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PLEASE POST – BL10299

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Community social services: negotiations break off

Talks between the unions representing BC's community based social services workers and the Community Social Services Employers' Association (CSSEA) have broken off a little more than a week away from Christmas.

The lost year

The collective agreement expired at the end of March this year. All terms and conditions – except the employment security provisions – continue to be in effect.

The union bargaining association says negotiations have dragged on for more than 13 months, and the employers' position has not significantly changed since discussions broke off almost exactly one year ago.

After a year, the employers' position remains as follows:

- No employment security or improvements to bumping and recall during a time of lay-offs and cuts;
- No improvements to wages;
- No improvements to benefits, including sick leave;
- No improvements to reimbursable expenses like mileage so employees will continue to subsidize their employers;
- No improvements to the way jobs are awarded to make the process fair and transparent;

The employers' ultimatum yesterday was a demand that community social services workers accept a modest improvement in harassment language, in exchange for no changes to bumping and recall rights, and job selections.

Less than zero

The government and employers' "zero-zero" mandate – which means no increased costs in the collective agreement for two years – actually means less than zero for our members. As the cost of living rises for everything from housing, food, hydro and the HST, we fall behind.

Your bargaining committee remains committed to advancing our mandate from members, and to making real and significant improvements and progress toward regaining what we have lost over the last 10 years.

Your bargaining committee will be consulting members in the near future. In the meantime, unions have advised employers and the federal government that approvals for summer student employment programs will be withheld given the circumstances.

Membership meetings

Meetings are being planned for early January where your bargaining committee will be seeking direction from members. Watch for notices on your union bulletin board and website. The Liberal government's CSSEA represents 220 agencies across the province.

The Community Social Services Bargaining Association of Unions collectively represents nearly 15,000 frontline workers in the sector who are members of the Health Sciences Association, BC Government and Service Employees' Union, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Hospital Employees' Union, Construction and Specialized Workers' Union, United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, United Steelworkers of America (Canada), BC Nurses' Union, and the Christian Labour Association of Canada. The BCGEU is the lead union in the association.

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