

BULLETIN

Working together to overcome daily economic challenges

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IN JUNE, I JOINED WITH BC Government and Service Employees Union President, Darryl Walker, at a community meeting in Nanaimo to hear from members of the community about the impact of the economic situation on regular people.

The meeting was part of a nation-wide campaign organized by the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) in cooperation with its component unions across the country. The tour is called the *Cut Me A Slice Bread and Butter Tour ... A peoples response to the economic crisis*.

Ordinary Canadians of all political leanings have been attending similar meetings and presenting their opinions on how best to respond to the economic challenges facing the country. Forums, meetings and town hall gatherings are being held in all parts of Canada.

The purpose of this campaign is to offer everyday Canadians an opportunity to have a say on what we feel needs to be done to help us through these difficult economic times.

Politicians and policy makers need to hear from Canadians and find out how exactly we are being affected and what can be done to help us through this economic downturn.

In Nanaimo, Leslie Clarke of the Nanaimo Womens Centre talked about the failure of governments to support the most vulnerable in our communities.

-Most of us feel vulnerable in a declining economy. For those on income assistance• they cant survive without this fragile patchwork. People cannot survive on what they get on income assistance or minimum wage. These women are like warriors. They get up in the morning and start piecing it together for another day.

-All womens centres lost core funding in 2004. Since then weve struggled. What this means in these economic times, when we need it the most, is that we have the fewest resources."

A community activist told the meeting that more than 50 per cent of the population of Nanaimo lives in poverty. Fifty per cent of jobs in Nanaimo are part time, while 15 per cent of the population lives on wages under \$10,000 a year, not including people on income assistance or pensions.

Meeting participants repeatedly spoke about the need for an increase to the minimum wage. A representative from the Vancouver Island University Students Association wanted to ensure that governments understand that affordable and accessible education is necessary to stimulate our economy. As he said, healthier communities are built on education.

THE STORIES WE HEARD in Nanaimo, and the stories that have been told over and over again in communities across the country are compelling us to tears, but, they also must inspire us to action.

Our national union has organized this campaign with the assistance of all its provincially based unions because we feel this is a way we can assist individuals to have a voice at a national level.

When the tour concludes, NUPGE will compile all the material gathered from across the country into a report that will be presented to federal, provincial and local governments.

Please have your say in this peoples response to the economic crisis by visiting the campaign website at www.peoplesresponse.ca 

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