

National meeting addresses community social service concerns

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HSA'S Heather Maschek, Heidi Coates, Stasia Hasumi and Anne Davis were among the many community social service workers who met in Ottawa.

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Financial pressures, overflowing casework, increasing mental health concerns are just a few of the issues addressed at an October conference for community service workers hosted in Ottawa by the National Union of Public and General Employees' (NUPGE).

"Services in our communities are feeling the crunch more than ever," says James Clancy, NUPGE National President. "Workers are having to do more with less and struggle with systems that have not kept up with the needs of our communities."

"We may come from different sectors but our goal is to provide the best care we can for those in our communities who need it," says Clancy. "As a union, we can build solidarity and support and put forward a plan that will take care of clients and their families — and workers."

Community social service workers from across Canada, including four HSA representatives, gathered to share and strategize on building support for increased funding for the programs and services that care for members of our communities.

The conference took a close look at many of the issues workers are facing and gave participants a chance to

talk about what is happening in their workplaces and regions, including the increasing level of privatization in community services.

Participants also discussed how to achieve the goal of raising the profile of community social service workers and ensuring community services are adequately funded.

Anne Davis, program co-ordinator at Comox Valley Transition Society and Region 1 Director was in attendance, and was asked to present. She reports that among the outcomes, NUPGE is now proposing a series of actions to be carried out across the country to profile the sector. They also plan to lobby for a Canada Community Services Transfer and Act."

"Overall, the information shared in the conference was useful and I think the idea of a national campaign is very good,"says Davis. "Our members who attended had a positive experience though they indicated they would have liked more opportunities to interact with members of other unions."

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