



A little fairness is all we ask

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As The Report magazine went to press, our community social service members were just voting on their tentative agreement. But for most members, another hard round of bargaining has come to an end.

I'm proud of the new agreements. Are they perfect? No. But in this bargaining climate, with the government set against us at every turn, demanding concessions that would have been unthinkable even five years ago, they are remarkable achievements and a testament to the hard work of your bargaining committees. Against a government seeking wage freezes, we achieved increases. In the face of demands for major concessions we protected core benefits. Every single element in the new contracts was hard fought for - by your bargaining committee members who have been at it for almost a year; and by you, the members. The list of individuals to thank is long, and elsewhere, in the 2013 Annual Report now on our new web site, you can find out more about these hardworking folks.

With the ink still drying on the new agreements, we prepare to start bargaining anew in just a few months. Gone are the days when a collective agreement approached expiry, the parties negotiated a set of collective agreement provisions, and then proceeded to carry on advocating for adherence to the terms and conditions, and protecting the rights negotiated.

With the constant attack on public services leading to erosion, restructuring, and changes in the delivery of services, the defense of the integrity of public sector collective agreements has meant sustained and intense advocacy and negotiation - for the people who deliver the services, and for the British Columbians who depend on them.

After years of endless and exhausting bargaining, we look with hope to the coming provincial elections. And while I believe a change in government could restore fairness and respect to the bargaining process, I also know that we cannot expect miracles. No matter who wins the election in May, tough choices will have to be made. A new government in Victoria will be constrained by a fiscal mess, a decade's legacy of unfair and short-sighted spending choices.

But I don't believe our members are asking for miracles. They want quality services for the people they help every day. They know we can build a better BC, working together, one step at a time. And it starts with fairness.

So get out there and vote.

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