

GUARDIAN



SUMMER 2011 • VOLUME 29 NUMBER 2 • THE VOICE OF THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

ONLINE POWER TOOLS

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this!



More and more
HEU members are tweeting,
blogging, friending and posting
to campaign and organize.

You can too! **PAGE 8**





Summer DAYS

Festivals, parades, tournaments and barbeques were just some of the events that kept HEU members busy this summer.

Hats off to everyone who took the time to promote our campaigns, raise funds for charitable causes, and bring some union spirit into their communities.

see page 3 >



JUDY DARCY

We're getting ready

Summer's often a time when life slows down. But in recent months, your union has been active on many fronts. And the fall is shaping up to be even busier.

In June, we held our first long-term care independent bargaining conference, which brought members together to talk about

the challenges they face in bargaining and on the job.

In every way, it was both historic and powerful.

There's a lot on our plate as we prepare for public sector contract negotiations in 2012.

members have in common – from the amazing compassion and courage they bring to work to the tough circumstances they face in dealing with heavy workloads, inadequate staffing levels and the constant threat of contract-flipping.

This experience, combined with a forum we held on seniors' issues in Kamloops earlier this summer, underscores the urgent need for government to take action on seniors' care. After screening our documentary *The Remaining Light*, it was clear that many family members came to this public event because they needed help. Some were totally desperate. All wanted something to change, and quickly. And many were anxious to spread the word by showing the film to others.

Because contracts with independent facilities are negotiated with different employers, there are a wide variety of collective agreements in this emerging sector. What was most striking for me, however, was not the differences between our independent locals, but how much these

voice.mail

Thanks HEU

On behalf of the 54,000 members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, I want to thank HEU for your support and solidarity during our recent fight with Canada Post and the Harper government.

CUPW locals in B.C. were overwhelmed by the support they received from HEU members on picket lines and at rallies. CUPW and HEU members share the same struggles for decent work and for quality public services.

CUPW will be relying on your support and solidarity as we enter into bargaining with Canada Post for the rural and suburban mail carriers.

Even though we have been ordered back to work, our fight is not over. CUPW's members' heads are held high and we will continue to work for respect, equality and a public post office.

We are proud of the struggle we have waged and are determined to continue.

DENIS LEMELIN

CUPW National President

Obscene pension

In reference to the extravagant \$315,000 pension awarded David Hahn of BC Ferries, I'd like to provide Premier Clark with a short refresher on history and economics as she seems to have forgotten both.

In defending the pension, Clark states that "this was a deal made five years ago and it's a legally binding contract" and that we are "stuck with it."

In the early hours of January 28, 2002, the B.C. Liberal government, of which Ms. Clark was a cabinet member, enacted *Bill 29*, legislation that "ripped up" HEU's collective agreement. Our contract was a freely negotiated and "legally binding contract." Then, on April 28, 2004, the BC Liberals legislated an end to HEU's strike action and passed *Bill 37* – which cut wages that had been previously negotiated – by 15 per cent.

So don't tell me, Ms. Clark, that we are "stuck" with Mr. Hahn's obscene pension package: your government has set the precedent for addressing this issue.

NANCY CZIGANY
Port Alberni

No place for sissies

Bette Davis said, "Old age ain't no place for sissies." By the time I was 55, I knew this to be true. My biggest fear now is not death itself,

but what I might have to go through before I get there.

On June 21, the BC Health Coalition hosted a screening of the film *The Remaining Light*, produced by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and HEU.

Among the 65 people attending, there were family members presently involved in navigating the care of their elderly parents, care providers working in extended health care facilities, volunteers and home care workers assisting seniors within the community, and many others at the tip of the baby boom iceberg who fear that a dignified, affordable and adequate future in the health care system is in serious question.

It should be obvious that a quality of life that includes mental stimulation and a connection with others increases the likelihood of general good health in seniors, the same as for everyone else. This in turn reduces the need for expensive hospital care. Studies of elder care have substantiated that preventative services for seniors offer good value for money.

Yet government short-sightedly insists on cutting funding to organizations that provide these services. For example, the Kamloops Centre for Seniors Information has provided outreach services for seniors living

Later in June, we hosted a day-long conference for licensed practical nurses about upcoming changes to the regulations governing their profession. In advance of the Ministry of Health's draft changes this fall, the union is consulting with our LPN members to make sure their views are carried forward to government.

Throughout the summer, the union has also focused on supporting our members in community social services who are struggling to achieve a fair contract in a sector where service cuts and group home closures make a mockery of our once sound, social safety net.

I urge you to support them in every way you can.

Currently, we are organizing our third round of occupational conferences in the facilities subsector, in September, which will pave the way for November's facilities bargaining conference. And then, in December, we'll be holding our community bargaining conference.

So there's a lot on our plate as we get ready for public sector negotiations in 2012. Watch for another awareness campaign featuring the value and diversity of our members' work. Thanks to past campaigns, the public has a far greater understanding of who our members are, the diverse jobs you do, and just how critical your work is to quality care.

And finally, you may have heard I am seeking the nomination to run for the NDP in New Westminster. If I'm successful, I will be taking our fight for health care, decent jobs and other critical services into a more public arena in the next election.

want to die alone. As things stand now, these possibilities do not look very promising.

WENDY WESEEN
Kamloops, B.C.

LPN advocacy

The 5,000 Registered Practical Nurses represented by the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions/ CUPE want to thank HEU for your leadership on behalf of Licensed Practical Nurses. As an RPN and a union leader, I am not aware of any union representing Practical Nurses in Canada or the U.S. doing work of the caliber of HEU.

Your campaign, *Pride in Our Profession*, sets an example for the rest of the country, as we all struggle to ensure that Practical Nurses take our proper places in nursing care. We are so grateful that you generously allowed us to reproduce your LPN materials for RPNs in Ontario during Nurses' Week.

The response has been tremendous. I also want to thank you for the invitation to participate in your conference, *Increased Independence for LPNs – Key to Modern Nursing*. I was honoured to participate, and awed by the speakers and depth of discussion.

We value our working relationship with HEU and look forward to years of joint advocacy on behalf of Practical Nurses.

HELEN FETTERLY
Secretary/Treasurer, OCHU





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CUPE president disputes myth of gold-plated pensions in the public sector • 10

LPNs discuss options for greater autonomy in face of impending regulatory change • 12

How a 100-year-old fire revolutionized occupational health and safety • 14

HEU locals **connect** with community

Unsettled weather and colder than normal temperatures this summer didn't curb HEU members' enthusiasm for being out and about in their communities – come rain or shine.

Whether raising money for charitable causes, entering floats in local parades, distributing campaign leaflets at fairs and farmers' markets, or participating in community celebrations, members were out front and visible in the towns and cities where they live and work.

In Powell River, health care workers made a fine showing at the annual Sea Fair celebrations where local secretary-treasurer Irene Smith and the union's second vice-president Louella Vincent organized a float for the community parade. Fourteen HEU members turned out to distribute more than 300 ice cream cones in exchange for non-perishable food donations for the local food bank. And they raised an unexpected \$300 in donations as well.

Member Misty Gleave says the event was “a way for our local to show the community that we care and support each other.”

It was planned by the newly formed Community Spirit Committee, organized by Gleave with support from

local chairperson and P.E. member John Fraser and union member Dan Rogers.

In Armstrong, the Pleasant Valley Manor local raised more than \$1,000 through their first annual fundraising run – “Trekking it for Multiple Sclerosis” – that invited the community to “run, jog, walk, bike or roller blade with HEU.”

The M.S. run featured a trail marked with HEU balloons, two en route stations decorated with union banners and flags, and T-shirts awarded as prizes from the union's Living Wage and Stand UP for Seniors' campaigns.

Local chairperson Lynn Serhan says, “We wanted to do a local-building event where members worked together and got involved with their community. We wanted to show how, as a team, we can make change. And we wanted the community to know more about

“We wanted the community to know more about who looks after their loved ones, and what we do.”

On Vancouver Island, HEU's Sunridge local won second place in the non-commercial division for their float in the Duncan Cowichan Festival Society's “Duncan Daze” Grand Parade.

Members from Sunridge and

who looks after their loved ones, and what we do.”

On Vancouver Island, HEU's Sunridge local won second place in the non-commercial



Powell River members made a fine showing at the annual Sea Fair celebrations.

HEU's Cowichan local braved the pouring rain to carry HEU banners, and pass out candy, buttons and information flyers.

Chairperson Nicole Lynch was especially pleased the two locals joined forces to make the venture a success. “This was a great way to bring our message to the community on our seniors and living wage campaigns and the issues we have with P3s.”

Castlegar local was also out in their community, proudly participating in the annual Sunfest celebration. “We look after people in the community and wanted to be visible,” says local chairperson Brad Burnham.

HEU members from Castlevue Care Centre entered a winning team in the

Sunfest Parade. A spirited 12-member team sported HEU hats while carrying union banners and flags.

Local members from Castlegar and District Community Health Centre (Talarico Place) also participated in the Relay for Life at Castlegar's Kinnaird Park raising over \$1,400 for the Canadian Cancer Society.

HEU president Ken Robinson saluted local activists for flying the union's flag at local community events.

“Not only are we showing our neighbours and friends that our commitment to care extends outside the workplace,” says Robinson.

“We're also building pride among our members in their union and that will result in stronger locals.”

Victory at The Hamlets in Penticton

When 60 care staff working at The Hamlets in Penticton received pink slips in early June – that would see them out of work by the end of August – they knew they were in for a fight.

Their employer, private operator H&H Total Care Services, was looking for wage rollbacks, even though the Interior Health Authority had increased payments to H&H by more than 10 per cent last year.

On the ground, HEU members set to work organizing weekly vigils outside of the facility every Saturday where they were joined by residents and family members. They set up a Facebook group to help them connect with each other and reach out to the broader community. And they circulated petitions calling for the employer to rescind the

lay-off notices.

At the provincial level, HEU called on the health authority to audit the books of the for-profit facility. “This is a totally unwarranted disruption in the continuity of care for these residents,” HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy said at the time.

“The health authority has a responsibility to find out where the money it provides to this operator, for the care of local seniors, is going.”

The Hamlets at Penticton opened in the fall of 2008 and provides both residential care beds and assisted living quarters. About three-quarters of its residential care beds are subsidized by the IHA.

Six weeks after the initial lay-off notices were handed out, the union reached a tentative three-



year agreement which provides for modest wage increases and includes a “no contracting out” provision. Members voted in favour of the new contract by 87 per cent.

The agreement covers about 120 union members at the facility, including nurses and support workers, in addition to the job classifications that had been targeted.



COFFEE BREAK

Minding your manners on the net

“Netiquette” is the newly coined word describing courteous social conduct on the internet, which has its own culture and rules.

Knowing your netiquette can help you avoid social blunders, or inadvertently offending someone.

- Don't shout by using CAPITAL LETTERS or oversized fonts.
- Always include a subject line appropriate to your message.
- Be concise, avoid long sentences and use adequate spacing to make your message easy to read.
- Always proofread your message for proper spelling and grammar before you hit the send button.
- Remember email is not confidential and can be forwarded to others, so don't say anything that could come back to haunt you.
- Respect people's time. Copy the minimum number of people required.
- Be conscious of the size of your attachments. Aim to keep them between 50k and 1MB.
- Remember that spammers feast on email addresses. Protect others' privacy by not automatically hitting the “reply to all” button.
- When forwarding an email, delete the email addresses of others (and comments) before sending it on.
- Don't expect immediate responses – allow time for a reply.

- Reply within 24 hours or set your auto-reply if away for an extended period of time.

- Use the Bcc (blind copy) field when sending bulk email.
- Do not respond to cyberbullying. Keep original correspondence. If messages are threatening, contact the police. And talk to your children about cyberbullying as a safety measure.



B.C. government proclaims Health Care Assistant Day

Care aides, community health workers and other front-line caregivers will now be formally honoured for the work they do in our communities after the B.C. government recently proclaimed October 18, 2011 as Health Care Assistant Day.

Health care assistant is the new name used to describe several different positions including community health

workers, residential care aides, home support workers, long-term care aides, home health aides, continuing care assistants and personal care aides.

HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy said that acknowledgement highlights how important the care these workers provide every day is to their patients, residents and clients.

“More than 16,500 HEU members

deliver services and programs to seniors and people with disabilities. We welcome the public recognition of their significant contribution,” said Darcy.

Health Care Assistant Day is the result of a collaborative effort by stakeholders – unions, educators, employers and government representatives – on the Care Aide and Community Health Worker Registry advisory committee.

Know your rights

Cyber world saavy on the job

As the world shifts en masse to conducting business through digital communications, so has health care.

With the increasing use of information technology and the advent of social media – like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube – B.C.'s health authorities are issuing policies about employee access to electronic workplace tools.

If you surf the internet or use email on your employer's equipment (such as computers, laptops and cell phones) or information systems network, realize you're being watched.

Each health authority has clear guidelines, with limitations, about utilizing email and the internet at work. Many employers require staff to sign

agreements before issuing personal usernames and passwords for computer access. And some hold information sessions for new users about what's appropriate or inappropriate online activity.

Much of it comes down to common sense. If you distribute hate propaganda; gossip about management or co-workers; disclose confidential client or patient information; or transmit hoaxes, chain letters and lewd jokes

on the employer's email system, you could be at risk for disciplinary action.

All health authorities prohibit employees from divulging proprietary information, breaching patient confidentiality, viewing and distributing pornography or materials that violate the *Human Rights Code*, improperly accessing private information about patients or staff (such as test results, phone numbers, appointments), participating in online games (including gambling), and running home businesses through the employer's information systems network.

Policy infringements are punishable by discipline, termination, and criminal prosecution if a law has been violated.

Some workplace networks have “access level” settings to help control what external websites can be visited.

One health authority has created a “white list” for sites approved as being business-related (including union websites), and a “black list” for websites that are restricted or blocked (like Facebook and MySpace).

Each webpage you click on and every email you send, receive, copy, delete and forward leaves a trail back to your login account. And although most employers say they don't intentionally read users' communications, Information Technology departments

monitor all network traffic and have an obligation to report policy breaches.

Employers recognize that a certain amount of personal email and internet use is inevitable, and most permit it as long as it meets their policy guidelines, occurs during scheduled breaks, and does not impact work performance.

However, you might be disciplined if you enter the cyber world and check your personal email accounts (like Hotmail, gmail or Yahoo) on employer-paid time, as this may be considered “time theft”.

What you do after the shift should be your business. But if you Tweet or post work-related comments or photos on your blog, Facebook wall, MySpace page or other public social media sites that are offensive, defamatory or breach confidentiality, you may be subject to discipline, suspension or even termination.

In our electronic world, there's no such thing as privacy. What you receive or transmit through your employer's network can legally be monitored and read.

However, as a unionized employee, you do have rights around the implementation of these policies. You always have the right to a shop steward, access to the grievance process, and certain privacy rights (*see story, page 7*).

To learn more about your employer's policy, contact your local executive.

BRENDA WHITEHALL

<<newsbites>>

Harper government supports deadly asbestos trade

The Canadian government recently blocked an international effort to list chrysotile asbestos as a hazardous chemical.

“The science is clear. Experts from around the world have said repeatedly that chrysotile asbestos is a dangerous substance that causes cancer,” says Canadian Labour Congress president Ken Georgetti. “Yet our government continues to pretend that in selling asbestos to developing countries it is exporting a safe product. Canada's government is putting people's lives at stake for what can only be described as crass politics.”

At an international summit in Switzerland in June, Canada blocked the inclusion of chrysotile asbestos on an international list of hazardous chemicals. Putting chrysotile asbestos on the Annex III list of the Rotterdam Convention would allow countries importing the substance to turn it away if they don't think they can handle it safely. The convention must have consensus to make changes to the list.

“Our government doesn't allow asbestos to be used in Canada, and it is being removed from the parliament buildings and the prime minister's own residence, but we continue to export it to developing countries,” says Georgetti.

The CLC is calling on the federal

government to support a ban on all asbestos production and export, to support a just transition of workers from the industry, and to stop providing financial support to the one mine left in production in Canada.

Georgetti says asbestos kills an estimated 100,000 people each year. (CLC/CALM)

Ontario hospitals buy local

Outsourcing food services in B.C. hospitals and long-term care facilities to private contractors has meant that patients and residents don't always get the fresh, nutritious meals they need to regain and maintain good health.

But in Ontario, some hospitals are

Mapping a vision for independent bargaining

More than 100 delegates representing HEU members from long-term care and assisted living facilities gathered in Richmond June 5 to 7 to map out a bargaining strategy for a sector rocked by cuts, privatization and contracting out.

The union's Long-term Care Independent Bargaining Conference brought together members who work for subcontractors, P3 operators and other for-profit and non-profit facilities that are not part of the province-wide facilities collective agreement.

There are more than 90 separate collective agreements covering HEU members employed by these work sites.

In her remarks to delegates, HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy acknowledged that workers in this sector have paid the

price for government's actions over the last 10 years through wage rollbacks, privatization, increased workload and most recently, demands for further rollbacks to pay for increased care hours while protecting profit margins.

"It is morally wrong for these guys to make money hand over fist from the care of seniors," said Darcy. "And we are going to stand up for dignity and respect for our seniors and those who care for them."

One of the conference highlights was a presentation from three members who fought hostile employers to protect their contract and improve caring conditions at their work site.

Nikki Bone from the Hamlets at

Westside in Kamloops told delegates how members at her local overcame an intimidating employer, threats of contracting out, and two decertification attempts to build a stronger local union.

"Today at the Hamlets, we have a local executive that works hard," said Bone.

"We continue to exercise our rights, and we are winning grievances. Members have gained confidence in the union and are slowly bringing issues forward to us. And the employer has failed to get rid of HEU."

Christine Brennan, a care aide at Qualicum Gardens in Parksville, described how her local built community support to face down a threat of contract-flipping by the for-profit operator of the facility.

Members launched a three-week strike that maintained strong support from residents, family members and the

community. "Collective action made all the difference," said Brennan. "The

owners met and cancelled the contract with the new company just days before the lay-off notice period ended."

Hawthorn Park's Monte Van Tol told delegates about his local's fight at the bargaining table in 2005 when their employer was demanding two-tier wages with lower rates for new hires.

Van Tol described how management worked hard to divide the local membership, and the steps the local took to communicate with members – often one-on-one – about the reasons why two-tier wages should be opposed.

The employer's demand was ultimate-



ly defeated (through arbitration) and the local emerged united and strong.

"This renewed strength served us well when we went into bargaining again in 2009 – our employer had a change in attitude and approached negotiations much differently," says Van Tol.

"Our union was with us every step of the way. We were supported. Our confidence increased. We knew the union had our backs. And that's what solidarity looks like."

During the conference, delegates passed a number of resolutions establishing the union's broad objectives for bargaining on issues ranging from pensions and benefits to wages and workload to employment security.

Delegates also participated in a number of skills-building exercises in the areas of political action, seniors' advocacy and workload.

But more than anything, delegates learned that they were not alone in their struggles to improve care and protect and improve their jobs. Networking – especially on a regional basis – was an important aspect of the conference.

The Long-term Care Independent Bargaining Conference was held as a result of a decision made by delegates to the 2010 HEU convention.

Bargaining goals

- Bargain strongest possible no contracting-out language.
- Lobby for government policies that place continuity and quality of care and fair wages before low-bidding of contracts and excess profits.
- Meet at least living wage standards as the minimum compensation package.
- Negotiate for compensation packages comparable to public sector.
- Campaign for living wages in the community and in the workplace.
- Improve health and welfare benefits at the bargaining table and by raising awareness about their importance with members.
- Negotiate improvements to paid sick leave.
- Bargain for safe working conditions, and empower local union activists to take on health and safety and workload issues in the workplace.
- Support CLC campaign to improve the Canada Pension Plan.
- Protect Municipal Pension Plan coverage and work toward establishing a defined benefit plan option for members who don't have access to the MPP.
- Work toward one contract for all health care workers.



showing there is a way to do this that's good for people and the environment – buy local.

St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto started to introduce some Ontario-grown produce to its patient menus in late July. The Scarborough Hospital, St. Joseph's Health Centre in Guelph and Ross Memorial Hospital in Lindsay will soon follow suit.

While the cost of buying in Ontario may be slightly higher, proponents indicate that this can be offset by better quality and nutrition, improved portion control, more efficient food waste management,

and lower shipping and fuel charges. Longer supply contracts with local producers would also reduce costs.

According to My Sustainable Canada, a not-for-profit organization for research, policy work and collaboration on sustainable consumption, a survey of 33 Ontario hospitals showed



that only 20 per cent of hospital food originated in the province.

My Sustainable Canada would like to see hospitals increase their purchase of local food to 25 per cent.

Government officials began looking to local producers to provide food to public institutions including hospitals, long-term care facilities and schools – through a provincial government program initiated in 2009.

U.K.'s largest private nursing home company collapses

Profit-driven, private companies continue to grow in B.C.'s residential care sector despite indications from other countries that this may not be in the

best interests of seniors and people with disabilities.

In recent weeks, Southern Cross, the largest residential care company in the United Kingdom, succumbed to severe financial pressures. The collapse has created massive upheaval and uncertainty for the 31,000 residents and 44,000 health care workers who live and work in the 750 Southern Cross facilities.

While government scrambles to contain the fallout, unions with members working in Southern Cross nursing homes have been lobbying for continuity of care for seniors and enforcement of collective agreement rights for workers.

GMB is one of the unions with members at Southern Cross. In June, del-

Union dues support your local activism

There are a lot of benefits that come with being a member of the Hospital Employees' Union. Bargaining and enforcing your collective agreement.

Providing you with servicing representation when you need it. And making sure there is a strong union voice advocating for decent jobs and better care.

But what you may not realize is that HEU's resources are not just dedicated to the day-to-day operations involved in running our union or supporting provincial campaigns. We have resources specifically to support your activism at the local level.

At HEU, part of every dues dollar you pay goes right back to your union local where your executive uses those funds to benefit member activities or projects within your local.

The union also sets aside additional resources that you and your local can access.

For example, at our 2010 biennial convention, delegates adopted a strategic directions initiative that is aimed at building stronger locals.

To support that initiative, HEU is making funds available to locals, on a cost-shared basis, for projects that promote member engagement.

These projects are all about building stronger member involvement internally, and encouraging outreach

activities in the broader community.

Another area where we target resources for member development is our ongoing education program. Members apply through their locals for HEU courses to learn the skills needed to become an effective shop steward, occupational health and safety representative or a stronger union activist.

More recently, we have extended our program to include some on-site steward training.

Priorities in this area include newly organized locals, larger locals with multiple sites and/or those locals that are dealing with transfer of services and consolidation.

We also provide table officers training for the newly elected chair, secretary-treasurer and assistant secretary-treasurer.

And did you know that as an HEU member, you can access up to \$350 in registration costs to attend labour study courses for your own personal development? Courses may be offered by such institutions as a community college, CUPE, the B.C. Federation of Labour or the Canadian Labour Congress.

As your financial secretary, I encourage you to use all these resources to build your own activism and strengthen your HEU local union.

DONISA BERNARDO
HEU FINANCIAL SECRETARY



Part of every dues dollar you pay goes right back to your union local where your executive uses those funds to benefit member activities or projects within your local.



KEN ROBINSON

PRESIDENT'S DESK

There's strength in numbers

As the *Guardian* goes to press, we may – or may not – be facing a provincial election in the fall. If we are, I hope HEU members in every riding will do whatever they can to raise the issues that are important to them both as

health care and social services workers, and as citizens who care about their communities.

More and more, as I visit different locals across the province, I see how much effort our members put into their own jobs and their communities. Whether it's raising money for Multiple Sclerosis, fighting contracting out, or mobilizing public support for better seniors' care and a living wage – so many HEU members go the extra mile.

It's that kind of commitment, combined with action, that can make a huge difference in the next provincial election. Because as we all know, our former premier may be gone, but all the damaging policies and plans to keep on cutting B.C.'s vital health and social services haven't changed a bit.

We have the collective ability to help elect candidates who will stand up for the things we believe in.

HEU members have a lot of influence. In some ridings, our members number in the thousands. That means we have the collective ability to help elect candidates who will stand up for the things we believe in. The services we count on. The people who are most vulnerable.

A provincial election may not be certain, but one thing we know for sure is we'll be heading to the ballot box in November to elect city councils, school boards and parks boards.

Health care and community social services are provincial responsibilities. But we can't ignore the influence of civic government. For example, HEU members are increasingly taking their concerns about declining seniors' care to their local councils and asking for their support. It's the same with our living wage campaign.

The fact is, when provincial policies hurt people, the place they feel it is where they live. City governments end up picking up the pieces in one way or another.

And the privatization of public services doesn't just happen provincially. Take water and recreation services, for example. Or consider the problems in our school system. Again, this may be a provincial responsibility, but the fight for quality, accessible education is on the ground. We need progressive voices on our school boards to champion the rights of children.

Even an issue like improving decent treatment of temporary foreign workers – which is under federal jurisdiction – requires finding advocates in local city councils.

Our union is more than 43,000 strong. That's a lot of collective power if we use it. I urge you to get politically active and do whatever you can to help elect candidates locally, or provincially, who care as much as you do about what matters most to our patients, residents and clients, our families, our neighbours and our communities.

<<newsbites>>

egates at the union's annual conference called on the government to step in.

Dave Prentiss, general secretary of UNISON, which represents thousands of Southern Cross health care workers, said, "This is another nail in the coffin for privatization.

"Whilst big city backers and company bosses have made off with tens of millions of pounds, vulnerable elderly people and care staff are paying the price."

UNISON, in a June 2011 report into the country's care industry, warned that

Southern Cross was not the only care provider on the brink of collapse.

"The government must step in to regulate the privatized care market. There are many other Southern Cross-style companies out there, and this cannot be allowed to happen again," said Prentiss.

More women getting injured at work

More women are getting injured at work than ever before according to WorkSafeBC's 2010 Statistics book which features a sec-

tion on female workers this year.

Women accounted for 36 per cent of B.C.'s injured workers in 2010.

Musculoskeletal injuries (sprains) are the most common injury for women and men across sectors with the most reported in health care, a female-dominated field.

Back and other strains make up the vast majority of reported on-the-job injuries.

Women constitute more than 60 per cent of accepted WCB claims for needle-stick injuries and infectious diseases.

Young male workers (15-24 years old) had the highest injury rate of all age and gender groups, stressing the need for education on occupational health and safety issues with young workers.

The report recognizes the differences in the work that men and women do, and notes that women do more shift work and part-time work, primarily in health care and social assistance.

WorkSafeBC Statistics 2010 is available online at <www.worksafebc.com>.

The report is published annually.

Union holds series of occupational conferences

As the union gears up for 2012 facilities bargaining, HEU members will take part in a series of occupational conferences this fall. These pre-bargaining conferences – for members working in support, trades and maintenance, patient care technical, clerical, and patient care – are an opportunity for members in each job family to network and discuss bargaining priorities specific to their occupational grouping.

Email ideas to your occupational subcommittee on our website under For Members, P.E. subcommittees.

EMAIL

TEXTS

INTERNET

FACEBOOK

BLOGS

TWITTER

So many things to say. So many places to say them. But do you know who's watching?

WHO'S READING YOUR MAIL?

Communication via email, text messages, the internet

and social media is everywhere. And more than ever before, our statements and images are accessible to audiences that are much wider than many of us realize.

The sheer volume of electronic communication alone can lull us into a false sense of security and privacy – making one feel bold and virtually anonymous when we speak out into the din.

Indeed, it's not uncommon for people who use the internet to believe their communications – whether on Facebook, Twitter or personal blogs – are private conversations.

After all, don't we all have a right to free speech and privacy?

The heated battle to protect workers' right to privacy is moving beyond the now familiar issue of video surveillance, into the relatively new frontier of employer surveillance of digital communication and cyberspace and relying on it to justify disciplinary action.

The workers' dilemma

These days, it's typical for employers to supply workers with such tools as cell phones, computers and laptops, smartphones, and internet access – tools that workers may use to stay connected in their personal lives.

Most arbitrators have found that employers, generally, should tolerate a reasonable amount of personal use even when there is no clear policy or collective agreement language allowing it.

Given that tolerance, workers have come to expect their communications are, and will remain, private. And they believe in their privacy even more strongly when they are using their own tools and time to express themselves about their work and workplaces through social media.

But it should come as no surprise that the boundary line between a workers' reasonable expectation of privacy when using employer equipment, or engaging in social media on their time and equipment, can be a blur.

What we know for sure is that what is "private" and beyond the employer's reach, and what is not, are matters of heated debate between employers and workers and the unions that represent them.

The right to privacy

When employees use electronic media at work, or when they allow their knowledge and opinions of their workplaces and bosses to creep into communications made on their own time and equipment, they may not expect the employer or a co-worker to see those images or hear what they say.

But what happens when employers are watching and listening? And what if they take offense? Workers want to know when and how an employer can justifiably access their private communications and take disciplinary action.

Although the right to privacy is fundamental, the employment relationship can limit that right in important ways.

When on work time, or when using the employer's equipment (laptops, computers, BlackBerries and cell phones, etc.), what many would consider private conversations, activities or images can quickly shift into a more public realm.

And when it does, a worker may end up facing discipline.

If this occurs, a union member's first step should be getting in touch with his or her local shop steward.

A union steward will check to see if the employer has a policy on the use of its equipment and the internet, or whether there was some other valid purpose such as a formal complaint.

Employer policies are generally developed to prevent workers from using employer systems to conduct businesses or other organized activities, or from downloading, viewing or disseminating inappropriate content such as pornography and other offensive material.

If there is no policy, there is a strong presumption in favour of the worker's reasonable expectation of privacy, and employer monitoring may be found to be unreasonable – even where the content or use might be inappropriate.

If there is a policy, the union steward will look at whether the policy has been clearly communicated to employees, along with what can happen if the policy is violated. Has the employer consistently enforced the policy? Does the policy say that the employer may randomly monitor internet use and electronic communications?

The employer can't go on fishing expeditions – even if the technology will allow it to find a whole lot of information, including home emails viewed on employer equipment, passwords or downloads. The employer has to have a valid purpose in order to justifiably infringe on a worker's privacy rights. Whether those purposes are reasonable, or the rights have been exercised fairly, always seem to be the focus of debate. The clearer an employer policy, the more reasonable it may be for privacy rights to give way to the employer's rights.

Some other factors to look at are whether the communications were undertaken on company time or off-duty hours, and whether the communications are harmful or offensive.

Workers also need to think about the content of their personal opinions – whether it is communicated using employer or personal equipment. For example, when it comes to personal blogs and Facebook, everyone needs to remember that if you put it out there, it is possible that the employer is reading or listening, and could try to discipline you for comments about co-workers, management or the employer. To do so, it has to show that the comments have irreparably undermined the employment relationship or constituted some other unlawful conduct (like defamation).

So it's important to remember that while an employer has the right to discipline you for what you might say or do using electronic equipment, that right is not absolute. But neither is a worker's right to privacy.

Jacquie deAguayo
HEU Director of Legal Services

If there is no policy, there is a strong presumption in favour of the worker's reasonable expectation of privacy

SOCIAL MEDIA > tools for engagement and activism



share this!

In 2008, when the Vancouver Island Health Authority moved to close Cowichan Lodge, Duncan's beloved seniors' care facility, HEU members, residents, their families, and the community fought back using a Facebook group.

By Margi Blamey

Along with traditional campaign tactics like petition-gathering and rallies, Lodge supporters held VIHA to account for its arbitrary and unexpected decision by networking and mobilizing in the virtual world.

And when Wisconsin's Republican governor attacked the collective bargaining rights of public sector employees last February 2011, the story unfolded in real time for all to see via social media, most notably Twitter, Flickr and YouTube.

Mainstream media sources were exposed as having selectively reported on these events, or having downplayed or ignored them all together. Journalists and political pundits, accustomed to leading public opinion, had to run to catch up with a populace that was using social media to stay informed.

And when trade unionists from B.C. and the U.S. Pacific Northwest gathered at the Peace Arch on April 2 for the "We Are All Wisconsin" solidarity rally, HEU members elsewhere in the province could see photos of the event sent by cell phones and posted on the union's website within minutes.

From Egypt's Tahrir Square to Toronto's G20 summit to the Greek general strikes, labour and community activists are using social media tools to help organize, inform public opinion and create an alternative to mainstream media.

We can communicate with anyone, anywhere, any time with a few quick taps on our laptops or smartphones. We can call and text individuals or groups. We can tweet our news, blog our views, and post photos and video. We can inform, learn, share, campaign and organize.

Exploring that new frontier

In 1998, HEU was one of the first unions in the country to launch a comprehensive website. The fourth redesign of the site, unveiled this past March, is loaded with goodies like an enhanced search function, easier access to collective agreements, an improved events calendar and the ability to host image galleries, video, petitions and email campaigns.

But while www.heu.org has a consistent and loyal following, the reality is that social media-savvy members are more likely to spend their time on Facebook or Twitter. That's why www.heu.org has integrated social media sharing tools that

make it easy for members to share HEU content with their friends or followers.

Laura Lightman, a unit clerk at Surrey Memorial Hospital, became active in her local a few years ago. Now she's on HEU's young workers' subcommittee and an avid Facebooker. She frequently posts on the "HEU Young Workers and Friends" Facebook page.

Lightman says Facebook makes it easy to connect, and to give and get information. "It's a really good way for young workers to ask questions and share experiences with other young workers.

"And it's great networking through other unions because, at some point, we're all going to need each other."

Lightman encourages other workers – young and not-so-young – to join the young workers' Facebook page.

Lucie Jackson has been a care aide at Victoria's Glenwarren Lodge for the last 23 years. She learned about Twitter from her daughter and is now a frequent "retweeter" of news from HEU and other sources.

"It did take me a while to get the hang of it," says Jackson. "At first I didn't know who to follow, and I still have problems replying to tweets, but I'm getting better at it. I follow different unions, building my contacts so I may learn and share info, especially special interest stories such as our efforts around issues with seniors and cutbacks in care."

Activism or slacktivism

Social media offers many ways to express yourself, show you care, and support your favourite causes – all without leaving the safety and comfort of your couch.

And that has led some skeptics to wonder whether social media's impact on political and community organizing is little more than hype that encourages slacktivism – activism that begins and ends with a few keystrokes to sign an online petition or with the click of a mouse to forward information to their contact lists.

After all, it's easier to "like" something on Facebook than to actually show up on a union picket line or attend a public meeting.

However, closer examination suggests that these simple acts are often the first step to becoming a fully engaged activist.

Take the highly successful Stop the Meter campaign launched by OpenMedia.ca to fight plans by internet providers to implement usage-based billing for internet access. Earlier this year, almost half a million people signed their online petition.

What's even more impressive is that 100,000 Canadians went one step further and actually filed written submissions with the federal regulator.

In an opinion piece published by *Postmedia News*, OpenMedia.ca's Steve Anderson writes that StopTheMeter.ca powered "an unprecedented level of citizen engagement on any issue." And he points out that not only were people vocal, they are "extremely well-informed". Much of that information was distributed through Open Media's Facebook page at < www.facebook.com/openmedia >.

Stop The Meter is a textbook example of an effective online campaign. Not only do the numbers testify to the high levels of public engagement, there are measurable outcomes including drawing all major federal political parties into the debate and sending the CRTC back to the drawing board despite the considerable influence of the country's profit-motivated telecommunications giants.

a different view

Online journalism is thriving and progressive sites are breaking and covering news in different ways, challenging traditional, mainstream media outlets. Share posts and join the conversations at these dynamic websites.

In B.C., **the Tyee** – www.thetyee.ca – is "your independent daily online magazine" known for its in-depth, investigative journalism. Since its appearance in November 2003, its readership has grown steadily, testifying to the need for progressive perspectives and voices to counter the province's corporate media empires.

Ten-year-old **Rabble** – www.rabble.ca – presents "news for the rest of us" and is an unapologetically socially progressive news service that boasts Naomi Klein, Linda McQuaig and Amy Goodman among its columnists and garners more than 100,000 visitors a month.



“We can communicate with anyone, anywhere, any time with a few quick taps on our laptops or smartphones. We can inform, learn, share, campaign and organize.”

Online petitions and other actions are not new. HEU has used them to send messages to government and to employers on a variety of issues important to members. One of the most action-oriented websites is LabourStart, “where trade unionists start their day on the net” < www.labourstart.org >.

In 2005, HEU used LabourStart’s ActNOW function to rally worldwide support for Sodexo housekeeping and food services members when they went on strike for a first collective agreement.

LabourStart put out an international call for support for these HEU members that generated more than 2,250 individual electronic letters to Sodexo’s Paris-based CEO from union members in Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Spain, Germany, France, Britain, the United States and other countries. Now that’s global solidarity!

HEU members and their locals have found that online activities combined with “live” events bring together the best of the new and old.

When Retirement Concepts flipped a contract for the third time at Nanaimo Seniors’ Village in 2007, causing 168 workers to lose their jobs, members took to Facebook to tell their story. But they also organized a rally that drew a couple of hundred supporters, gained the support of Nanaimo City Council and wrote letters to the editor of local newspapers.

Activists at Sunridge Place and more recently, The Hamlets at Penticton, also used Facebook to promote their campaigns against contract-flipping.

Tapping the potential of social media

HEU communications director Mike Old says the growing use of social media tools by HEU members provides the union with new opportunities to engage members on issues.

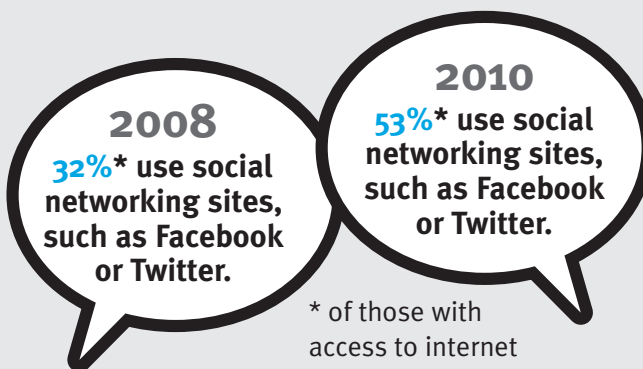
HEU and other unions have used their websites, email lists, Facebook, Twitter and other online tools to distribute union bulletins that have traditionally been distributed by mail to be posted on union boards at work sites.

“But the untapped potential of social media to engage members in a two-way conversation is huge,” says Old who points out that more than half of HEU members with internet access are using Facebook or some other social media site.

“In many ways, unions are racing to catch up with their members on the social media front,” adds Old.

“At the same time, we need to acknowledge our own digital divide. Many HEU members are not using social media so we need to treat these tools as a supplement to – not a substitute for – good old-fashioned organizing.”

> your social media tool kit



MORE HEU MEMBERS ARE USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Your virtual union The latest version of HEU’s award-winning website at www.heu.org includes a handy “share this” badge on every page. Use it to post HEU news to your Facebook profile or Twitter timeline in just a few seconds.

While you’re there, be sure to sign up for HEU’s email list.



Keep it short. Just tweet it. **Twitter** (www.twitter.com) has become one of the most popular social networking tools ever. It’s a virtual timeline of brief messages or comments which can include links to web content and photos. Keep your messages short and sweet

because with a maximum of 140 characters to “tweet” your message, you really have no choice.

One popular use is to tweet from an event, like a union convention, a rally or a public meeting. That way other users can follow comments or critiques from the heart of the action in real time. You can also use hashtags (basically putting a “#” in front of a descriptive word in your tweet) so that other users can easily find tweets from multiple users on a single topic.

Try entering #bcpoli or #privatization in the twitter search window, and you’ll get the idea.

HEU’s twitter account (@hospempunio) has more than 900 followers at press time. You can find a link to the union’s timeline at the bottom of any page at www.heu.org. Become one of our “tweeps.”



Do you “like” me **Facebook** is far and away the most popular social media tool used by HEU members. Use it to share news and views, post photos and videos from union events, and keep in touch with campaigns that you support.

Many HEU activists are using Facebook to create sites to support local campaigns, promote union committees, or to communicate with other members in their locals.

Type in HEU or Hospital Employees’ Union in the Facebook search bar and you’ll be surprised at the number of HEU-related sites. And by the way, we’re working on an HEU Facebook page – watch for news of it at < www.heu.org >.



Picture this! **Flickr** (www.flickr.com) is the fastest growing tool for storing and sharing photos on the internet. There is an excellent group on Flickr at www.flickr.com/groups/union/ where you can browse images of union members in action from around the world. You might want to upload some photos of your own!



Many unions are using **YouTube** (www.youtube.com) to rebroadcast rallies and other events or to get their message out to new audiences without the expense of TV advertising. Type in “What have unions ever done for us” in the YouTube search window to see a funny and eye-

opening video that’s been watched more than 280,000 times.

HEU now hosts most of its video at www.heu.org but we do have a YouTube channel at **MyHEUTube**.



Keeping it accessible HEU is a supporter of **OpenMedia.ca** – the non-profit organization that’s leading the fight to keep the internet affordable and accessible for Canadians. In addition

to the “Stop the Meter” campaign against usage-based billing of your internet, OpenMedia.ca is also campaigning against federal laws that would compromise internet privacy.

Tying it all together The B.C. Federation of Labour launched its **New Media Bootcamp for Union Activists** in July, and more than 2,500 people have registered to take the free online course. If you’re confused about social media, or not quite sure how to use these tools as a union activist, register at < www.newmediabootcamp.ca >. You can start the course anytime and go at your own speed.

Victory and defeat for farm workers

California's United Farm Workers finally got a bill passed by their state legislature which provides for majority sign-up union recognition.

United Farm Workers vice-president Armando Elenes says the bill (a third effort) will tamp down the intimidation and threats that have frustrated organizing efforts.

In May, Canada's highest court rubberstamped the Ontario law denying collective bargaining to 80,000 farm workers. About one in four are guest workers. The United Nations says the law violates basic labour standards.

The case started when 200 workers, many of them Sudanese and Cambodian immigrants, organized a union at an industrial mushroom farm in Leamington, Ontario. They worked in dangerous conditions, on slippery ladders on stacked mushroom beds in the dark.

Overseers called them by numbers instead of names and forbade them to speak any language but English. They voted in 2003 to join UFCW.

The workers took their case to the Supreme Court, but not before the employer fired four union activists and replaced them with guest workers.

(Labour Notes/CALM)



Is an \$18,000 pension gold-plated?

Try as they might, those attacking public sector unions can't seem to figure out why exactly they are so bad for Canada.

For whatever reason – it doesn't seem to matter much – many from Canada's corporate classes insist public sector unions are a blight, and spend much time and energy mounting their hyperbolic attacks.

The threadbare nature of these arguments is best exemplified in opposition to the labour movement's efforts to expand the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) as the best way to help Canadians save more for their retirements.

By gradually increasing CPP contributions made by both employees and employers, we could greatly improve retirement security of all Canadians, and help the millions who cannot afford a private retirement savings plan.

Of course, under this approach, Canada's banks and finance industry will lose out on opportunities to charge their exorbitant investment management fees.

Instead of offering solutions for low-income Canadians, it is much easier to portray CPP contributions as a payroll tax. CPP contributions help fund a deferred salary for Canadian workers and supply no revenue to the federal government. It is not a tax.

When it comes to debating pensions, however, disingenuous arguments are commonplace – such as corporate Canada's insistence on pointing to public sector pensions as prime examples of union-led extravagance.

The typical public sector pension – for someone who has worked for 30 years

– is \$18,000 per year. Most Canadians don't think this is excessive.

An Environics poll in August 2010 shows that 80 per cent of Canadians thought public sector pensions were at an appropriate level or too low.

The large majority of public sector workers are in health care, schools, social services, and local government. They are mostly women and are far from highly paid. The average annual pay of CUPE members is less than \$40,000. To portray these workers as privileged stretches even the most inventive imaginations.

No position, however, is too outlandish for those looking to cast public sector workers as a plague on the taxpayer. Instead of tackling the economic policies that caused the global recession, they take up this diversionary strategy of attacking public sector workers to protect economic policies that are great for profits, but bad for working Canadians.

While crying out against the so-called extravagances of public sector worker salaries, benefits and pensions, they continue to promote extending even more irresponsible and reckless corporate tax cuts to Canada's banks and the oil industry without any proof these cuts provide the new jobs or investments they're supposed to generate.

While claiming to be looking out for the best interests of taxpayers, those who attack public sector workers are



also taking unjustified aim at our communities. Canadians are being asked to shoulder the deficits and also sacrifice the high-quality public services we have developed over generations.

It is undeniable that Canada is facing fiscal challenges after weathering the global economic meltdown. Stimulus spending that kept the economy afloat during a crisis created by speculation and fraud has left a public debt.

Canadian governments have a responsibility to ensure all Canadians contribute their fair share to the ongoing recovery. Public sector workers are prepared to do their part, but the responsibility should not fall on their shoulders alone.

High-quality public services are crucial to our economic recovery and help make Canada a great place to live. They are reliable, accountable and are there for all people when they need them most. Public sector workers are dedicated to these principles, and are focused on making our communities stronger for all Canadians.

PAUL MOIST • CUPE PRESIDENT,
(First published in the *Financial Post*
on March 11, 2011)

>>notebook>>



At a time when many are struggling to make ends meet, Hahn's pension looks excessive, to say the least.

BC Ferries pension payoff grates HEU members

The revelation that BC Ferries CEO David Hahn will collect a fat \$315,000 annual pension when he retires in 2013 (after just 10 years on the job) was met with widespread anger this summer. At a time when many are struggling to make ends meet, much less plan for a dignified retirement, Hahn's pension looks excessive, to say the least. Especially considering his \$1.2 million annual compensation package.

But for HEU members, there are added reasons for outrage over Hahn's pension bonanza. First, there is the premier's insistence that her government can do nothing about the decision made by the BC Ferries board it appointed, because it's a "legally binding contract."

As long-time HEU activist Nancy Czigan points out on the *Guardian's* letters page, that's a double standard. The Campbell/Clark government had absolutely no problem tearing up their contracts with HEU members in 2002 with the passage of *Bill 29*.

Second, there was the devastating impact of *Bill 29* on health care workers' access to pension benefits. More than 7,000 health care workers didn't just lose their jobs to privatization. Most saw reductions to the modest pensions they had worked a lifetime to secure. Some missed out

on full pensions within weeks of their retirement date. And for those who are now employed by private contractors, there are no pension plans and few opportunities (due to low wages) to save for retirement.

Third, there are the outlandish private sector comparisons the BC Ferries' board made to justify Hahn's pension, pay and other benefits.

Hahn's pension was super-sized because BC Ferries looked to CEO compensation at private corporations like McDonalds, Nike and Coca-Cola rather than just to public sector agencies.

In stark contrast, the BC Liberals used private sector comparisons as their rationale for privatizing health care jobs and for slashing wages during their first term in office. And today, the business lobby is making those same comparisons to back their argument that public sector pensions are too rich.

Decent pensions are a hedge against poverty that working people have negotiated as part of their own compensation packages. And we need to defend our pensions, educate younger workers about their importance, and fight to extend pension benefits to other workers.

MIKE OLD • HEU COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

Postal dispute **unmasks** Harper's anti-labour agenda

Having finally secured his long sought-after majority government, Prime Minister Stephen Harper wasted no time in using the strike/lockout at Canada Post to signal his contempt for Canada's unionized labour force.

Following a marathon round-the-clock filibuster at the end of June, led by the newly elected opposition New Democrats, the Conservative majority passed back-to-work legislation that ended the month-long labour dispute and imposed a wage increase on members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) that was inferior to Canada Post's final offer.

A recent article by Aalya Ahmad

and Geoff Bickerton – *CUPW: A cautionary tale of union busting, with a little help from the media* – documents a steady “flow of disinformation” that eclipsed many of the issues and undermined the plight of the striking workers.

From the employer's erroneous announcement that the union's demands would cost Canada Post \$1.4 billion, to the fictitious 17 per cent drop in mail volumes that supposedly occurred between 2006 and 2010, to the under-reported fact that Canada Post imposed a national full-scale lockout when only 23 people were on a rotating strike – the article paints a disturbing picture of unapologetic anti-worker bias.

Nonetheless, say the authors,

CUPW members could not be bullied into selling out the next generation of postal workers.

“When the union launched a series of rotating strikes in order to draw public attention to its bargaining issues, management responded by doing everything it could to provoke a lengthy, full-scale strike, including cutting drug coverage, cancelling sick leave and vacation leaves, laying off temporary workers, cutting part-time hours and harassing members on the work floor. Still, the union remained resolutely committed to fighting for both current and future workers.”

Check out the full analysis at the online news service <rabble.ca>.



Living wage **activism**

In June, Compass workers from Evergreen Baptist (above) presented a huge poster to their employer during a break from the bargaining table at the union's Provincial Office.

Members from the local had each filled out a postcard describing the hardships they experience from earning low wages.

On other fronts, HEU's Living Wage Campaign activists were busy this spring and summer taking part in rallies and events throughout the province – distributing leaflets, information sheets, stickers, buttons and T-shirts – all aimed at educating community groups and allies about the importance of fair, family-supporting wages for all workers.

Community **social services** workers preparing for strike action

At press time, unionized workers in B.C.'s community social services sector were on the verge of issuing 72-hour strike notice. Unless a last-minute deal emerges between the Community Social Services Employers' Association and the multi-union Community Social Services Bargaining Association (CSSBA), 15,000 workers across the province will be taking job action before the summer is out.

Following more than 18 months of contract talks that broke down in late March, members gave their bargaining committee a strong strike mandate in May. They voted 85 per cent in Community Living Services and 77 per cent in General Services to support job action.

With a strike mandate in hand, the bargaining association proceeded to work over several weeks, and through many delays, to establish the essential services levels required to make sure client health and safety is well-protected during strike action. More recently, union solidarity schools brought activists together from all parts of B.C. to discuss action strategies, establish communication networks and learn how to set up regional strike headquarters.

The nine-union bargaining association has made job security measures a top priority at a time when program cuts and group home closures are resulting in increased layoffs and the loss of critical services throughout the sector.

“Our members deserve nothing less than a fair collective agreement that will improve their working conditions and bring greater stability to the services that so many depend on,” says HEU assistant secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson.

“And that means employers must deal with key employment security issues that are as critical for members facing job loss and displacement as they are for those who rely on community-based services for their support and well-being.”

Community social services workers provide a wide range of assistance to people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds, including child care for families, employment and housing support for people with developmental disabilities, specialized services for immigrant and First Nations families, support for women dealing with violence, youth programs and much more.

>>voices>>



Now is the time to start building the next generation of health care in our country.

Don't privatize public health services, expand them

Since becoming the health critic for the federal New Democratic Party in May, I have frequently heard from Canadians that their first priority for the federal government is to take the lead and renew our public health care system. What I hear from Canadians is very clear: don't privatize health care, but continue to expand it in innovative ways.

It is often portrayed that medicare, or our public health care system, is not sustainable. This is actually not true. Studies show that provinces with the highest proportion of privatized services are the ones where the wait times are highest, since they poach human resources from our public system.

Privatization leads to reduced quality of care because profit demands lower wages, fewer staff and selective coverage based on procedure costs. Improving our health care system begins by enforcing the *Canada Health Act* and renewing the *Health Accord* in 2014, something the Conservative government is showing no leadership on.

Now is the time to start building the next generation of health

care in our country, to negotiate the second phase of Tommy Douglas' vision for medicare. But in order to protect medicare, we need to expand it. We need to adjust to the 21st century reality of offering more services in the community and offering Canadians many options, from home care to improved community care and residential care.

While many of the tools for improving service delivery are under the jurisdiction of provincial and territorial governments, the federal government must show leadership on this issue.

I want to put the Conservative government on notice, that on the issue of health care, they will see an enormous amount of vigour and vigilance from the NDP to hold the government to account. We want to ensure that every Canadian, no matter where he or she lives, can access high-quality and timely health care services.

LIBBY DAVIES • MP FOR VANCOUVER EAST AND FEDERAL NDP HEALTH CRITIC

If you're an LPN, make your voice heard

The regulation governing licensed practical nurses in B.C. is about to change, and with it, LPNs may be given the authority to perform certain activities independently.

What's most important in the lead up to these changes, is that LPNs know the options that are being considered, and that they have a clear say in defining and advancing the future of their own profession.

That's why, on June 21, HEU brought together 60 LPNs from all parts of the province who work in acute care, long-term care, and home and community care.

The day-long conference was part of a broad consultation HEU is undertaking with

its LPN members about what's at stake for their professional practice as a result of regulatory change.

Throughout the day, participants delved deeply into the various alternatives and opportunities a new regulatory model could offer LPNs in B.C., and some of the specific changes they would like to see.

Representatives of the

College of Licensed Practical Nurses of B.C., and the province's Ministry of Health were also part of the proceedings – providing important

background information on LPNs' evolving profession, and the process involved with moving to a new model that could better support teamwork and collaborative practice.

The conference also welcomed Teresa Bateman from the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta. She provided some important insights into how regula-



tory changes have enhanced LPNs' roles and utilization in Alberta's health care system.

As HEU prepares its recommendations on the issues currently under consideration by government, LPNs are asked to make their views known to the union through an online survey at <www.heu.org/join-theconversation>.

Pride matters

Summer is always a busy outreach time for HEU's Pink Triangle Standing Committee (PTSC). Earlier this year, they helped produce a pink "Anti-bullying T-shirt" with the union's equal opportunities committee, and will be collaborating later in the year with the HEU clerical subcommittee as they launch an anti-

bullying campaign.

In July, HEU representatives attended the Vancouver 2011 Outgames and Human Rights Conference, which included diversity workshops, and helped kickstart the week-long event at the opening ceremonies on July 25 at City Hall. There was a "running of the flags" – similar to the Olympic torch – in Vancouver and Whistler, ending with the Olympic cauldron at Jack Poole Plaza on the waterfront being lit for the duration of the Outgames.

The PTSC also took part in several pride parades across the province.

HEU and the PTSC are sponsoring the documentary *Gen Silent* at this year's Vancouver Queer Film Festival. Directed by

PARTNERSHIPS

CAROL WOOD

A seventeen-year partnership between **CODEVELOPMENT CANADA** and HEU has strengthened global justice work within the union.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

International solidarity work and long-term change needs long-term commitment. And that level of commitment is central to the seventeen-year partnership between CoDevelopment Canada and the Hospital Employees' Union.

CoDevelopment Canada is a B.C.-based organization that works for social change and global education in the Americas. Founded in 1985 by a group of activists who wanted to go beyond financial aid, CoDev builds partnerships between like-minded organizations in Canada and Latin America to foster learning, social change, and community empowerment.

These partnerships educate Canadians about Latin America and assist them to offer direct support to the region. Such connections build solidarity, mutual understanding and help to bring about a fairer global order.

CoDev builds partnerships between organizations in Canada and Latin America to foster learning, social change, and community empowerment.

The union's dedication to the workers of Central America began in 1994 when it forged a partnership between CoDev and the Maria Elena Cuadra Movement for Working and Unemployed Women in Nicaragua, where women in textile piecework factories were provided with education on their basic labour rights.

HEU then sponsored a communications project with health union partners in Cuba, provided support for regional factory workers' organizations in Central America, and undertook political solidarity efforts with trade unionists in Colombia.

"The international work done by CoDev fits in perfectly with HEU's philosophy and work here in Canada – it's all about fair wages, working conditions, and health care as a human right," explains HEU president Ken Robinson.

"We know we can count on CoDev to be there with background information and analysis on the issues," he continues, "and that education is very valuable to us as a union."

Not only is HEU one of CoDev's oldest Canadian partners, but union representatives have also been on many educational trips with CoDev. The latest delegations have visited CoDev's human rights training partners in Colombia.

"A majority Conservative government in Canada

means more trade agreements around the world – but what does the future hold for Colombia under a free trade agreement with Canada?" muses Robinson. "It's important to show solidarity with organizations there, who are struggling for their human rights."

Because HEU is the B.C. health care services division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, much of the union's international solidarity work is done in conjunction with the CUPE Global Justice Fund of the national union.

HEU Provincial Executive member Carol Bunch is currently the union's representative on the national Global Justice Committee. She acts as a liaison between CUPE National and the union, and in her role helps to further strengthen global justice work within HEU.

Robinson says there are many ways to support international solidarity, pointing to avenues like support for fair trade.



Members of the Honduran Women's Collective (CODEMUH) protest violence against women on March 8, during an International Women's Day celebration in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. "Because we provide life, we condemn violence toward women."

"We have recently started drinking only *café ético* in the Provincial Office," he says, "and it's a great reminder of the links that exist for us through fair trade. On top of that, it's delicious!"

The long-term partnership with CoDev provides HEU with a solid resource on Latin America and international concerns, something that has also served the union well when dealing with another important topic: migrant and

temporary foreign workers.

"This is something that is bubbling up here in B.C., and we have CoDev to help us understand the underlying causes and context for this important labour issue."



JOSHUA BERSON PHOTO

Stu Maddux, the film – which will be screened at the Empire Granville theatre on August 20 at 4:00 p.m. – chronicles the lives of LGBT seniors and their relationship to the health care system.

And once again, the committee will participate in Vancouver's AIDS Walk for LIFE on September 18.

Film illuminates Kamloops care

HEU's screening of the documentary film on seniors' care in B.C., *The Remaining Light*, drew more than 50 people to a downtown hotel in Kamloops in June.

The event, co-sponsored by

Scores of HEU members took part in Pride parades across the province.

the Kamloops Health Coalition and HEU, also featured a guest panel and an audience feedback and question period during which people shared their experiences and got

ready to act on opportunities to improve services and programs for seniors.

Following the film, guest panellist and HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy urged people to support the province's Ombudsperson Kim Carter's recommendations that have already been made to government, and her follow up report and recommendations due out in the fall.

HEU member Nicole Bone, a care aide at The Hamlets at Westsyde in Kamloops, spoke about the realities of caring and supporting those who live in residential care.

"The cost of heavy workloads is not enough time to be with residents when they need us," said Bone, "when they are anxious or afraid,

when they are worried and restless, when a few minutes and some kind words can make all the difference."

Dr. Margaret McGregor said research has found that a leading factor in making a resident in care feel good was a close relationship with at least one staff member.

McGregor also said recreational and social programs are critical to the ongoing health and well-being of seniors who often struggle with isolation and depression.

The audience wholeheartedly endorsed two motions presented by Rick Turner, co-chair of the Kamloops Health Coalition and the evening's moderator, urging better support and care for B.C. seniors.

Turner plans to take these

to Kamloops city council.

City councils support seniors' care motions

Five municipal councils – Vancouver, Nanaimo, Burnaby, White Rock and Maple Ridge – have endorsed two motions urging much-needed improvements to support and care for B.C. seniors.

One motion calls on the Union of B.C. Municipalities to urge the provincial government to significantly enhance B.C.'s system of community-based seniors' care in order to ensure timely access to the full range of public services that support seniors to age and die with dignity.

The second motion asks that Victoria provide funding for enhanced seniors' out-

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ON THE JOB

PATTY GIBSON

Long-time member **FRANK PAGNOTTA** is now working as a certified millwright at Vancouver General Hospital thanks to a pilot apprenticeship program bargained in 2006.

LEARNING NEW SKILLS

When most people think about bargaining, they generally think in terms of wages and benefits. But in every round of contract negotiations, there are important gains that come in the form of non-monetary items.

Such was the case in 2006, when the union bargained a pilot Trades Apprenticeship Program. Subsequently, the pilot was undertaken by Vancouver Coastal.

And long-time HEU member Frank Pagnotta was one of five people accepted into the program.

Today, he is a ticketed millwright, following a four-year apprenticeship at Vancouver General Hospital.

"It was a perfect opportunity for me to be able to increase my skills and wages and gain greater job security," he says. "So I went for it."

Prior to applying for the program, Pagnotta had worked at G.F. Strong in Vancouver – initially as a housekeeper, then a therapy assistant, and for the past 16 years, a maintenance worker III.

When the application forms came out in early 2007, he was ready for a change and a challenge.

"So what exactly is a millwright," I had to ask. "And what does a millwright do in a hospital?"

"Basically, we are machinery mechanics," he explained. "Millwright work is more common in heavy industry. In a hospital, we work with all matters related to machinery whether it's fan systems, water pumps, all wheeled equipment.

"Our work involves welding, or machining new parts, but it's not only about repair. It's also about

fabrication, designing adaptations for equipment to make them work better for the people who use them. There's a lot of problem-solving involved."

As for the apprenticeship program itself, Pagnotta says it worked well because it alternated between theory and practice. In each of the four years, he spent a seven-week stretch taking courses at the B.C. Institute of Technology. By going back and forth between school and working at the hospital, he was able to apply what he'd learned on the job.

"As an apprentice, you work alongside a journey person. At VGH, there are about seven certified millwrights and machinists in the hospital, machine shop, and they all pitched in to support my apprenticeship," he says.

"The idea was to work alongside each of them on different jobs and they would teach me the tricks of the trade."

Pagnotta has high praise for the team he apprenticed with. "It was a great working atmosphere. Everyone was very helpful and more than willing to share their knowledge with me," he says.

In terms of wages, the first year was paid at 60 per cent of salary. The next, at 70 per cent, and so on. His tuition was accessed through the Facilities Bargaining Association's Education Fund, which had also been negotiated in 2006 to assist members to upgrade their skills.

Given his own experience, Pagnotta hopes Vancouver Coastal will continue with the program and that the pilot will be picked up by other health authorities.

"It's good for everyone – the people who are able to



apprentice and upgrade their skills, and the employer. If you can train from within, you already know who your employees are and they already know the complexities of a hospital environment, which is different from a lot of other sites. And it helps deal with the loss of skilled and experienced trades people who are heading to retirement."

ARE YOU A MEMBER OF THE FACILITIES SUBSECTOR?

Want to know more about the work of your occupational subcommittee?

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**STAY CONNECTED.
STAY INFORMED.**

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reach and health prevention programs, and to support better coordination among existing services.

HEU second vice-president Carolyn Unsworth is a care aide at Queen's Park in New Westminster and spoke about seniors' care before Vancouver's mayor and council in June.

"We [who work in residential care] have chosen to spend our working life taking care of seniors and their needs. We dream of a system that would be much more respectful of those needs," said Unsworth.

"If we all work hard to pass motions such as this, we can raise the standards of care for our parents."

The resolutions arose from *The Remaining Light*, a film

documentary on seniors' care that was co-produced by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in B.C. and HEU.

Young workers rock!

HEU young workers have been active in recent months at two events geared to developing skills, building activism, and networking with their peers from other unions.

In June, eight members went to Camp Jubilee in Port Moody, the B.C. Federation of Labour's annual retreat for young workers.

This year was bigger with 92 attending, up from 65 in 2010. And there were more workshops including: introduction to labour, mobilizing young workers, feminism and the labour movement, climate change and climate justice, and political action.

Early in July, three HEU young workers joined their CUPE BC sisters and brothers at that union's youth conference in Naramata. Participants attended workshops on the role of a shop steward, occupational health and safety, being an ally for equality, leadership in your local, taking on privatization, and the impact of globalization.

Saluting our support workers

Be sure to take some time on Wednesday, August 24 to salute the members of your health care team who provide support services.

HEU Support Workers' Day is a chance to acknowledge the valuable work these members do every shift – from preparing nutritious

meals, to sterilizing surgical tools and equipment, to cleaning and sanitizing hospital rooms, and providing critical laundry services to help patient admissions and discharges flow safely.

Working in more than 30 job classifications, support workers make up about 13 per cent of the union's membership.

The union's trades and maintenance subcommittee is also using August 24 to draw attention to the crucial services they provide and to acknowledge their collaborative team work with support workers each day on the job.

FBA Education Fund gets \$1.25 million

The education and training fund managed by HEU and other unions in the Facilities

Bargaining Association (FBA) is receiving a further \$1.25 million over the next year to provide skills upgrading and career mobility opportunities for members in the facilities subsector.

The FBA Education Fund was first established as part of 2006 bargaining. With this latest boost, total funding received over the last six years has reached \$7.5 million and has supported about 1,500 applications for training assistance from every occupational group.

The application and selection process is overseen by union members and staff.

More information, including application forms, will be available in the fall.

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

AUGUST 24
HEU Support Workers' Day

AUGUST 30- SEPT 1
P.E. meeting

HEU OCCUPATIONAL CONFERENCES

SEPT 13-14
Support workers

SEPT 15-16
Trades and maintenance

SEPT 20-21
Patient care technical

SEPT 22-23
Clerical workers

SEPT 27-29
Patient care

SEPTEMBER 21
Deadline for facilities bargaining demands

OCTOBER 18-20
P.E. meeting

NOVEMBER 17
HEU Clerical Team Appreciation Day

NOVEMBER 20-22
FBA bargaining conference

DECEMBER 1-2
Community bargaining conference

DECEMBER 5-9
P.E. meeting

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Triangle: Remembering the Fire

Each day when HEU members report for duty, they expect to return home safely at the end of their shift. But even with B.C.'s occupational health and safety (OH&S) regulations securely in place, statistics show that nearly 200 British Columbians died from illnesses acquired, or injuries sustained, on the job last year.

So imagine what "working life" would have been like 100 years ago when many of these measures were not regulated by law. That's the subject of a new HBO documentary *Triangle: Remembering the Fire*, a must-see for every trade union activist. The film retraces a workplace tragedy that triggered mass OH&S reforms and introduced labour laws that benefit workers today.

For the 146 garment workers – mostly immigrant women and young girls – who died in Manhattan's Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, those reforms came too late.

On Saturday, March 25, 1911, one of the worst industrial catastrophes in U.S. history struck New York City. Nearly 500 employees reported to work that morning at the 10-storey Asch Building in the heart of Greenwich Village. But shortly before closing time, a spark in a scrap fabric bin ignited a rapidly spreading fire – fueled by countless paper patterns and rolls of fabric. Within mere moments, flames consumed the eighth and ninth floors, trapping unsuspecting workers.

After 18 minutes of horror, the factory was reduced to scorched, twisted metal in smoldering ashes. The fatalities: 129 women and young girls, 17 men, and another 71 injured.

Ironically, and tragically, many of those young women had taken to the streets two years earlier over unsafe conditions, only to be beaten by employer-hired thugs and arrested for disorderly conduct.

The city was shocked and outraged. Many of the casualties could have been avoided. There was no fire alarm or sprinkler system. Emergency doors were locked by the employer to prevent theft. Stairwells were only two-feet wide, making it challenging for workers to escape. The fire department's ladders only extended to the sixth floor. Overcrowding added to the chaos. It's reported that 300 women were working side-by-side on sewing machines on the ninth floor when flames broke out. Many perished in the fire or jumped to their deaths.

The factory's owners – Max Blanck and Isaac Harris – were



HBO documentary commemorates the 100th anniversary of a tragedy that revolutionized occupational health and safety.

charged with manslaughter, acquitted by an all-men jury, and were paid a reported \$60,000 insurance claim (about \$400 per victim) in excess of their business losses. One witness – Frances Perkins – who would later play a key role in labour reforms as President Roosevelt's Secretary of Labor, recalls testimony from the trial.

"[The door] had been locked by the employer himself because he feared that... some of the people in the shop might stroll out over the roof exit with a few shirtwaists rolled up under their jackets... I remember the judge in righteous indignation reproached him for his attitude toward his employees."

The tragedy galvanized the labour movement and put immense public pressure on politicians to be accountable for workers' safety. Over the next few years, 32 bills were passed in New York. Although this only changed workplace policies in the state, it paved the way for federal reforms in the 1930s.

Many OH&S standards were established (like building codes and fire drills), plus new regulations to improve working conditions, such as hours of work, minimum wages, employment insurance,

workers' compensation, pensions, and health benefits. There was also a huge push to abolish sweatshops and child labour.

Despite being acquitted of criminal liability, Blanck and Harris had to pay \$75 compensation to each victim's family after a 1913 civil suit. That same year, Blanck was fined \$20 for a safety violation after again locking the factory's emergency doors.

BRENDA WHITEHALL

In memoriams

HEU was saddened by the recent passing of long-time activist and former Provincial Executive member **Catherine (Cathy) Peters.**



PETERS

An LPN and unit clerk at B.C. Children's Hospital, Cathy served many roles on her local executive, including chair and shop steward, and was on the P.E. from 1992-1994 as the Lower Mainland regional vice-president.

After acquiring a disability in 1997, Cathy was elected to HEU's People with disabilities committee and the CUPE National disabilities working group. Her legacy includes advocating for GRTW programs, improving LTD benefits, helping to create HEU's Blue Poppy Button campaign and the PWD committee's *One union, many abilities* publication.

"When I wasn't able to go back to work, I felt like the whole world had crumbled around me," she recalled in a 2009 CUPE interview. "I felt that I was no use to the union anymore, but I certainly found out that wasn't true because I was able to accomplish so much more, especially working on the disabilities committee... It made me feel that I, as a disabled person, could do things, could make changes, could continue in the union

and be involved and active."

In 2009, she received the CUPE National Disability Rights Activism Award.

In June, HEU food service worker **Libby (Mary) Strong** lost her courageous battle with cancer at the age of 57. She had been an HEU member since 1993.

Colleagues at her Prince George local, Parkside Intermediate Care Home, remember Mary as lively, well-liked, good-hearted and caring. Mary loved her work and was supportive of the union. Her passions included her family, playing bingo, and going to the casino.



STRONG

Mary will be deeply missed by all her sisters and brothers. Tragically, on June 30, Vancouver General Hospital Aramark member **Pushpa Reddy**, 62, perished with her husband in a Surrey house fire. The actions of quick-thinking neighbours saved the life of their 27-year-old son.

An HEU member since 2003, Pushpa worked as a housekeeping aide until a workplace injury put her on WCB in April 2010.



REDDY

"She was a valuable sister in our union," says local chairperson Naty Basa.

"We'll keep her smile and memories in our hearts."

Retirements

In June, care aide **Josefa Mirzaei-Moghadam** retired after 35 years of service. She began her health care career as an LPN at Dogwood Lodge in 1976, and later transferred to Rosewood as a resident care aide in 1984, where she served as local secretary-treasurer.



MIRZAEI-MOGHADAM

"She is an amazing woman we all love," says Leah Paje, former local chair. "Josefa is always helping others. She is like a mother goose helping us all."

Josefa's parting words of advice to her union sisters and brothers is to "be active and support the local executive, attend meetings, and read your collective agreement."

HEU also sends thanks and well-wishes to two staff who recently retired.

Vancouver Island servicing representative **Bonnie Youngman** retired in March after 24 years of service. She also bargained for independent facilities during her career. And bargaining representative **Heather Compton** retired in May after six years at the Provincial Office. Prior to that, she worked at HEU's Kootenay office as a servicing representative.

We'll miss you both.

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



fnationspeople@heu.org

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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.



pinktriangle@heu.org

PINK TRIANGLE

For support: afraid of being identified, feeling isolated, want to know your rights? Call for information on same-sex benefits, fighting homophobia and discrimination.



pwd@heu.org

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.



women@heu.org

WOMEN'S

The HEU Women's Standing Committee works with women's groups, coalitions and other union committees to advance women's social and economic rights. Want to get involved?



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