for public investigation

Family members of the six workers injured and killed at a Langley mushroom farm in September have joined the B.C. Federation of Labour's call for a public inquiry into working conditions in the province's agricultural sector.

"We have heard from the families about a lack of safety training on the farm, a lack of material in languages they could understand, and the fear of being fired... if they raised safety concerns," says B.C. Federation of Labour President Jim Sinclair.

"If we are to stop these terrible incidents before they happen, we must investigate the root causes and examine industry-wide solutions."

Since the accident, family members have been demanding a transparent and far-reaching look at the realities facing workers in the agricultural industry, many of whom are particularly vulnerable as migrant workers or recent immigrants.

Farmer's Fresh Mushrooms, the site of the incident, has since been closed for environmental violations, unrelated to the accident.

WorkSafeBC is conducting an investigation that is expected to take a year to complete.

This latest tragedy comes a year after three farm workers were killed and many others injured in an accident involving a contractor's van that transported them to the fields.

## Farm workers win right to unionize

**A** historic ruling from the Ontario Court of Appeal has ended 60 years of discrimination against Ontario farm workers, capping a constitutional challenge almost two decades old.

On November 17, the court handed down a decision giving Ontario's 35,000 farm workers the right to full labour legislation protection, including the right to organize and negotiate wages and working conditions.

In a 3-0 decision, the court ruled that Ontario's *Agricultural Employees Protection Act* "substantially" denied freedom of association to farm workers under the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. It gave the government one year to bring farm workers under the *Ontario Labour Relations Act*, or draft legislation respecting the right to unionize.

Lawyer Paul Cavalluzzo, who fought the case for United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), credits HEU's successful fight against *Bill 29* for the farm workers' victory.

"In the B.C. case, the Supreme Court ruled that Section 2 (d) of the charter protects the right to bargain collectively," he told the *Guardian*. "We relied on that case heavily in winning the right for farm workers."

The UFCW launched the appeal in May 2008 on behalf of 270 workers at Rol-Land Farms in Kingsville, Ontario who had voted to join the union in 2003, but were denied certification because of the Act.

One of those workers was a landed immigrant from China, Xin Liu. He and two other former farm workers joined the UFCW in the appeal.



In a 3-0 decision the Ontario Court of Appeal ended 60 years of discrimination against Ontario farm workers.

Now a Canadian citizen working in construction, Liu told the *Guardian* he became involved in the unionizing effort because of intolerable conditions at the mushroom growing operation. In addition to covering up accidents, he says company supervisors "were hitting people, screaming, using bad words and they fired people for no reason."

At one point, when Liu sought legal advice about his ailing wife's need for medical leave, a lawyer had suggested he contact a union as there was nothing that could be done to resolve the issue legally.

"The UFCW has fought this battle across the country," says Cavalluzzo. "They've been in court in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec and Ontario, and on a number of occasions all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. The first case was back in 1990. It's been a long battle. Hopefully it's coming to an end."

Ontario's former Conservative government enacted the *Agricultural Workers Protection Act* after losing a legal challenge by the UFCW. The Supreme Court of Canada said the Ontario government erred when it cancelled the *Agricultural Labour Relations*

*Act* of the previous NDP government, which had granted full labour rights to farm workers. The new Act followed the ruling in allowing workers to form associations, but forbade exclusive representation by an association or union, and collective bargaining.

Justification for excluding farm workers relies on the argument that there are unique circumstances governing work on family farms. Critics say old-style family farms are being replaced by large-scale agribusinesses.

About 20,000 farm workers are migrant workers.

"This is a victory for all agricultural workers in Ontario," declared Wayne Hanley, UFCW Canada president. "Now it's time for the McGuinty Ontario government to join the 21st century and end this discriminatory gap in democracy as soon as possible."

In commenting on the victory, Liu says it wasn't fair that in a country like Canada, farm workers were singled out and banned from joining a union.

"I feel very good," he says. "But not just for me. Everybody is really happy."

DAN KEETON

## >>notebook>>



The recent credit crisis that sparked the current economic meltdown may have spelled the end of P3s as we know them.

## Will P3s survive the global credit crisis?

Governments around the world are responding to the deepening global recession with plans to invest heavily in public infrastructure.

It makes sense. After years of neglect, we urgently need to upgrade or replace our roads and bridges, hospitals and schools, sewage and water treatment plants – and to build more social housing. And the spin-offs from the resulting construction jobs and local supply contracts will help offset hard times in a recession-bound economy.

Here's the problem. The Harper Conservatives and the Campbell Liberals want to use public-private partnerships (P3s) for these projects. That's where a group of companies finance, build and, in some cases, operate the new public asset.

But these are expensive propositions for taxpayers who must foot the bill for the companies' profit margin and their higher costs of borrowing through 30-year payment plans. As HEU members in Abbotsford and the Okanagan know, good jobs are lost too, through the contracting out of services.

P3s were never a good deal for taxpayers or workers. But the recent credit crisis that sparked the current economic meltdown

may have spelled the end of P3s as we know them. That's because the investment banks that have been backing P3s are finding it nearly impossible to secure loans from other banks due to tight credit. The crisis is so serious that some of the banks involved in P3 hospital projects in B.C. were recently bailed out by European governments to the tune of \$85 billion. In the U.K., several major P3 projects involving transit, highways and sewage treatment have been delayed because of the lack of private credit.

There's a wide consensus among politicians, economists and business leaders that infrastructure projects must be brought on line quickly if they are to have a positive impact on our deteriorating economic situation. But the complexity of P3 contracts and the credit crunch mean that P3 schemes will continue to be saddled with impossibly long delays.

Maybe it's time for government to fast-track these projects by cutting out the middle man. As an added bonus, we'll protect decent jobs and save money for taxpayers.

MIKE OLD • HEU COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR



# U.S. workers **central** to Obama victory

**W**hen Barack Obama asked the people of the United States to make change happen, and to believe that together they could heal their country from the travesty of the Bush years, the American labour movement answered the call.

Hundreds of thousands of American workers mobilized in unprecedented numbers and ended up playing a decisive role in Obama's historic presidential victory.

Labour poured \$450 million of support into Obama's campaign in a massive organizing effort that reached 13 million households in 24 key states, with more than 250,000 union members working to elect Obama, America's first black president.

In December, the *Guardian* spoke with Elaine Bernard, Executive Director of Harvard University's Labor and Worklife Program, and Kent Wong of the Center for Labor Research and Education at the University of California. We asked them for their thoughts on labour's role in the Obama campaign and what his victory means for working people now.

While labour's support for Obama in key battleground states was central to his victory, both pointed to how

labour leaders took on the issue of racism, countering the Republican effort to exploit people's fears about electing a black American to the country's highest office.

"The American labour movement had not addressed the issue of racism for a very long time," says Bernard. "It was clear that amongst a certain group of white workers, there was hesitancy, and it ran from hesitancy to racism. This time, there was no running and no hiding. From the leadership on down, thousands and, in fact, I would say millions of workers and union folk took on the issue of racism."

Wong agrees. He says labour didn't allow racial prejudice to become an obstacle in electing the candidate who would stand by workers' interests.

Now, he says, "Labour has been energized by Obama's victory. They see it as their victory."

Given the global economic meltdown, Wong says Obama has inherited tremendous difficulties while facing high expectations from many different sectors. But it's clear, he says, that "any economic stimulus package from Obama must address the interests of working people."

Bernard backs that view. "There is a lot of anger in the country," she says. "How can we find billions for the people who brought us this crisis, but nothing for ordinary home owners?"

She also points out that labour is going to have to fight to hold onto what it has, and she argues against any tendency union members might have to turn inward and abandon solidar-



ity with others "The lesson from the Clinton administration is that you can't sit on your hands and wait for the great father to deliver, you've got to mobilize."

And union members *are* mobilizing. Top priorities include greater access to health care for the 46 million Americans without health insurance, welfare and unemployment insurance reform, training and job creation.

Bernard predicts a massive restructuring of the health system, noting that the colossal bailout of the health insurance companies means they are no longer in the driver's seat. "This time, labour feels like it's at the table," she says.

The *Employee Free Choice Act*, a key legislative priority for labour, needs strong support from Obama to ensure its passage. The bill aims to reverse a long, steady decline in union membership by making it easier to win union certification while allowing for mandatory arbitration to gain a first collective agreement. As a U.S. Senator, Obama sponsored the bill which has been blocked by Republicans, whose efforts are supported by a massive anti-union campaign led by Wal-mart

and McDonald's.

"All these policy issues are inter-related," says Wong, "and unions will advocate for them in tandem as labour moves forward in the first year of Obama's administration."

Bernard and Wong both say U.S. labour has moved into full-on mobilization mode and has every intention of staying the course. They contend that union members will not fold in the face of setbacks.

"Barack Obama himself was a community organizer, the first U.S. president to ever come out of that background," said Wong. "He understands that continuing the process of grassroots mobilization is critical to any meaningful change and, that it just doesn't ever stop."

The drama of the American election campaign is now part of history, but the vital role the U.S. labour movement played in Obama's victory represents an immense win for labour. Wong says that in spite of the challenges Obama faces, "There's tremendous hope that he will deliver change for working people."

**ESTHER SHANNON**



## >>voices>>



**More than half of the 180 candidates on the CUPE endorsement list were elected on November 15.**

## CUPE and HEU members made their mark

Trade union members pay a lot of attention to elections for municipal council, board of education, and regional district representatives.

We are active residents of our communities, and many of us have children or grandchildren in the school system. And we care deeply about public education and local issues like water, recreation facilities, and community development.

But for the 50,000 CUPE members in the municipal and school sectors, these councillors and trustees will also be our employers. So when community elections come around every three years, we have 50,000 plus reasons to get active.

Municipal councils can play an important role – even in areas where they might not have a direct responsibility – as in the multi-union campaign seeking the endorsement of councils for Community Social Services Awareness Month.

And because they are governing at "home," locally elected people are always accountable. We run into them at the grocery store, in the park, and at the hospital. They also have a strong

interest in supporting local jobs and strong public facilities and services – issues that are near and dear to my heart.

I can't say enough about the CUPE and HEU members who came out in force to fight the good fight and help elect progressive people on November 15.

We are all incredibly busy, but still we make the sacrifices and take time away from our families and our friends to be activists.

The good news is that our work pays off. More than half of the 180 candidates on the CUPE endorsement list were elected on November 15. And close to half of the more than 30 CUPE members running for office were elected, many of them first-time candidates.

These people will need our support over the three years to stay the course and stand up for jobs and public services in our communities.

And yes, we'll do it all again in November 2011.

**BARRY O'NEILL • PRESIDENT, CUPE BC**



## It's not too late to apply to the FBA Education Fund

At the end of December, the FBA Education Fund Committee had committed just over four million dollars, and approved 948 applications, for health care workers in the facilities sector to access training upgrades and skills development.

The five million dollar fund, negotiated during 2006 facilities bargaining, has provided educational opportunities for regular full-time and part-time employees from all health authorities, and all HEU job families – clerical, patient care, patient care technical, support and trades.

Applications for short-term and long-term training are still

being accepted on an ongoing basis, until all monies in the fund have been exhausted.

In February 2008, the committee increased its daily training allowance to a maximum \$100 per day for a full-time employee, pro-rated for part-time workers. The training allowance is retroactive to September 2006.

The FBA Education Fund office staff has contacted employees who received allowances to issue retroactive payments. Employees must respond before February 28, 2009. After that, remaining monies designated for retroactive payments will be returned to the fund for use by new applicants.

Find more information at [www.heu.org](http://www.heu.org) or call 604-456-7146.

## P.E. seeks activists to join subcommittees

HEU's Provincial Executive (P.E.) is seeking Expression of Interest applications from activists who are interested in joining a subcommittee. The deadline is January 26.

P.E. subcommittees meet twice a year, but continue carrying out the committee's work between meetings. Each subcommittee has two P.E. members and five rank-and-file members. They're co-chaired by a P.E. member and an HEU committee member.

"This is an opportunity for members who are passionate about an issue to put that enthusiasm to work for their union and their fellow members," says HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy.

"Grassroots participation in these subcommittees makes our union stronger, more effective and more democratic."

Subcommittees include: Anti-Privatization, Occupational Health and Safety, Political Action, Pensions, Global Justice and Peace, Men's Issues, Young Workers, and the Environment.

The union is also accepting Expressions of Interest for occupational subcommittees (Patient Care Technical, Clerical, Nursing Team, Trades and Maintenance, and Support) to implement convention decisions, develop action plans, and do outreach.

For more information, contact your local executive or visit HEU's website.

## Islanders petition to protect seniors' care

In their continuing fight to protect seniors' services, representatives from two Vancouver Island communities travelled to Victoria in late-November. They were armed with petitions, signed by thousands of Island residents, who are protesting the closure of Cowichan Lodge in Duncan and service cuts at Echo Village in Port Alberni.

HEU members, residents and families from Cowichan Lodge watched from the legislature's public gallery as Doug Routley, NDP MLA for Cowichan-Ladysmith, tabled their petition, which had gathered 11,000 signatures in a three-week period.

Routley told B.C.'s Health

# HEU bids a fond farewell to long-time activist

At HEU's recent biennial convention, assistant secretary-business manager Zorica Bosancic received the Mary LaPlante Sisterhood Award in appreciation for her more than 20 years of service to union members.

In advance of her retirement, officially scheduled for April 2009, she talked to the *Guardian* about her journey from a childhood in eastern Europe to her life as a union activist in Vancouver.

The daughter of an army officer in the former Yugoslavia, Bosancic credits military life with laying the groundwork of values that have served her well.

"Being an army brat prepared me for union work," she says. "The collective, the greater good was the foundation of the army. And loyalty was number one. It was easy to apply those principles to solidarity in the labour movement."

Bosancic remembers that even though Yugoslavia was a Communist country where everyone was considered equal – health care, for example, was free to all

**"Whenever I would get discouraged, I'd go to the membership and talk to some of my sisters and brothers. And that would bring me right back, re-energized and ready to fight another day."**

British television: *BBC News*, *Monty Python*, *Fawlty Towers* and *Coronation Street*.

Like so many other foreign students, Bosancic worked in London's hospitality industry, which relied heavily on a pool of cheap immigrant labour.

"Abuses were terrible and hardly anyone spoke up," says Bosancic. "What I witnessed really raised my

consciousness about people who do not have choices... I got fired more times than I remember. And I thought, what we need is a union."

In 1974, Bosancic joined her sister and brother-in-law in Vancouver, where she earned a science degree at UBC. Two years later, she was hired at Vancouver General Hospital as a nurse's aide (care aide today) on an orthopaedic surgical ward.

"We had a full week of orientation that covered everything you can imagine – a complete tour of the hospital, a meeting with human resources and time with a union representative," she says.

"I loved the work. The care staff really was a team made up of a registered nurse, a licensed practical nurse and a nurse's aide. There were lots of staff and lots of time to give true personal care," Bosancic remembers. "An LPN and I had eight patients to look after. Eight patients! That's unheard of today."

When her position was deleted a year-and-a-half later, she applied for a posting as a timekeeper.

"That's when I got active, the first year I became a clerical worker," she says, recalling her involvement in the clerical classification review, which eventually increased wages by up to six dollars an hour with retroactive payments of more than \$15,000.

The next step in her activism came when co-workers prompted her to successfully run for local office, first as an assistant secretary of the VGH local, and later as chief shop steward.

Then, in 1986, she joined HEU's servicing staff. Bosancic went on to become the "assistant to the officers", and then the "assistant secretary-business manager."

In recalling some of her most memorable moments at HEU, Bosancic notes the union's pay equity advanc-



HEU's assistant secretary-business manager Zorica Bosancic shared her journey from a childhood in Eastern Europe to her life as a union activist in Vancouver

es and its *Bill 29* Supreme Court victory.

And she remembers with pride *Operation Solidarity* in 1983, when unionized workers across the province walked out in an escalating protest against the Social Credit government's attack on labour.

"That was one of many times when I was extremely proud of VGH members. Our people walked out in droves.

"All these successes were exciting and satisfying, but they don't compare to being part of HEU and its membership," she says.

"Whenever I would get discouraged, I'd go to the membership and talk to some of my sisters and brothers. And that would bring me right back, re-energized and ready to fight another day."

So, what's next for Bosancic? Her love of opera and travelling are well-known, as is her devotion to her family.

"But I will always be an HEU member," she declares. "Whenever this union needs me, I'll be there."

MARGI BLAMEY



Minister George Abbott that he had the authority to ensure the Lodge remains open, but Abbott insisted the decision to close the Lodge belonged solely to the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA).

“This government always answers: ‘Next window. Someone else’s fault; it’s not us.’ Well, it is them,” Routley told the legislature. “They made this decision. They’re driving these decisions through their health authorities.”

Less than a week earlier, Port Alberni HEU members and residents saw their petition, signed by 1,700 supporters, tabled in the legislature by Scott Fraser, NDP MLA for Alberni-Qualicum.

Nancy Czigany, one of the HEU members who organized

the petition drive, says VIHA and the Ministry of Health have consistently under-funded Fir Park and Echo Village, which has created a serious funding shortfall, forcing the facilities to exhaust their financial reserves.

Earlier this year, VIHA cut the Echo Village budget by \$80,000 forcing the August closure of the “pink wing,” a secure unit that separates residents with advanced dementia from other residents who are able to live more independently.

The pink wing’s closure has prompted the Echo Village residents council to take their complaints about inadequate staffing and service levels to B.C.’s Ombudsman.

### New bonus payment for CSS members

HEU members working in community social services will be receiving a new bonus payment – equal to about one per cent of their 2008 earnings – before the end of March 2009.

The bonus comes from a \$3.9 million surplus in the Early Incentive Bonus Fund, secured in 2006 bargaining by HEU and its partners in the Community Social Services Bargaining Association.

These payments were preceded by the distribution of full or topped-up bonus payments in November for members on LTD and/or maternity leave who did not receive a bonus in 2006, or who only received a partial bonus.

Calculations for the final



PATY GIBSON PHOTO

**RIGHTS, RECOGNITION AND RESPECT: A two-day conference for HEU care aides, activity workers and rehab assistants in early-December brought together 35 nursing team members to build leadership and advocacy skills on issues related to staffing and quality care issues.**

bonus payment will be based on an employees’ income for the 2008 tax year, as reported by their employer on the T4 tax form, issued at the end of February 2009.

The additional payments were made possible by a unique feature of the 2006

contract settlement in the community social services sector, which included an audit of the bonus fund and an agreement that any surplus monies would be returned to workers.

The Community Social Services Employers

continued on page 14

## AFTER THE SHIFT

BRENDA WHITEHALL

Union activist and Métis artist Nancy Luis is passionate about the power of art and spirituality to raise awareness, inspire action and address climate change.

## LIFE’S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU’RE MAKING OTHER PLANS

**E**nlightening. Uplifting. Motivational. Joyful. Talking with HEU member Nancy Luis about her life as a Métis artist – after the shift – was all of that and more.

Incorporating First Nations culture into her artwork, Luis’ central themes include spirituality, climate change and her strong connection to animals.

Inspired by news reports, conversations with Elders, life events and her dreams, she writes compelling poems and stories about the dream catchers and spirit catchers she creates.

“The main gist of my art is in the stories and in raising awareness about the environment,” says Luis, an emergency patient porter/ward aide at Burnaby Hospital.

Part of Aboriginal tradition, she explains, is being affiliated with an animal spirit or animal totem – symbolic forces that guide and protect us. Giving a voice to the animals in her spirit catchers is core to her work.

In her impressive portfolio, for example, Luis has a photo of a spirit catcher she designed to describe the plight of the polar bear. The accompanying story is written from the polar bear’s point of view.

“It’s really dire what’s going on with polar bears right now,” says Luis, who’s married with two daughters.

“With global warming, ice caps are melting, and there are smaller pieces of ice. Polar bears are really good swimmers, but the ice is too far for them to swim to when hunting for seals, and they’re drown-

ing before they reach the ice.”

Viewing her work, it’s hard to believe that Luis never set out to become an artist. Instead, while working in health care, she decided to enroll in a tourism management diploma program at the Native Education College. Her plan was to eventually open a Bed & Breakfast. But that didn’t happen.

Having connected with her Aboriginal culture for the first time – studying in a traditional longhouse with First Nations teachers – Luis found herself in what she describes as “a life-changing experience” and “a spiritual awakening.”

When Luis graduated in 2001 – equipped with business skills, a hunger for change, and a passion to further explore First Nations customs – she decided to focus her energy on art, not tourism.

“My Mom had always tried to cover up her identity. She’d say, ‘Don’t tell anybody you’re Aboriginal.’ I couldn’t understand that growing up. But when I went back to school, I understood why she hid it. There was so much abuse against Aboriginal people that she was only protecting me... Now, I embrace my culture.”

While many non-aboriginal people view the dream catchers they see in gift shops, craft fairs, or at people’s homes as decorations, the origin of the traditional dream catcher has deep, cultural meaning for the Aboriginal community.

The “purpose is to catch bad dreams,” explains



Luis. The centre of the dream catcher is where good dreams come through, she says, and the web is where bad dreams are caught at night. Then, with the sun starting to rise and the morning dew dripping, bad dreams caught in the web melt away, and the feather along the bottom of the dream catcher blows the bad dreams away.

Although Luis has been an HEU activist since 1996 – she’s co-chair of her local and its OH&S committee, and a member of HEU’s First Nations caucus – she attended convention for the first time in November, an experience that inspired a new piece of art.

“When I was on the resolutions committee, it was culturally diverse with people from different parts of the province,” explains Luis. “So, I made a round dream catcher about balance and working for all. In the centre is a bird; and I used the four colours of mankind – red, white, yellow and black – to show working together. It symbolizes working as one for the power of the whole, which is HEU.”

Luis, whose work is on display and sold at cultural events around the Lower Mainland, says power also comes from knowing your rights.

“That’s half the battle in facing your employer and working in a safe environment, and not letting the employer bully you. I think it should be mandatory for all HEU members to take the Know & Enforce Your Rights course.”



continued from page 13

Association (CSSEA) rejected earlier union proposals to use surplus funds to increase wages or sick pay to address the sector's growing retention and recruitment problems.

Planning for 2010 bargaining in the community social services sector is already underway.

## WorkSafeBC nails Sodexo and Compass

A union project aimed at helping HEU members employed by Aramark, Compass and Sodexo (Big 3) advocate for safe working conditions resulted in 47 orders against Compass and Sodexo from WorkSafeBC over the past 14 months.

The most recent investigation – into health and safety violations at the BC Cancer Agency – gives Compass

group until January 20 to create a plan to establish a joint health and safety committee in the workplace, ensure that workplace inspections include worker participation and address concerns related to hazard reporting, post exposure protocols and the handling of cytotoxic drug waste.

The union's efforts to improve health and safety conditions for this privatized workforce have focused on educating members about their rights and the resources available to them, as well as assisting them to advocate for a safer, healthier working environment.

Using a combination of outreach surveys and member meetings, the project identified several key health and safety issues experi-

enced by the union's Big 3 members including inadequate infection control training, lack of access to protective equipment, extreme workloads, communication problems for housekeeping staff due to the inefficiency of the call centre model, and inadequate representation on joint occupational health and safety committees.

It then provided members with materials and support to protect their rights and hold their employers to account for safer working conditions.

## B.C. Fed convention builds solidarity

About 125 HEU members joined with fellow trade unionists from across the province to tackle a long list of policy resolutions

at the B.C. Federation of Labour's 52nd convention in November.

Over the five days, the 1,000 delegates in attendance took on issues ranging from B.C. Employment Standards to governments' economic policies to international solidarity.

Of particular interest to HEU members were resolutions supporting community social services, block funding for health care and successor rights, and resolutions opposing the B.C. government's advertising gag law (*Bill 42*), de-unionizing efforts in the community living services sector, the continued privatization of health services, and the growth of private medical clinics.

"One of the very clear

messages from our convention was that people get it," says B.C. Fed President Jim Sinclair, who was re-elected for a two-year term. "They get that this province cannot handle another four more years of Gordon Campbell and the Liberals cutting services, cutting back workers' rights, ignoring the crisis in the forest industry, and doing nothing to solve poverty and homelessness."

He says delegation after delegation affirmed that "our number one priority in the next four months is making sure working people have a voice in the next provincial election – one that ensures Gordon Campbell gets a pink slip, like the ones he gave thousands of health care workers in this province."

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

### JANUARY 27–28

HEU Political Action Conference

### JANUARY 27

International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust

### JANUARY 29–30

Provincial Executive meetings

### FEBRUARY

Black History Month

### FEBRUARY 10–13

CUPE National Women's Bargaining Conference (Montreal)

### MARCH

Women's History Month

### MARCH 8

International Women's Day (Daylight Savings Time begins)

### MARCH 16–19

Provincial Executive meetings

### MARCH 21

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

### MARCH 22

World Water Day

### APRIL 7

World Health Day

PUBLICATIONS MAIL  
AGREEMENT NUMBER 40007486

## Coalition forces Harper to back down

continued from page

tions is used worldwide, including in the United States," he says. "It helps ensure that political parties, once they are elected, are financed primarily by individual donations and the votes they get from Canadians."

Canada's finance laws ban donations from corporations and unions, and put a \$1,100 cap on the amount of money individuals can donate to a political party. Each party also receives \$1.95 per vote from the public purse.

"It's not a lot of money, but it's definitely in the best interests of the public to spend that small amount to keep big money out of politics, and to know that the people they elect are not beholden to the wealthiest people in the country," he says.

As for the idea that the coalition shouldn't make deals with the Bloc Québécois, Sinclair says: "It was cheap, cheap politics that led Harper to attack Québec so he could save the West. It was a shameful act of disunity. There was never an agreement to give a special deal to Québec.

"The real issue is that Canadians want politicians to work together in Parliament to solve the country's problems. And when we say Canadians, we also mean Québec," he says.

"I may not like the Bloc's brand of separatism, but the fact is it was democratically elected. It holds 50 seats in Parliament. They represent Québec. And they represent Canadians."

That issue, more than any other, appears to have divided Canadians.

In a passionate commentary published in the *Globe and Mail* on December 4, former leader of the federal New Democratic Party Ed Broadbent accused Stephen Harper of unleashing "a barrage of deliberately gross distortions" intended to "de-legitimize a democratically formed coalition, proposed in accordance with normal parliamentary practices, between the Liberals and the NDP."

He lashed out at Harper, his ministers and his party for spreading such falsehoods as: the Bloc is part of the Liberal-NDP coalition (it's not); the Bloc was promised six Senate seats (it wasn't); the Canadian flag did not appear behind Dion, Layton and Duceppe during their press conference (it did); and the Bloc would have a veto on all the actions of the coalition government (not true).

"Instead of following constitutional precedent and allowing a democratic confidence vote to take place when it should," wrote Broadbent, "we have a power-hungry man who will be recorded as the first prime minister in Canada's history to deliberately cre-



ate a political crisis and set the fire of national disunity."

While no one can predict what will happen when the Conservatives bring in a new budget on January 27, the Canadian Labour Congress and their affiliates are continuing to pressure federal politicians to ensure the needs of working people are reflected in the upcoming budget.

Labour's prescription for strengthening the Canadian economy is three-fold.

First, improve access and benefits to Employment Insurance for laid-off workers while providing better training programs for new jobs.

Second, introduce a major public investment program to create jobs, promote environmental goals, and build new industries for the future.

Third, create a pension guarantee fund and increase Old Age Security benefits.

"Last month, while Mr. Harper and his finance Minister were preparing an overly optimistic economic statement, 75,000 Canadians lost their jobs, more than any single month in recent history," says

CLC President Ken Georgetti.

"At the same time the Prime Minister was telling Canadians there was no need for further economic stimulus, another 42,000 manufacturing jobs disappeared. Factories are closing and secondary industries are laying workers off. Less than half of the people who lose their jobs can expect help from our broken Employment Insurance system."

As events continue to play out in Ottawa, with no sure sign of how Harper's Conservatives will proceed when Parliament reconvenes, it's clear their actions will be under much greater scrutiny than in the past. And we can be assured that Canadians' expectations for genuine leadership on the country's escalating economic crisis will also be that much higher.

PATTY GIBSON



## Darcy wins Black Eagle Award

HEU secretary-business manager **Judy Darcy** was one of several unionists and social activists to be honoured for their support of migrant agricultural workers in Canada during the ninth annual César E. Chavez Black Eagle Awards ceremony.

Three days prior to the awards ceremony, history was made when the United Food and Commercial Workers union (UFCW) won full organizing and bargaining rights for Ontario farm workers, almost half of whom are yearly migrants to Ontario.

The union's case was based on HEU's successful charter challenge to *Bill 29* in 2007.

"In her acceptance speech, [Darcy] talked about the fact that all unions are built on others' strengths and I thought that was a very interesting line, because if it hadn't been for the B.C. health decision, we would've lost," said Stan Raper, of UFCW Canada.

The awards were presented by the Canadian Labour Congress and the César E. Chavez Foundation on November 19.

## Welcome to HEU

Former Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) president **Deborah Bourque** has joined the HEU staff as Coordinator of Policy and Planning.

"I've always really liked and respected HEU," says Bourque, who became familiar with the union through years of attending B.C. Federation of Labour conventions. "I've always seen HEU as a strong union, a union that cares about social justice and the broader movement, and at the same time meets the day-to-day needs of its members."

Born in Nova Scotia, Bourque moved to Saint John, New Brunswick with her family when her father retired from the military.

At 19, she was hired by the post office, and elected to the local executive at her first CUPW meeting. By 1983, she became a national union representative in the grievance arbitration department; and in 1990, was elected 3rd national vice-president.

Then, in 2002, Bourque became CUPW's first woman president.

Bourque says her union was proud of HEU's *Bill 29* fight and eventual Supreme Court victory.

"It was a big issue for people in my union and other trade unionists in Ontario. We shared a lot of the anger with HEU members over *Bill 29*. People were pretty excited to see the union take a strong stand. HEU took on a tough fight, showed real leadership, and the membership was really strong."



**BOURQUE**

Being a union activist has played a major role in Bourque's life. "I learned my politics in the union, my feminism in the union, and it shaped me to be who I am. More than school, more than anything – it was the union."

## In Memoriam

HEU members at Mount Saint Joseph Hospital (MSJ) in Vancouver were shocked by the tragic death of Aramark housekeeping aide **Kevin McKenzie**, who was struck by a car while walking to work on December 16.

Kevin joined HEU in 2003, working in housekeeping at both Burnaby Hospital and MSJ. After his *Bill 29* layoff, Kevin was re-hired by Aramark at MSJ in 2005. A year later, he took HEU's Union Activism and Introduction to Shop Steward courses, becoming a shop steward, and later a site representative.

Co-workers remember Kevin as "an intelligent man with a dry sense of humour. He was a true gentleman, always willing to answer questions and help solve members' problems."

Family and friends are mourning the passing of former HEU member **Margaret Carin**, a clerical worker at Cowichan District Hospital in Duncan.

Originally from Kelowna, Margaret and her family settled in the Cowichan Valley in the early-1970s. Health concerns forced her to retire early in the late-1980s.

## You can

1. save HEU money
2. save trees
3. get your *Guardian* quickly

by notifying us promptly of any change of address. Just clip this coupon, which has your mailing label on the back, fill in your new address below and mail to the *Guardian*, 5000 North Fraser Way, Burnaby V5J 5M3.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Facility \_\_\_\_\_

# GUARDIAN

"In humble dedication to all those who toil to live."

EDITOR  
**Mike Old**

MANAGING EDITOR  
**Patty Gibson**

ASSOCIATE EDITOR  
**Margi Blamey**

DESKTOP PRODUCTION  
**Elaine Happer**

DESIGN CONSULTATION  
**Kris Klaasen,  
Working Design**

PRINTING  
**Mitchell Press**

The *Guardian* is published on behalf of the Provincial Executive of the Hospital Employees' Union, under the direction of the following editorial committee:

**Ken Robinson, Judy Darcy, Donisa Bernardo, Victor Elkins, Carol Kenzie, Sandra Giesbrecht, Kelly Knox**

## PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE

**Ken Robinson**  
President  
**Judy Darcy**  
Secretary-Business Manager

**Donisa Bernardo**  
Financial Secretary

**Victor Elkins**  
1st Vice-President

**Carol Kenzie**  
2nd Vice-President

**Sandra Giesbrecht**  
3rd Vice-President

**Kelly Knox**  
Senior Trustee

**Jacqueline Zilkie**  
Senior Trustee Elect

**Louella Vincent**  
Trustee

**Carolyn Unsworth**  
Regional Vice-President  
Fraser Valley

**Bob Norquay**  
Regional Vice-President  
Fraser Valley

**Margie Anderson**  
Regional Vice-President  
Interior

**Becky Jacobson**  
Regional Vice-President  
Interior

**Rhonda Bruce**  
Regional Vice-President  
Interior

**Debbie Lawrance**  
Regional Vice-President  
Vancouver Coastal

**Beverly Trynchy**  
Regional Vice-President  
Vancouver Coastal

**Jim Barrett**  
Regional Vice-President  
Vancouver Coastal

**Pat Shaw**  
Regional Vice-President  
North

**Kimberlea Stuparyk**  
Regional Vice-President  
North

**Carol Bunch**  
Regional Vice-President  
Vancouver Island

**Jackie Woodley**  
Regional Vice-President  
Vancouver Island

**Joanne Foote**  
First Alternate  
Provincial Executive

## UNION OFFICES

**Provincial Office**  
5000 North Fraser Way  
Burnaby V5J 5M3  
604-438-5000  
E-MAIL [heu@heu.org](mailto:heu@heu.org)  
INTERNET [www.heu.org](http://www.heu.org)

## Regional Offices

**VANCOUVER ISLAND**  
**Victoria Site**  
201-415 Gorge Road East  
Victoria V8T 2W1  
(250) 480-0533

**Comox Site**  
6-204 North Island Highway  
Courtenay, V9N 3P1  
(250) 331-0368

**INTERIOR REGION**  
**Kelowna Site**  
100-160 Dougall Rd. S.  
Kelowna V1X 3J4  
(250) 765-8838

**Nelson Site**  
745 Baker St.  
Nelson V1L 4J5  
(250) 354-4466

**NORTHERN**  
1197 Third Ave.  
Prince George V2L 3E4  
(250) 564-2102

## EQUITY PHONE LINE

1.800.663.5813, ext. 7192  
Lower Mainland 604.456.7192

### PRESS 1

## Ethnic Diversity

One union, many colours! Working across our differences! To participate, please call and leave us your name!

### PRESS 2

## First Nations

First Nations members would like to hear from you! Please call if you would like to help educate our union sisters and brothers on issues that affect First Nations People.

### PRESS 3

## Lesbians and Gays

For support: afraid of being identified, feeling isolated, want to know your rights? Call for information on same-sex benefits, fighting homophobia and discrimination. [www.pridepages.org](http://www.pridepages.org)

### PRESS 4

## People with disAbilities

If you are on WCB, LTD, or if invisibly or visibly disabled in the workplace, let us know how the union can better meet your needs.



## Talk to us Toll-Free!

You can call any HEU office toll-free to deal with a problem or get information. It's fast, easy and free.

### PROVINCIAL OFFICE

• Burnaby Site  
1-800-663-5813

### REGIONAL OFFICES

#### Northern Office

• Prince George  
1-800-663-6539

#### Okanagan Office

• Kelowna  
1-800-219-9699

#### Vancouver Island Offices

• Victoria Site  
1-800-742-8001

• Comox Site  
1-800-624-9940

#### Kootenay Office

• Nelson  
1-800-437-9877

ALL CALLS ARE CONFIDENTIAL







AGREEMENT NUMBER 40007486

RETURN TO  
The Guardian  
5000 North Fraser Way  
Burnaby, BC  
V5J 5M3

JOSHUA BERSON PHOTOS