

BULLETIN

Rotating strikes support vulnerable families

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SINCE 2004, THE BC LIBERAL GOVERNMENT HAS SLASHED \$300 MILLION IN FUNDING FOR PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED, VULNERABLE WOMEN, AT-RISK YOUTH, AND CHILDREN AND INFANTS IN COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS ACROSS THE PROVINCE.

Community social service workers have faced a decade of declining wages. The current starting wage for a residential care worker is \$15.54 an hour. In 2002, it was \$16.83. Factoring in inflation, that's a 22 percent wage cut.

Despite these facts, the government continues to ignore critical resource needs in this underfunded sector. Following a breakdown in bargaining voted overwhelmingly in favour of strike action, While the multiunion bargaining committee for community social services met with the employer -- the Community Social Services Employers Association (CSSEA) in September and the committee was able to fight off a number of concessions, no progress was made on monetary issues and job action began October 16.

-The bargaining committee does not take lightly the decision to strike, but believes that job action is necessary to send a message to the BC government: stop putting the squeeze on community social services! Community social service workers need a fair and reasonable deal, including a wage increase," said HSA President Reid Johnson.

The bargaining team is conducting strategically targeted strike action on specific days in specific communities around BC. Essential services levels are being maintained in all cases.

On October 16, protestors at Premier Christy Clark's office in Vancouver carried picket signs, waved flags, and called on the provincial government to ensure a fair and reasonable deal that shows respect for community social services and the workers who provide them.

The rally received considerable public support ... honking, sirens, and more - and good media coverage. To view rally pictures, see HSA's Facebook page.

On October 17, Interior Community Services in Kamloops was the target of a full day of job action. Striking workers took their message to Liberal MLA Terry Lakes office in North Kamloops calling on the government to fund community social services.

On October 18, more than 40 workers from AimHi headquarters were on strike on a cold day in Prince George. Striking workers brought the message to MLA Shirley Bonds office at midday and received front-page regional media coverage.

In mid-October, HSA joined several unions rolling out radio and print ads across the province in support of the bargaining objectives, and more details can be found at cssfairdeal.ca.

On October 23, union activists next took political action by rallying at Social Development Minister Moira

Stillwells office in Vancouver. There was no job action associated with this specific action.

On October 30, striking CSS workers and their supporters in Victoria took their protest to Minister Ida Chongs constituency office and were joined by HSA members from Victoria Womens Transition House Society.

On November 1, community social services professionals at three agencies that support children and adults with developmental disabilities went on strike for one day in Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam. HSA members from Community Integration Services Society, Community Ventures Society and SHARE Family and Community Services Society participated.

As *The Report* goes to print in early November, job action rolled out in Terrace, Cranbrook, Penticton, Williams Lake, Quesnel, Armstrong, and Vernon. A one day strike targeting the office of Stephanie Cadieux, Minister of Children and Family Development was held November 15, and more actions are in the works. Keep in touch with your steward, check hsabc.org for details, and make sure HSA has your contact information.

IN SEPTEMBER, WITH TALKS STALLED, HSA MEMBERS WHO WORK IN COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES AND SUPPORT VOTED 86 PER CENT IN FAVOUR OF JOB ACTION.

In November, job action commenced with Raincity Housing and Support Society and Lookout Emergency Aid Society, two downtown Vancouver BCGEU certifications, leading the way. HSA President Reid Johnson spoke to hundreds of health workers who attended in a Vancouver rally on the same day.

-Our members in community health help hold our communities together," he said. -Its time for the Health Employers Association of BC and the BC government to recognize the invaluable services provided by these members, and to value the needs of their patients and clients."

Johnson said community health workers provide crucial services in many community settings. -They are autism interventionists, child care assistants, and front line advocates for community health centres. They work as preschool teachers, residential care workers, in supported child care, as womens support workers at transition houses, and in mental health and addiction rehabilitation support."

Further job action plans are in the works. If your employer is to be targeted by job action, you will be advised of that plan by your union.

The Community Bargaining Association (CBA) conducted the strike vote following more than six months of negotiations.

To get updates on plans for job action, check hsabc.org, talk to your steward and make sure HSA has your email address.

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