



# Strike puts workers behind coats and coffee, not pickets

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Instead of picketing group homes, social services workers in Nanaimo opted to back their demand for better wages by giving away coats, blankets and coffee Thursday.

The job action happened at Diana Krall Plaza downtown, where Hospital Employees' Union and Health Sciences Association members gave away clothing, cookies, hot chocolate and coffee to people in need.

"We're taking a different approach," said Cheryl Colborne, Canadian Union of Public Employees community social services coordinator. "Rather than picketing and going to MLA offices, we're actually bringing it back out to the street and the public, because this is the work that the members do - is work with all those most in need."

The unusual job action was staged from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. with about 20 social services workers at a time rotating through the plaza throughout the day as people came by to pick up free warm winter clothing.

Colborne said the members would break from further job action until Jan. 7 and consider further measures if the government does not come back to the bargaining table. The union has been rotating strike action around the province since Oct. 16.

"It's just to say to the government, 'We're here. We're not going away'," Colborne said. "We're going to continue job action. We have to. This sector is in desperate and dire need of wage increases and improvements to the collective agreement."

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