



JOSHUA BERSON PHOTO

POWERING UP for 2012 contract talks

HEU MEMBERS and many of their sisters and brothers in the public sector are gearing up for the challenge of what promises to be a tough round of bargaining.



Vancouver's Occupy protest in mid-October rallied thousands against growing economic inequality and social injustice. See page 11.

Public sector gets ready to bargain

Members of HEU are no strangers to the struggle for economic justice and basic human rights.

For years, they've been on the frontlines of the fight to stop the privatization of public Medicare and other vital public services.

More recently, they've championed the right to a living wage for all workers – union and non-union.

So, it must be extremely gratifying for many HEU members to have witnessed the extraordinary events of the last few months unfold.

Across North America and in other parts of the world, people are making the connections between rising poverty rates and the huge profits raked in by banks and corporations.

At the same time, the fight by public sector unions in Wisconsin and Ohio to protect their bargaining rights has galvanized unprecedented levels of support from their communities.

In November, two million British workers walked off the job to protest government plans to attack their public pensions.

And thanks to the emerging Occupy Movement, more people – of all ages and backgrounds – are questioning the mechanics of an economic system that makes the rich richer and the poor poorer.

While none of these things on their own will make 2012 bargaining in the public sector any easier, what is hopeful is that more people than ever before are realizing that healthy, sustainable communities cannot exist without decent jobs with fair wages and a strong, social safety net.

They are also beginning to understand that unions play a critical role in challenging the politics of inequality. Far from being no longer necessary, as various politicians and corporate spokespeople would have us believe, unions are essential to what has become a global fight for fairness.

As HEU members get ready to head into bargaining, they do so at a time when members of the public are far more aware of the need to protect and improve our health and social services. And they

know that those improvements simply can't happen if the workers who provide British Columbians with care and support are not treated fairly.

"We are part of the movements for social justice, human rights and economic equality – and have been for a long time," HEU secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson reminded delegates attending the facilities bargaining conference in November.

"Standing up for seniors. Speaking up

More people than ever before realize that healthy communities cannot exist without decent jobs and a strong, social safety net.

for the environment. Supporting clients and their families in the community living sector. Solidarity pickets with other unions. All these actions strengthen bonds with our communities and our allies. We need to continue to understand and support their struggles and make sure that they understand and support ours."



BONNIE PEARSON

New Year brings hopes and challenges

2012 will be an important year for HEU members. We will see a year dominated by collective bargaining, as will many of our sister public sector unions. And, looking toward the 2013 provincial election and the 2014 renewal of the federal-provincial *Health Accord* in 2014, HEU will work hard to defend our medicare system.

HEU collective agreements expire this spring for members working in facilities, community health and community social services. It is disappointing that the BC Liberals, once again, have refused to put any new money into the system.

We know firsthand just how much privatized health services have put public medicare at risk in B.C. – driving down wages, wasting precious resources, and destabilizing the care we all rely on.

Members employed by B.C.'s large private corporations will also be bargaining this fall. And throughout the year, HEU will be negotiating more than 35 independent contract renewals, primarily in the long-term care sector.

In all cases, we will be going to the table with concrete proposals to improve members' working conditions and the quality of care British Columbians deserve.

Beyond the bargaining table, we will be continuing the important work identified by delegates attending our 2010 biennial convention – building stronger locals and greater unity across our sectors, as well as strengthening our health care team, our diversity and our alliances in the community.

And this year, we will be working closely with our sisters and brothers in CUPE to campaign for a new *Health*

Accord that will protect and expand public medicare.

With the current federal-provincial agreement set to expire in 2014, health care advocates across Canada are concerned – with good reason – that Prime Minister Stephen Harper will

be pushing for greater privatization in our health system. We already know he has a sympathetic ear in Victoria.

HEU members have a huge stake in these negotiations – as do all Canadians. We know firsthand just how much privatized health services have put public medicare at risk in B.C. – driving down wages, wasting precious resources, and destabilizing the care we all rely on.

Advocates of for-profit health care have spent years undermining medicare, arguing it is unsustainable. And now, those voices have seized the opportunity to lobby federal and provincial governments for more “private solutions” to health care's challenges.

We are at a crossroads – one that will ultimately determine whether or not we will be able to preserve and strengthen our medicare system.

And like the generations of HEU activists who fought before us, we have a critical role to play in these debates.

That's why our union will be working within CUPE, and side by side with our allies in the labour movement and the community, to stop the Harper and Clark governments from weakening public health care, and to advance real solutions that will make it stronger.

And while all these challenges may seem overwhelming, I know that together we will stand strong in 2012 for fair collective agreements. We will continue to build our union. And we will use our collective power to defend the vital work of our members in a public, national system of medicare.

We are now at a crossroads – one that will ultimately determine whether or not we will be able to preserve and strengthen our medicare system.

voice.mail

A fond farewell from Judy Darcy

As many of you know by now, I was recently acclaimed as the NDP candidate for New Westminster in the next provincial election and have resigned as HEU's secretary-business manager. I am writing to say both “farewell” and “thank you”.

It was March of 2005 when I first came to HEU. At the time, the shock-waves brought about by *Bill 29* (stripping our collective agreements) and *Bill 37* (wage rollbacks) were being felt in every HEU workplace across B.C. The Gordon Campbell/Christy Clark Liberal government had torn up our contracts and laid off thousands of health care workers.

But when I began touring the province to meet HEU members and hear your concerns, it was also clear to me that – in addition to the anger – there was a strong desire to rebuild, to reunite, and to stand up for your rights. And, despite the viciousness of the Liberal government's attacks, your passion and commitment to give your all to your patients and residents, every day, and to stand up for public quality health care never wavered.

So, together with your Provincial Executive and HEU staff, we got down to work mapping out some strategic priorities for our union – achieving negotiated collective agreements, not legislated ones; bargaining decent first contracts for newly organized private sector workers; advocating for positive public health care solutions; and standing up for seniors care. And, very importantly, rebuilding our strength and unity as a union.

To say that the last six and a half years have been challenging would be a massive understatement! But I



HEU Provincial Executive and staff gathered on November 30 to celebrate Judy's significant contribution to the union over her six and a half year tenure as HEU's secretary-business manager.

am so very proud of what we have been able to accomplish together – despite overwhelming challenges.

We were successful in negotiating important new protections for our members covered by provincial agreements, even under highly restrictive government guidelines. We have spoken out about the crisis in seniors' care in every corner of this province. Our Living Wage Campaign not only helped win major increases for our members employed by private contractors, but also launched a

broad coalition to raise low-paid workers' wages.

We have worked hard to raise public awareness about the treatment of people with disabilities and the problems in Community Living B.C. And who can ever forget our historic Supreme Court of Canada victory when *Bill 29* was declared unconstitutional and collective bargaining rights were established as charter-protected rights for the very first time.

The common thread that weaves all of this together is

that HEU makes a difference every single day – an enormous difference. And that's because of the tireless efforts of HEU members, leaders and staff who are prepared to stand up for what's right: for health care, for working people, for a more equal province for all.

It has been a great honour for me to serve as your chief negotiator and spokesperson. And I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for welcoming me into your lives. I leave HEU fully confident that this great union will weather any storms ahead and continue to grow even stronger.

So, with this letter, I say “farewell” but not “goodbye”. Because although I am leaving HEU to work for change in the political arena, the passion and commitment we share – for patients, for residents, for fairness for working people – will always be in my heart. And I know we will continue to work closely together in the future to build a better British Columbia.

JUDY DARCY
HEU's former
secretary-business manager





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Veteran union negotiator appointed HEU's new secretary-business manager

The union's new secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson is a veteran union negotiator with roots in Saskatchewan and a wealth of experience in both public and private sector unions.

Pearson was appointed by the HEU Provincial Executive to succeed Judy Darcy, who resigned in September to seek office in the next provincial election.

She had been the assistant secretary-business manager since 2009.

Pearson will be the chief negotiator in the upcoming round of bargaining for a new facilities subsector collective agreement. And she is no stranger at the bargaining table.

Her union advocacy goes back more than three decades to her years as a municipal clerk in Moose Jaw, where she became a shop steward and then the secretary for CUPE Local 9.

Pearson later became a union rep for both CUPE and the Grain Services Union – and was also elected vice-president of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour.

But, she says, her first lessons about the power of collective action were on her family farm east of Weyburn, SK.

"My father organized for the National Farmers' Union and the CCF (the predecessor of the NDP), so some of my earliest memories are of political meetings in our community," says Pearson.

"I can vividly remember sitting on my father's shoulders so I could see Tommy Douglas speak at rallies – and my father used to take him from farm to farm during election campaigns."

Pearson especially remembers the fight for medicare in Saskatchewan.

"When I was very young, my mother had been seriously ill and it took my family years to pay off the doctors' and hospital bills," says Pearson. "It's a hardship that faced many farm families.



"So when Tommy Douglas proposed public medicare, I can remember the neighbours coming over for coffee and it was part of every conversation. It was a really exciting time and it demonstrated to me the power of collective action.

"HEU members also understand their collective strength. And they have used it time and time again to fight for workers' rights and social justice," adds Pearson.

"That's why I'm excited and honoured to take on this new role."

HEU's president Ken Robinson says the Provincial Executive's decision to appoint Pearson was an easy one.

"As a key member of our management team for the past five years, Bonnie brings a lot of hands-on experience, sound judgement and superior leadership skills to this job," says Robinson.

A B.C. resident for nearly two decades, Pearson worked at HEU for three years before moving to the College Institute Educators' Association (now the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators), where she assisted in the 1998 negotiations and



Pearson says she's excited and honoured to take on her new role in the union.

was the chief negotiator in the 2001 round of bargaining.

Pearson was appointed to the Vancouver-Richmond Health Board in 1999, and continued in that position until the BC Liberals restructured regional health authorities and replaced their boards in 2001.

From 2001 to 2006, Pearson worked for the Compensation Employees' Union, representing staff at the Workers' Compensation Board in B.C.

She returned to HEU in 2006 and assisted Darcy in negotiating major provincial agreements for health care workers in 2006 and 2010, and in the *Bill 29* settlement negotiations in 2007 and 2008.

HEU's secretary-business manager is the chief negotiator and spokesperson for the union and acts in an executive director role within the union's management structure. Pearson also sits on the Provincial Executive.

"I'm extremely proud to represent HEU members," says Pearson.

"They have built a progressive union



that looks out for its members and advocates for health care and the other public services that are so critical to providing a just and equitable society.

"And that will serve us well as we mobilize within our union and reach out to our allies in preparation for a tough round of bargaining next year."

Pearson lives in Surrey with her husband Don – a union welder. They have two children and two grandchildren.

MIKE OLD
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

"I can vividly remember sitting on my father's shoulders so I could see Tommy Douglas speak at rallies – and my father used to take him from farm to farm during election campaigns."

"HEU members understand their collective strength. And they have used it time and time again to fight for workers' rights and social justice."



COFFEE BREAK

Happy New Year

It's that time of year when we make a fresh start. Here are some quotes about resolutions that make one think, and tickle the funny bone.

Many people look forward to the New Year for a new start on old habits.

– Anonymous



New Year's Resolution: To tolerate fools more gladly, provided this does not encourage them to take up more of my time.

– James Agate

Good resolutions are simply checks that men draw on at a bank where they have no account.

– Oscar Wilde



A dog's New Year's Resolution: I will not chase that stick unless I actually see it leave his hand!

– Anonymous

One resolution I have made and try always to keep is this: To rise above the little things.

– John Burroughs

He who breaks a resolution is a weakling. He who makes one is a fool.

– F.M. Knowles



I think in terms of the day's resolutions — not the year's.

– Henry Moore

People are so worried about what they eat between Christmas and the New Year, but they really should be worried about what they eat between the New Year and Christmas.

– Anonymous



Now is the accepted time to make your regular annual good resolutions. Next week, you can begin paving hell with them as usual.

– Mark Twain

May all your troubles last as long as your New Year's resolutions!

– Joey Adams

Cheers to a New Year and another chance for us to get it right.

– Oprah Winfrey



Stanford Place workers launch campaign

HEU members working at Stanford Place in Parksville are joining with other concerned citizens to launch a community-wide campaign about the future of seniors' care locally, and across the Island.

Less than two years after the Ahmon Group – a for-profit operator in seniors' care – opened the long-term care facility, it rolled back workers'

wages by five per cent. Workers were promised that once the facility was in the black, wages and benefits would be restored to original levels.

But in 2011, the Ahmons won a further 20 per cent cut in wages and benefits through an arbitrated settlement, arguing the facility was in financial peril.

Now, workers are questioning why the Vancouver Island Health Authority

provided the Ahmons with a profit-making opportunity in seniors' care, given their inability to maintain a financially solvent organization based on their original business plan.

And they question the business ethic behind recruiting residential care staff, with decent wages and benefits, only to renege on that agreement twice in little more than a two-year period.

Know your rights

Proof of illness and rights to privacy

When you're legitimately home from work with an illness, worrying about how to prove it to your employer should be the last thing on your mind. Yet, a growing number of employers are requesting doctor's notes, or medical certificates, from workers who call in sick.

It's a bit of a juggling act finding the balance between a worker's right to access sick leave, the right to privacy of medical information, and an employer's right to request medical information under specific circumstances.

On one hand, you have the right to keep your medical information private. On the other hand, employers have the right to manage the workplace which sometimes requires workers to disclose some medical information. But when and how detailed are the questions.

For example, if an employer has an "attendance management" program, is providing an ongoing duty-to-accommodate, or has reasonable grounds to believe a worker is not actually sick – then it's not unjustifiable for the employer to request a doctor's note.

If you find yourself in any of these situations, contact a shop steward and review your collective agreement.

For example, the community social services contract does not have specific language requiring proof of illness

(Article 19). This can make it *harder* for employers to ask for medical notes, but not impossible if their request is proven reasonable.

In contrast, the facilities (Article 31.03) and community health (Article 28.03) contracts state: "sick leave with pay is only payable because of sickness and employees who are absent from duty because of sickness may be required to prove illness. Failure to meet this requirement can be cause for disciplinary action." Despite the different contract language, a request to prove illness must still be a reasonable one.

All contract language is open to interpretation depending on the circumstances. Is the employer suggesting "pattern absenteeism"? In other words, is the employer saying there's a suspiciously regular pattern of calling in sick on Mondays or Fridays, or at the beginning or end of a planned vacation, or that there is a picture of you celebrating outside the hockey arena on the day you said you were down with the flu?

If the employer can demonstrate that pattern or conduct, and there is no proof you were actually sick, then it can show "culpable absenteeism", which gives the employer the option to issue discipline (and sometimes termination of employment).

In the vast majority of cases, however, employer requests for medical information arise in cases of "innocent absenteeism", where the employee is genuinely sick due to a disability, a single serious health event, a recurring (chronic) illness, or repeated sickness due to infectious exposure through work or family members. Each situation impacts your privacy rights differently.

Employers are entitled only to the information reasonably necessary

to decide if your absence from work is, in fact, related to illness or injury, to evaluate workplace accommodations, or to determine

logistics of a future return to work. These are medical determinations, not a license for management to probe into the details of your illness or condition.

Consent forms that give the employer open access to your medical file are an unjustified intrusion into your sensitive medical information. The consent must be fairly specific about the information being sought.

Except in the rarest of cases, employers are not entitled to know a diagnosis.

Medical information can only be shared on a "need to know" basis, and there must be systems in place to protect confidentiality and a timeframe for which your information is kept.

A growing number of employers are requesting doctor's notes.

<<newsbites>>

Remembering December 6 Montreal massacre

Three hundred placard-carrying delegates attending the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union women's conference in Ottawa, and more than 200 union and community allies, marched to Parliament Hill on December 6 as part of the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

They were also protesting the Harper government's *Bill C-19* to end the *Long-gun Registry Act*.

Several family members of the young women murdered at l'École Polytechnique in 1989 were there to remember their loved ones during the

rose ceremony and roll call of the 14 victims.

NDP leader Nycole Turmel, Liberal leader Bob Rae and Bloc Québécois MP Maria Mourani all spoke out against *Bill C-19*. Several unions, including the Canadian Labour Congress and CUPE, have sent submissions to the House of Commons urging the government to retain the registry.

In a keynote address to CEP delegates, the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, former Governor General of

Canada, spoke about the relationship between unions, women's groups and research bodies and their collective responsibility to educate and take action on issues like violence, discrimination, poverty and oppression in this country.

"This morning, we lift our voices in



TANYA SCHLUETER PHOTO

Saluting HEU care aides and community health workers

On October 18, HEU celebrated the province's first-ever Health Care Assistant Day, paying tribute to the union's 15,000 care aides and community health workers.

The B.C. government proclamation was the result of a collaborative effort among unions, educators, employers and government representatives on the Care Aide and Community Health Worker Registry advisory committee.

The proclamation states that "Health Care Assistants have demonstrated to be an indispensable component in the safety and quality of personal care to patients, clients and residents..." – something that is widely evidenced in research studies in Canada and abroad.

The following was submitted to the *Guardian* by Heather Cormack, Qualicum local.

A TRIBUTE TO HEALTH CARE ASSISTANTS

A health care assistant is the one who wakes your loved one up with a gentle touch and a loving smile.

A health care assistant is the one who bathes, washes, dresses and assists your loved one with breakfast, lunch and supper. And if your loved one is not feeling well, we will bring a tray back to their room.

A health care assistant is the one who will give your loved one a hand, if they are not able to feed themselves. We will make sure their meal is warm, and sneak in that extra cookie, just because they really liked the first one.

A health care assistant is the one who will try to organize the closet and room, as we carefully unpack the suitcase that holds all of your loved one's treasures and memories.

A health care assistant is the one who will listen to your loved one, when they are sad, happy and upset. We will patiently listen as they tell us stories of you, their past and hopes for their future.

We will try to explain to your loved one why we cannot stay and hear all the stories, as unfortunately, they are not our only ones to care for.

We will try to comfort and softly explain why they cannot go home, and why you cannot visit very often.

A health care assistant is the one who tries to balance all of the above, equally, in an eight-hour shift, 24/7, among all of your loved ones.

A health care assistant is the one who will be at your loved one's side, when it is their time to say goodbye. We will be there until you arrive, and stay because you cannot make it on time.

Your loved one will never take this first step of their journey alone.

The health care assistant is the first person who sees your loved one on a bad day: that's the time when we may receive a punch, a slap, a hit, a bite, a scratch, a kick or verbal abuse, because we know your loved one sometimes does not understand their own actions.

We try very hard to keep a smiling face, when we have been working short, or on our second shift of the day because there was no one to replace us.

We want to thank our families for their patience and love when we come home tired or cranky.

But most of all, we thank all health care assistants for the care they give every day.

She also spoke about bullying and the disturbing trend of teen suicides, saying Canadians need to protect our children and women from harassment and violence.

For more information on *Bill C-19*, visit the Coalition for Gun Control at <http://www.guncontrol.ca>. You can also contact Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Premier Christy Clark, your local MPs and MLAs, urging them to help defeat the bill.

Abbotsford voters kill P3 water deal

There will be no profit from water in Abbotsford.

That's the message citizens delivered to local politicians this past November when a controversial deal for a new utility to supply water to the Fraser Valley city went down to defeat.

Nearly three-quarters of voters rejected the proposed \$291 million *Stave Lake Water Project* in a civic referendum. Had it passed, the city would have entered into a 25-year-plus contract with a private business to build, partially finance and operate the facility as a public-private partnership (P3).

In the end, new requirements tying all federal municipal infrastructure funding to P3s introduced last spring by the Harper government, proved to

be the poison pill that voters would not swallow. Not only were there concerns about the higher costs of the P3, but the possibility that Abbotsford's water would be privately managed was also a non-starter.

"Our number one priority is that water must remain a right – not a commodity," says Abbotsford Water Watch spokesperson and community activist Lynn Perrin.

For CUPE BC, which has been active in Water Watch projects around the province, the numbers don't add up. As CUPE BC president Barry O'Neill notes, "Financially, there's no way a P3 project can beat a traditional privately built/publicly run development



a powerful call to action to declare to the nation that violence against women must be eliminated," said Madame Jean. "And this morning, we are breaking the silence. We are breaking the indifference."

Jean said she has made it her mission to vigilantly defend women's freedom. "To me, denying more than half of the world's population the most basic human rights, including the right to live in security, is the most flagrant form of subjugation and one of the worst scandals of our time... Women's rights are not special rights. Women's rights are human rights. And these values define what it means to be a citizen of this country."

New bill addresses mental stress in the workplace

A progressive new bill introduced in the B.C. legislature in November could have widespread benefits to workers with mental health conditions, if passed by the provincial government.

"This bill is long overdue," says HEU occupational health and safety representative Ana Rahmat. "They're finally recognizing that stress and mental health – including workplace harassment – are as serious and real a problem as physical illness and injuries.

"Our union conducted a workplace bullying survey with our members this fall, and the results were staggering – 83 to 94 per cent of our members report that they have either witnessed bullying or been bullied on the job.

"We're very concerned and we need to sit down with employers, with government officials and WorkSafeBC representatives to address this growing problem. It's not going away, it's only getting worse."

The proposed legislation, *Bill 14 – Workers Compensation Amendment Act, 2011*, would expand workers' rights under the *Workers Compensation Act* for WorkSafeBC claims related to workplace injuries or fatalities.

These amendments include broader coverage for workplace mental stress; improved compensation for apprentice-

es injured on the job; granting survivor benefits to common-law spouses after two years of cohabitation rather than three, and calculating cost of living for compensation and penalties.

Currently, mental health claims through WorkSafeBC are limited to "an acute reaction to a sudden and traumatic event."

Under the new regulation, however, this would extend to include post-traumatic stress disorder arising from a series of work-related incidents (i.e. emergency personnel), workplace bullying and violence, and sexual harassment.

The legislation emphasizes the physical and psychological dangers of workplace mental stress and the impact on worker safety, absenteeism, decision-making, productivity and alertness – factors that could lead to serious accidents at work.

"Our government recognizes that we need to treat job-related mental stress the same way we treat physical illness and injuries," said labour minister Margaret MacDiarmid. "We know mental stress has significant impact on workers, their families and their workplace."

The bill, which is expected to pass, is slated to have a second reading in the spring session of the legislature.

BRENDA WHITEHALL



KEN ROBINSON

PRESIDENT'S DESK

Jack's legacy serves us well

With a big bargaining year ahead of us, and our continuing work to build and strengthen our locals, it's going to be a very busy 12 months.

As I look ahead, we need to reflect on the legacy of hope that NDP Leader Jack Layton has given all Canadians. It will serve us well in the challenges we'll be facing in 2012.

When Jack passed away on August 22, we lost a great leader and a good friend. But I think we can take a lot of guidance from the values he inspired – not only among New Democrats, but among Canadians of all political stripes.

Three things in particular stand out for me.

The first was Jack's perseverance. He never gave up. Although most remember his successes – rebuilding the federal party and moving the NDP from last place to official opposition in eight years – it's easy to forget he had his share of political losses.

He lost his bid for Mayor of Toronto in 1991, but regained his city council seat in the next election and went on to win the national presidency of the

Federation of Canadian Municipalities. He was also twice defeated in his bid to be elected as a Member of Parliament, but went on to win the NDP leadership race.

Jack bounced back from his defeats and kept his eyes firmly fixed on the future.

The second was his approach to leadership.

Jack was the kind of positive visionary who worked to bring people together to achieve a greater good.

During the minority government period from 2004 to 2011, for example, he skillfully negotiated billions of dollars in federal support for affordable housing, post-secondary education, worker re-training and public transit. The way he did it was by communicating, connecting and creating common ground. It's a style of leadership that looks for ways to include and engage people in the work of social change.

And finally, we can all learn from Jack's commitment to the younger generations. His efforts to embrace young leaders and attract young voters to the NDP will have a long-term impact on the politics of Canada. The NDP now has 20 out of 103 MPs under the age of 30. And in the last election, almost twice as many young people marked a ballot for the NDP than the Harper Conservatives.

We, like the rest of the labour movement, need to have the same commitment to develop and mentor young leaders to carry our movement forward.

As we ready ourselves for the coming year, I am also remembering another great Canadian, Tommy Douglas, the father of medicare. His words are an excellent motto for 2012: "Courage, my friends, 'tis not too late to build a better world."

Jack was the kind of positive visionary who worked to bring people together to achieve a greater good.

Late-night workers' safety jeopardized

At press time WorkSafeBC had just announced plans to water down *Grant's Law*.

Named after Maple Ridge gas station attendant Grant DePatie, who was killed while working alone at night, *Grant's Law* put safety regulations in place to prevent similar tragedies from occurring. As part of that law, stores are required to lock their doors and exchange money and purchases through enclosed windows between 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m., if the employ-

ee is working in isolation. That part of the regulation is being abolished.

"It is extremely disappointing to see WorkSafeBC sacrifice evidence-based safety regulations after a lobby based only on the profit motive of late-night employers," said B.C. Federation of Labour president Jim Sinclair. "This is a huge setback for some of the most vulnerable and lowest-paid workers in the province."

The stripped down law goes into effect on April 15, 2012.

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when it comes to municipal infrastructure.

"For the Stave Lake P3, the City of Abbotsford's own estimates pegged the annual operating costs at \$1 million more – and that's on top of the significantly higher financing costs needed to build this facility as a P3 in the first place," says O'Neill.

A petition has now been launched to demand the Harper government end the requirement that federal infrastructure funds for municipalities be only used for P3 projects. Visit <http://tiny.cc/iucl5> to add your signature.

City governments oppose CETA trade agreement

B.C.'s local governments are banding together to make sure their concerns about the proposed *Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement* (CETA) are heard.

At September's annual Union of B.C. Municipalities (UBCM) conference, delegates representing 189 towns, cities and districts demanded Christy Clark's government negotiate a clear, permanent exemption for local governments from CETA.

"This time, [the Europeans] want access not to what the federal government controls, but to what subnational governments control, government procurement at the provincial and local government level – Crown corporations, public transit authorities, water systems, airports, health and social services, most of which were exempted from the *Free Trade Agreement* of the late-'80s and the *North American Free Trade Agreement* of the '90s," CUPE National president Paul Moist told a public meeting on CETA in mid-October.

Since May 2009, the B.C. government – along with Ottawa, the territories and the other provinces – has been in a series of closed-door talks with the Europeans over CETA. While formal negotiations for CETA wrapped up this October in Ottawa, the federal government and the European Commission must still hammer out some difficult details that should drag out trade negotiations well into next year.

For Moist and others who have been rallying the public around CETA, the slowdown is welcome news.

Public opposition helped kill every international trade deal since NAFTA. With the UBCM now joining the ranks of CETA critics, perhaps this is the beginning of the end of another bad trade agreement.

Report dispels myth of the grey tsunami

In recent years, the media has flooded the public with stories that the aging population – especially the baby-boomer generation – has pushed public health care costs to unsustainable proportions, draining the government coffers of valuable

Advocates call for **investigation** into crisis rocking community living

As the remaining walls of Woodlands institution in New Westminster tumbled to the ground on October 18 – symbolizing a final ending to B.C.'s institutionalization of people with developmental disabilities – the government and its crown agency responsible for delivering services to this vulnerable population were under fire in the legislature and the media.

Years of underfunding, cutbacks and escalating waitlists, combined with the more recent closure of 65 group homes, had produced a crisis in the community living sector that could no longer be hidden from public view.

Day after day, families and advocates came forward to tell their heart-wrenching stories about what it meant to them to be denied needed services, or how a loved one had been forced to leave a group home against their will.

In the face of these mounting appeals for support, Community Living B.C. (CLBC) and the province's social development minister steadfastly maintained everything was fine at CLBC. No one had been forced to move, they claimed.

But in the end, the official line crumbled. On September 26, Harry Bloy was replaced with a new Minister of Social Development Stephanie Cadieux. And within three weeks, CLBC's CEO Rick Mowles had been fired.

For HEU members working in the sector, the dra-

matic unfolding of events validated a reality they've known firsthand.

There's not enough money in the system to support people with developmental disabilities and their families with the level and quality of services they require.

The shift to less costly housing arrangements for many individuals living in group homes has destabilized their lives. And too many people's needs are not being met.

For more than a year, HEU has been working with a coalition of family groups, service agencies, unions representing workers in the sector, and disability organizations to advocate for practical solutions to B.C.'s community living crisis.

The B.C. Community Living Action Group (BC-CLAG) is calling for an immediate stop to CLBC's cuts to services and supports, a moratorium on group home and day program closures, and a regulatory regime to oversee the new home-sharing model that is replac-

ing group homes.

The coalition is also calling for an external review of CLBC's mandate and operations, an immediate infusion of \$70 million to address outstanding service requests, and the creation of an independent advocate for adults with developmental disabilities.

While government has resisted the kind of systemic solutions advocated by BC-CLAG and others, the

outpouring of public condemnation did prompt a deputy minister review of CLBC, an internal audit of the agency and the creation of a new client support team to deal with individual appeals for support.

By late-November, in a stunning departure from the CLBC's official public story, the agency finally admitted that it had pushed too hard to move individuals out of their group homes, saying no one would be moved against their will in the future.

While that admission was welcome news, advocates expressed concern that the report contained no concrete solutions to improve services over the longterm.

In a November 1 editorial to the *Vancouver Sun*, University of Victoria professor Michael Prince said the interim steps undertaken by government "may be necessary to deal with the immediate fallout, but they don't even begin to address the serious, systemic issues of public accountability surrounding CLBC, and the vulnerable population of British Columbians this crown agency is meant to serve."

Faith Bodnar, executive director of the B.C. Association for Community Living – a province-wide advocacy organization – issued the following appeal on behalf of families.

"They take their stories to the streets, insisting on leading what has become an incredible public conversation. They demand accountability from governments and decision-makers. We must be more than witness to their struggles. We are called to join with them as activists."

For more information, visit <www.communitylivingaction.org>.

PATTY GIBSON

For HEU members working in the community living sector, the dramatic unfolding of events validated a reality they have known first hand.



Former residents of Woodlands institution in New Westminster and their supporters cheer as they watch the demolition of the 133-year-old centre block tower. In 1996, Woodlands became B.C.'s last institution for people with developmental disabilities to close its doors.



PHOTOS COURTESY BCACL

taxpayer money.

But a new report by the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) suggests there are other factors driving up health care spending, including population growth, physician services, and long-term institutional care.

According to the report, seniors are healthier than ever before. "Canada's seniors are healthy well into their later years... and the health status of younger seniors appears to be similar to adults younger than 65."

In 1998, Canadians older than 65 accounted for 43.6

per cent of health care costs. Ten years later, it was 43.8 per cent – something the report indicates should not be cause for alarm.

What's happened to Canada?

Canada's decision to formally withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol on climate change is an international embarrassment that tarnishes Canada's global reputation, says the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC).

In early December, the CLC led a delegation of representatives from Canadian unions to the United Nations climate

change talks in Durban, South Africa. They were urging an ambitious commitment and credible plan for Canada to reduce its greenhouse gas pollution as part of a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. At the same time, the CLC also called on the Canadian government to do our fair share to support poorer countries to adopt clean energy technologies and to adapt to the effects of climate change.

In the end, says the CLC, the talks were a failure of political will, and Canada put the final nail in the coffin with its

announcement to withdraw from the binding international climate treaty – an action that paints Canada as a country which doesn't keep its word.

According to the Council of Canadians, Canada's position about needing a deal that includes all countries, particularly China and India, is actually about achieving a deal that will allow business as usual for Canada via a weaker agreement.

And while fingers were consistently pointed at China and India by Canada, the U.S. and Australia, among others, what is less well-known is

that China, India, Brazil and other developing countries have committed to make larger emission reductions than those promised by so-called developed countries.

The Council also points out that an often missing part of this debate is the reality that Canada, the U.S. and Australia still outpace many countries (including China) on a per capita emissions basis. And, they say, there is also the inconvenient reality that much of the emissions in China are produced by the production of products that wind up in our homes.

Battle of the wages: who's paid more?

A detailed study, just released by CUPE, undercuts the growing perception that public sector workers are consistently paid more than those working in comparative jobs in the private sector.

The Battle of the Wages, which uses the most comprehensive data available on earnings by occupation, found a different reality. Overall, average pay in the public sector is very similar to pay for comparable occupations in the private sector. Public sector pay is also considerably more equitable, whether measured by gender, age, occupational group or by region.

Average annual pay in the public sector was \$49,655 as compared to an average of \$49,407 in the private sector. The difference reflects a smaller pay gap for women in the public sector.

Women in the public sector were paid an average of 4.5 per cent more than women in similar occupations in the private sector.

On the other hand, men in the public sector were paid 5.3 per cent less on average than men in similar occupations in the private sector.

The study notes that the smaller pay gap for women in the public sector, and lower average pay for men than in the private sector, are consistent for all levels of government and major areas of the broader public sector: federal, provincial, local, health and social services, and education.

CUPE obtained the most detailed data available from Statistics Canada, with earnings information on over 500 specific, detailed occupations.

For more information, read the full study at www.cupe.ca.

Wisconsin, Ohio victories push back attacks on public sector

When HEU members gathered at Peace Arch Park last April in solidarity with Wisconsin public workers and services, reversing the unprecedented assault on that state's public sector seemed well out of reach.

Wisconsin teachers, police, firefighters, health care workers and other public sector workers had just lost their collective bargaining rights in a controversial vote by the Republican-dominated state legislature.

On the surface, the vicious attack on Wisconsin's labour laws and workers' rights was all about clawing back \$300 million from employee salaries to reduce the state's deficit.

But it was a claim that didn't hold up to deeper scrutiny. At the same time the state legislature was rolling back workers' wages, Republican Governor Scott Walker was doling out \$117 million in tax breaks to corporations.

As the attack on the public sector rolled out across a half dozen Republican-run states, so too did an unprecedented fightback that united workers, progressive politicians and their parties, unions, public interest groups and thousands of concerned citizens.

By mid-August, two of 19 Wisconsin Republican senators who backed the anti-union legislation in the spring, were recalled and replaced by Democrats. Now, Governor Walker is facing his own recall campaign. In the first 12 days of the 60-day recall period, over 300,000 citizens signed the recall

petition – organizers need 584,000 signatures to trigger a new election.

In early-November, Ohio voters overwhelmingly rejected a law limit-

labour movement.

"The demonization of public employees is neither a strategy nor a solution and the heartland Americans who voted [in Ohio] to restore rights for public employees understood that," says AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka.

"Public employees didn't cause the economic crisis and they're not the enemy."

Unions are now looking to channel energy from the Ohio victory into other Republican-run states where public sector workers and services are under attack. The new battlegrounds are Pennsylvania, Michigan, Indiana, Missouri and Florida.

NEIL MONCKTON



Thousands gathered inside Madison, Wisconsin's Capitol rotunda last spring to protest extreme anti-labour legislation.

ing the bargaining rights of more than 350,000 public sector workers. It's being called one of the biggest victories in decades for the American

OECD report shows income gap rising

A new study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) called *Divided We Stand: Why Inequality Keeps Rising* confirms what the labour movement has been saying for a long time – the income gap in Canada is escalating. And that's because of government tax cuts for the wealthy and more low-wage jobs.

The average income of the top 10 per cent of Canadians in 2008 was \$103,500 – 10 times that of the bottom 10 per cent, who had an average income of \$10,260. At the same time, the top federal marginal income tax

rates dropped to 29 per cent in 2010 from 43 per cent in 1981.

According to the study, two factors explain Canada's growing income gap: a widening disparity in labour earnings between high- and low-paid workers, and less redistribution of taxes and benefits.

In September, a study by the Conference Board of Canada found income inequality has risen more rapidly in Canada than in the U.S. since the mid-1990s. In its analysis of 18 countries, it found that Canada had the fourth-largest increase in inequality between the mid-1990s and late-2000s.

HEU confident as BCNU raid applications head to LRB

The B.C. Nurses' Union has for the second time in two years filed applications at the B.C. Labour Relations Board (LRB) to "raid" LPN members of HEU and other unions.

On November 28, BCNU filed seven applications (one for each health authority and one for Providence Health care) to raid LPNs.

But unlike in 2009, the BCNU has not filed a province-wide application to represent LPNs and, with the exception of Providence, has excluded all affiliate employers from their applications.

HEU secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson commended HEU's LPN network and local executives for their strong and principled campaign against the raid.

"Our LPN members have been under unrelenting pressure and intimidation in BCNU's efforts to collect cards," says Pearson. "But we remain confident that LPNs will continue to support their union and that this raid will ultimately be defeated."

"That's because HEU has consistently supported LPNs to move their profession forward through better access to training, education, expanded roles, new leadership opportunities and improvements to the collective agreement," adds Pearson.

The LRB has held an initial hearing on the BCNU applications and has established a timeline for legal submissions on issues arising from BCNU's raid. This process will extend into February.

At the same time, the Employment Standards Branch of the labour ministry will investigate the validity of the membership cards submitted by the BCNU to support its applications. When they have completed this investigation, they will submit a report to the LRB.

It is not clear how long it will take to learn the fate of BCNU's raid, but it took nearly six months before all of BCNU's 2009 applications were dismissed. BCNU was also prohibited from launching another raid on LPNs for 22 months.

But by scaling back its applications this year, BCNU has left the door open to further raids in the fall of 2012 and has already announced that it will attempt to raid LPNs working at affiliates at that time.

BCNU has also published its strategic plan which targets non-nursing members of the health care team as part of its membership expansion plans.

"It is profoundly disappointing that the BCNU has chosen to squander resources on raiding other unions when we should be standing together against the attacks that are taking place on health care and other public services," says Pearson.

As a result of their ongoing raids on HEU and other unions, the BCNU can no longer participate in local labour councils, the B.C. Federation of Labour or the Canadian Labour Congress. And earlier this year, BCNU was forced to pull out of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions.

There's something happening here...

Occupy movement inspires millions, launches world-wide conversation about corporate greed and economic inequality.

It began in New York City. In just a few short months, it took over parks and public squares in more than 1,200 cities and 80 countries around the world.

It shamed the banks and corporations for their unbridled greed in the pages of mainstream newspapers and across the internet.

It withstood ridicule, media hostility, police brutality, and mass arrests.

Without leaders, demands, or clearly defined goals, what has come to be known as the Occupy Movement captured the imagination of millions.

Throughout North America and other parts of the world, it ignited a conversation about how the global economic system has created poverty everywhere and has put the planet at risk.

And while there are those who predict the movement will gradually fade away, there is every sign that this conversation is far from over.

For many HEU members and trade unionists, who either joined the protests directly or supported them from a distance, Occupy has struck a chord.

HEU members know a lot about corporate greed and economic injustice. Many have lost their jobs to privatization and contracting out in our hospitals and long-term care homes. They've also been on the frontlines of a national fight to save our public medicare system from privatization.

HEU members know they are part of the 99 per cent. And thanks to Occupy, they now know there are millions more with them who are demanding a better way, a fairer way, of doing business.

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

At its core, Occupy is a pro-democracy movement. It believes the banks and corporations have too much power, and that governments are letting them off the hook.

It is fueled by public anger about rising poverty – more and more people not getting their basic needs met – and the concentration of wealth among fewer and fewer people, the one per cent.

And while there is no single demand that covers the vast number of issues raised by Occupy protesters, it's clear they want real economic changes to stop the widening gap between the rich and poor.

They want the banks and corporations to pay their fair share of taxes.

And they want that tax money to pay for all the things people need to live decently – housing, education, health care, clean water, and more.

It's no accident that Occupy Wall Street burst onto the political stage in the United States where more than four million homes have been taken over by the banks.

In its October decision to stand in solidarity with the Occupy protests, the B.C. Federation of Labour issued a statement about the impact of economic inequality on people's lives.

"In the United States, the consequences have been widespread and severe. Real unemployment is approaching 20 per cent. People are losing their homes to foreclosures," it stated.

"Here, well-paying jobs, fair taxation and strong public services built the Canada we know and love. For 20 years across Canada, however, real wages



MIKE OLD PHOTOS

HEU members know they are part of the 99%. And thanks to Occupy, they now know there are millions more with them.

have stagnated, the richest Canadians and corporations have avoided billions in taxes, and successive governments have weakened public services. This has created a gap between rich and poor not seen in generations."

And in this province, it points out, a decade of tax cuts for the richest British Columbians and corporations combined with stagnant wages for average-income earners have left many families struggling to make ends meet.

WHAT'S NEXT?

In the aftermath of hundreds of tent occupations, the question has quickly turned to what's next?

Gary Younge, a writer for Britain's *Guardian* newspaper, put it this way: "The occupations are more effective as a launch pad than a destination. Nobody knows where this is going. It's just great to be on the move."

At press time, it was clear that while Occupy may have come in from the cold, it was very definitely on the move.

In Canada, Occupy protesters were continuing to hold general assemblies, rallies and demonstrations targeting locations such as banks or Walmarts, and on the west coast, Vancouver's ports.

In the U.S., they were occupying

foreclosed homes and attempting to stop the steady stream of evictions that's putting more families on the street. Laid-off workers in Chicago were occupying a factory that had shut down without giving workers their severance or vacation pay.

In Los Angeles, they had shut down a film set that was preparing to shoot an episode of *Law and Order*, using a replica of the Manhattan Occupy camp as a backdrop.

And according to the *Wall Street Journal*, starting next year, Occupy Wall Street will be part of the curriculum at New York University, which will offer two classes on the movement, one an undergraduate class and the other a graduate-level seminar.

In fact, not a day goes by without another Occupy story from somewhere in the world.

That reality spurred *Time* magazine to choose "The Protester" as its person of the year, in reference both to the "Arab Spring" where mass demonstrations toppled dictators, and the worldwide Occupy protests that followed.

To find out more, just go to the internet and google 'occupy'. Or check out YouTube for video coverage.

PATTY GIBSON

>>voices>>



Ben Swankey's voice has now been stilled, but his spirit lives on in the next generation of activists.

HEU members lose a great friend and teacher

When 98-year-old writer, seniors' activist and medicare advocate Ben Swankey died on November 22 at St. Michael's Centre in Burnaby, HEU members lost a great friend and teacher.

But Swankey's legacy – the confidence and fighting spirit he instilled in so many HEU members he met – will live on in the union for years to come.

An entire generation of HEU activists participated in Swankey's lectures and workshops at summer schools during the 1980s and 1990s. No matter how complex the topic, he had a gift for putting people at ease, and encouraging debate.

Most important, he gave students confidence that they had the ability, knowledge and experience to defend medicare and their rights on the job. As Lynne Gaster, an HEU activist at St. Michael's, recalled at Swankey's memorial, he remained interested in the union's work to the end. He expressed real satisfaction when he learned she was headed off to the union's 2011 bargaining conference.

Swankey crammed at least four careers into his long life. After a prairie childhood, he moved to Vancouver. He was

outraged in 1931 when he witnessed a police attack on unemployed men, women and their children.

He vowed to commit his life to socialism and became an organizer in many of the major struggles by the poor and unemployed during the Depression: the Alberta Hunger March, the On to Ottawa Trek and many more.

His ability to read and write English made him a vital ally of the immigrant workers he helped organize. He was imprisoned for his political views, then released.

He served in the Canadian army, then found his way in to a dozen other careers: writer, teacher, researcher, public speaker, peace activist, seniors' leader and defender of medicare.

The HEU marked his contribution to the union membership with a special award at the 2004 convention. Ben Swankey's voice has now been stilled, but his spirit lives on in the next generation of activists whom he mentored and inspired throughout his life.

GEOFF MEGGS • COUNCILLOR, CITY OF VANCOUVER, FORMER HEU COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

HEU partners with the United Way

The Hospital Employees' Union has joined forces with the United Way to support a number of programs that assist union members, their families and communities.

"HEU has always had a strong relationship with the United Way through the Union Counselling Program," says HEU president Ken Robinson. "Now, we will also support labour campaigns that occur in the workplace each fall."

The United Way in Canada has had a formal partnership with the Canadian Labour Congress for nearly 25 years.

Several HEU locals have actively supported the United Way, and at the last HEU convention, delegates passed a

resolution to evaluate whether the provincial union should become more engaged.

"The Provincial Executive's decision to join with the United Way was based on the fact that it is a community-based organization, and that many HEU members utilize their services, donate to their campaigns, and are employed at work sites that receive United Way support," says Robinson.

"We look forward to working more formally with the United Way in this province to help make our communities stronger for all workers and their families."

Many HEU members have benefited from the United Way's Union Counselling Program – a 30-year-old service that trains union members

as peer counsellors to assist fellow members deal with workplace, family and personal challenges and link them to services in the community.

More than 1,200 peer counsellors have now been trained in B.C., including several HEU members.

One of the unique features of labour's partnership with the United Way is a joint statement of principles that affirms the United Way's commitment to ensure that volunteers are never used to replace striking or locked-out workers, or to provide ongoing services that could be provided by ongoing funding.

You can find out more about the United Way and its relationship with unions by visiting <<http://www.uwlm.ca/labour-partnership>>.

Ballot box power

Can unions and their members make a difference at election time?

Judging by the results of November's B.C. municipal campaigns, the answer is a resounding yes.

According to the New Westminster and District Labour Council, nearly 70 per cent of the candidates it endorsed won elections to municipal boards in 2011.

"Unions can play a crucial role in municipal politics because they can mobilize their members," says SFU



Mike MacDonald receives a new iPad 2 from HEU financial secretary Donisa Bernardo and president Ken Robinson.

A care aide working at St. Vincent's Hospital in Vancouver, Mike was the lucky winner of the *Guardian's* "Get Connected" contest, which had more than 2,000 members enter the draw.

professor Patrick Smith. "Of course, not every union member votes according to these endorsements, but they can make a difference, especially when voter turnout is low."

HEU president Ken Robinson says HEU took part in labour council-sponsored outreach efforts in most parts of the province and mailed more than 50,000 "vote reminder" cards to members

BALANCING IT ALL

BRENDA WHITEHALL

Organizer **MICHAEL MCCARTHY FLYNN** is a fearless advocate for children living in poverty and a close ally of HEU's Living Wage Campaign.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

When Michael McCarthy Flynn left his homeland of Ireland in 2009, he wasn't surprised that his travels and life's work would involve political and social activism.

A Living Wage for Families campaign organizer at First Call and ally to HEU's living wage campaign, McCarthy Flynn is a fearless advocate for children living in poverty, low-waged workers and social justice for immigrant workers.

His job can be frustrating and emotionally draining, he says, but the rewards – although few and far between – solidify his commitment to the fight for fair, family-supporting wages that will improve the work-life balance for working British Columbians.

Successes include New Westminster becoming the first municipality in Canada to pass a Living Wage policy and 21 Lower Mainland businesses being certified as living wage employers.

McCarthy Flynn's days are spent educating employers and government officials on the benefits of paying a living wage, while spending countless hours listening to horrific stories from workers earning poverty-level wages and the impact it has on their families.

"When children don't have enough time with their parents because they are working two or three jobs to

make ends meet, we clearly see a pattern where they don't flourish. They don't have access to social activities, nutritious food, warm clothing and shelter, and they may even get into trouble with the law. It's our responsibility to ensure that all children in this country have access to resources for healthy development."

Raised on a dairy farm in a small country parish called Kilcloon, County Meath – about 30 kms from Dublin – McCarthy Flynn first became an activist in college when he helped organize a refugee support group.

McCarthy Flynn was drawn to the living wage campaign because he recognized the value of its mission to help bridge the huge economic gap between workers' wages and the increasing cost of living.

"I'm the black sheep of the family," he says. "I have lived in the Netherlands and Swaziland and traveled widely in Europe, Africa and South America."

Those travels – along with his Bachelor of Arts in History from Trinity College Dublin and a Master's in Community Development from the National University of Ireland in Galway – have given him a broad framework to compare working conditions and union activism in various countries.

"In Ireland, it's easier to join a union as the whole workforce doesn't have to be unionized for you to join one," he explains. "Also, in Europe, our labour laws are a lot more progressive with rights of succession and general labour protections at a higher level."

"The state is also seen as having a much more benevolent role in economic and social affairs," he

continues. "But, having said that, those protections aren't much help with Europe currently facing its biggest economic crisis in 100 years."

He notes, however, that an increase in part-time and casual work, outsourcing positions, and lack of job security are similar problems plaguing Europe.

"In Swaziland, work conditions are very different as most of the population works in the 'informal sector' or is involved in self-sufficiency farming. Also, unions and political parties are banned, and activists risk imprisonment for advocating for basic rights."

McCarthy Flynn was drawn to the living wage campaign because he recognized the value of its mission to help bridge the huge economic gap between workers' wages and the increasing cost of living.



Michael McCarthy Flynn designates HEU a living wage employer.

When he's not working, McCarthy Flynn enjoys reading, walking, yoga and spending time with his family, which includes his wife Jennifer and their baby daughter Hannah.

For more information, visit <www.livingwageforfamilies.ca>.

and retirees that endorsed candidates for local office.

“Even more exciting, 11 HEU members and staff ran for local office,” he says.

“Congratulations to those with the courage to take on the challenges of being a candidate,” says Robinson. “For those members elected – Andrea Bonkowski, Patty Hanson, Wendy Kerr, Raquel Knust and Gordie Logan – HEU wishes you all the best over the next three years.”

Also running for local office were HEU members Kevin Andrews, Melissa Broadhurst, Chris Carr, John MacKenzie and Noah Routley, along with Provincial Office staff members Chris Dorais and Donald Greenwell-Baker. HEU is pleased to announce that

many have already committed to running again in 2014.

“Getting HEU members involved in politics is necessary for progressive change,” says Robinson.

“From offering an alternative vision that puts people and communities first, to engaging voters in casting an informed ballot, HEU and its members will continue to play a role in bringing politics back to the people.”

Living Wage Campaign on the move

In mid-December, HEU living wage activists brought a roaming *Living Tree for Living Wages* to Surrey Memorial, Children’s and Women’s, Vancouver General, and Lions Gate hospitals. They invited

low-income workers to decorate a holiday tag to place on the tree with messages about what a living wage would mean to them.

In recent weeks, our allies at the Living Wage for Families Campaign – along with 54 organizations representing more than 300,000 British Columbians – sent an open letter to Metro Vancouver civic election candidates urging them to support and adopt a living wage policy to ensure that all city staff and contracted workers be paid a living wage.

And on Vancouver Island, the District 69 Living Wage for Families Coalition held a public forum on living wages with candidates from Parksville, Qualicum and the Regional

District of Nanaimo.

More than 100 candidates were receptive to the concept. You can read more about this at www.living-wageforfamilies.ca.

In November, the Hari Sharma Foundation and labour partners, including the B.C. Federation of Labour and the Canadian Farmworkers’ Union, hosted the Globalization and Migrant Labour Conference: Focus on South Asia at SFU’s downtown Vancouver campus, attended by some HEU Living Wage Campaign members.

The three-day conference brought together scholars



HEU’s *Living Tree for Living Wages* made the rounds during the holiday season.

and activists from around the world to discuss the exploitation of immigrant workers (including temporary foreign workers and domestic workers, such as “nannies”), and progressive steps by marginalized workers (including sex-trade workers) to organize themselves. Guest speakers

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ON THE JOB

SHARON NEUFELD

Mental health group home worker **CINDY LETAIN** is committed to helping her clients, in every way she can, to succeed on their road to recovery.

SUPPORTING PEOPLE’S DREAMS

Cindy Letain has a smile that lights up a room – a quality that symbolizes the compassionate care she provides every day at work.

“I’m a people person,” says Letain. “I work with my clients to enable them to live independently.” That involves teaching day-to-day lifeskills like cooking, cleaning and budgeting.

A group home worker with Coast Foundation for the past 18 years, Letain currently works at Cherry Doors, a heritage residence which will be closing soon. In 2012, she’ll begin working with six men at Shaw House in East Vancouver.

Coast is a non-profit organization that provides supported housing and community services to clients with treatable mental illness in the Greater Vancouver area. Their programs include supported housing, community homes, cottages (for those involved with the justice system), concurrent disorder transitional housing, and semi-independent living.

Because the road to recovery starts with meaningful conversations and relationships, Letain encourages clients to talk about their goals, needs and dreams. “I work to earn the trust of clients and it really helps with their recovery. I pay attention to the whole person,” she explains.

“I’ve learned a lot about myself too. Now, I’m more in tune to other people’s feelings and emotions, especially to their invisible pain. I read people’s faces to see inside, to understand more than just the words they say.”

Letain is concerned that people with mental ill-

ness are increasingly marginalized and on society’s periphery because B.C. doesn’t have appropriate care or services.

Over her working life, she has witnessed a lot of changes in approaches to treatment and support. With the closing of hospitals, more acutely ill patients were going into homes requiring additional support.

“From hospital to community home – our clients want the comfort of home,” she says. “Care plans are now more detailed and specific and there are more new duties, so we have less time with residents. The pace of government pushing people into independent living is getting faster, so clients may not learn necessary lifeskills.”

Letain says one of her biggest wishes for the clients she supports is “more one-on-one time. You just don’t get the time, there’s not always enough staff or budget.”

On the job, Letain has learned patience. “My strategy is to slow down to the client’s speed, so I’m on their level. And I’ve also learned you have to keep your cool. What ultimately matters is the health and safety of the people entrusted to my care.”

She says she likes working with people one-on-one. “To see somebody succeed is really good. I had a client with a history of violence who I taught lifeskills and budgeting. If you just help one person, you’re doing good. And it’s satisfying to keep on trying. Those who succeed are my best reward – I feed on that. I love this work because I feel good. I



feel like a mechanic who has the satisfaction of making an engine roar to life.”

Eighteen years ago, Letain was one of six applicants, out of 200, who were supported to take a mental health worker course at Douglas College. She was hired the day after graduation.

Today, Letain is a single woman with a grown family. She raised her son and daughter on a “hobby farm” in Surrey, and now has two grandsons.

She’s active on her local executive where she is currently both conductor and shop steward. She also loves taking union education courses and plans to start educating other members of her local about hot topics, such as bumping.

But despite the demands of her job and her union activism, Letain works hard at taking care of herself physically and emotionally. As a cancer survivor, she takes her health seriously – swimming two or three times a week.

“Even though my clients are my number one priority, I’ve learned that to do a good job I also have to take care of myself. I’m going to work till the day I die, so I want to live fully and well to the end.”

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came from Canada, the U.S., Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, Nepal and the Philippines.

One of the most powerful sessions was a video featuring a Sri Lankan migrant worker who was savagely abused while employed as a domestic worker in Saudi Arabia. Her story can be viewed on YouTube at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vql2oWHj9jQ>>.

HEU commemorates World AIDS Day

On December 1, HEU members across the province commemorated World AIDS Day by wearing stickers and red ribbons at their work sites. This year was especially significant as it marked the 30th anniversary of the virus that's killed millions of people around the globe.

It was three decades ago that the first case of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) – the virus that causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) – was discovered. Scientists believe humans contracted HIV from chimpanzees in West Africa when they hunted them for meat and were exposed to their blood. These chimpanzees carried the simian immunodeficiency virus (SIV), which mutated in humans to become HIV. The virus gradually spread across Africa and then other parts of the world. HIV/AIDS reached epidemic proportions in the 1980s – spreading fear and prejudice.

The face of HIV and AIDS has changed over the years. Initially labeled the “gay men’s cancer” as HIV largely inflicted homosexual men, it

soon became commonplace among injection drug-users and hemophiliacs receiving contaminated blood-products and transfusions. It eventually spread to women and children – babies were often infected through their mother’s breast milk or in utero. And even senior citizens have been infected with HIV.

According to UNAIDS (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS), there are currently 33.3 million people living with HIV in the world, including 2.5 million children and 52 per cent of them are women and girls. During 2009, there were a reported 2.6 million new HIV diagnoses, and an estimated 1.8 million deaths from AIDS.

In Canada, UNAIDS reports 67,000 Canadians are living with HIV, including 14,000 women.

For more information, visit <www.positivelivingbc.org/>.

Change starts with education

When HEU convention delegates passed the 2010 Strategic Directions document, the union made a commitment to address equity issues within the membership and the organization as a whole.

Recognizing the damaging impact of oppression and discrimination in the workplace, the union devised a plan to educate members at-large, HEU staff and Provincial Executive representatives on equity-based leadership training.

In November, 22 HEU members took part in a week-long Grassroots Leadership Training course

in Parksville on Vancouver Island. During the workshop, participants discussed and reviewed a framework for how social justice, anti-oppression and diversity affect workplace environments. And they were equipped with tools – as union leaders – to respond to challenges impacting members.

And earlier in the spring, HEU equity caucus co-chairs, staff and Provincial Executive members took part in a week-long program around the challenges of marginalized workers, recognizing oppression and privilege, exploring ways to advance equity, and implement best union practices to represent the needs of members who face oppression.

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

JANUARY 15 - FEBRUARY 17

CLC Pacific Regional Winter School
Harrison Hot Springs

JANUARY 23

Chinese New Year

JANUARY 24-26

Provincial Executive meeting

JANUARY 25

HEU Patient Care Technical Day

FEBRUARY

Black History Month

MARCH

Women’s History Month

MARCH 8

International Women’s Day

MARCH 11

Daylight Savings Time Begins

MARCH 20-22

Provincial Executive meeting

MARCH 21

International Day for the Elimination of Racism

MARCH 22

World Water Day

Pink washing breast cancer

A new film, set to be released in February, may ruffle feathers but it will also inspire some hard-nosed questions. For director Lea Pool, the questions are the point.

Pink Ribbons, Inc. opens with 40,000 women running in the Susan G. Komen Run for the Cure in Washington, D.C. They are there for the women they know and love who have been touched by breast cancer. Or to celebrate their own survival.

Their goal is to raise money for breast cancer research.

Many of those runners would be surprised to learn that while millions of dollars have been raised, the mortality rates for breast cancer have not appreciably decreased in 60 years. In the 1940s, one in 20 women was diagnosed with breast cancer; now it’s one in eight.

It’s hard to miss the hucksterism at this event and others. Breast cancer has been called the poster child of “cause marketing”.

The list of companies that emblazon their products with the pink ribbon is long, but this symbol had a modest beginning.

In the early 1990s, Charlotte Hayley took a length of salmon-coloured ribbon, cut it into pieces, twisted them into loops and attached them in groups of five to cards that read: The National Cancer Institute’s annual budget is \$1.8 billion. Only five per cent goes to cancer prevention. Help us wake up our legislators and America by wearing this ribbon.

Strictly grassroots, she distributed a few thousand cards.

They attracted attention. Estée Lauder Inc. came calling. They loved the ribbon and wanted to make it the breast cancer symbol. Hayley said no, she wanted to inspire women to press for change, not sell products. So, they changed the colour to pink.

The film takes special issue with companies that actually manufacture and sell products that are carcinogenic, and then claim to be contributing to the fight against breast cancer. Pool was particularly shocked at the cynicism

of companies that produce both carcinogens and medicine to treat cancer.

Every year, 59,000 North American women die of breast cancer. The cause remains unknown, and without knowing the cause, it cannot be cured.

“We have to take on the challenge of finding the cause and stop it,” says Dr. Susan Love, an advocate of preventative research. “We need to politicize this and know where the research dollars are going.”

Nancy Brinker, founder of the Susan G. Komen Run for the Cure, is proud of the more than one billion dollars the event has raised. She says that if there is only anger, there is no hope.

Samantha King, author of *Pink Ribbons, Inc. – Breast Cancer and the Politics of Philanthropy*, the book that inspired the film, disagrees.

“Anger, pride and optimism have existed side by side in movements throughout history.”

The film looks at where activism has affected change – either in products themselves or their advertising claims. But it hasn’t had much impact on research spending.

Why are research funds – favouring treatment and cure over prevention – still sitting at five per cent? Who really benefits from the Pink Ribbon campaigns? What if the very products that promise to find a cure are actually contributing to the problem? And why are links to environmental causes not explored more?

Pink Ribbons, Inc. takes on these and other ethical and moral dilemmas.

One dilemma is pointed out by feminist writer Barbara Ehrenreich, who had her own experience with breast cancer. “We used to march in the streets in sisterhood, now we run for the cause.”

Pool is not suggesting that we should stop raising money. “We are just saying let’s think more about our actions and how we can be more effective if we act with a political conscience.”



New documentary film challenges the politics and profit-making that have made breast cancer the poster child of ‘cause marketing.’

Film Review

Pink Ribbons, Inc.

National Film Board of Canada

Directed by Lea Pool

Produced by Ravinda Din (2011, 98 minutes)

In memoriam

On October 6, Langley admitting clerk **Jackie Dix** (50) passed away peacefully at home with her family by her side.



DIX

Jackie was an optimist, who never gave up hope, during her three-year battle with cancer. She is survived by

her husband David and son Matthew.

A long-time HEU member, Jackie worked at Woodlands, Riverview Hospital, Shaughnessy, Burnaby, Langley and MSA locals. For the past 14 years, she worked full-time at Langley – as a lab tech, in health records, and finally in registration services.

“Jackie was a hard worker and a pleasure to work with,” says co-worker Lanette Hayes. “She worked with honesty and integrity. Her smile and giggles were infectious. She will be dearly missed.”

On August 24, Trail cook **Merilyn Merracher** (55) passed away from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Merilyn worked for 34 years in Rossland's Mater Misericordiae Hospital, and then briefly at Trail local prior to her retirement.



MERRACHER

Merilyn served on HEU's Provincial Bargaining Committee in 1988 and the Provincial

Executive (P.E.) as regional vice-president for the Kootenays (1992 to 1998). A dedicated activist and long-time local chairperson, “she gave her heart and soul to HEU,” says Margie Anderson, HEU regional VP (Interior). “Merilyn protected the members and stood up for them for many years. She took great pride in getting the job done well.”

She is lovingly remembered by many friends and colleagues, her mother, children and extended family members.

HEU mourns the loss of long-time activist **Cathy Pinsent** (58), who passed away on October 1 from pancreatic cancer.

Prior to working at Provincial Office as a servicing rep, Cathy was an activity worker at Lions Gate Hospital for more than 20 years. She also served on the P.E. as a regional vice-president (2002 to 2008).



PINSENT

Cathy was a fierce and determined advocate for the members. “I'm sad that we've lost a great HEU sister,” says HEU director of membership services Chris Dorais. “She was true HEU – dedicated to our membership without fail. She was active in the union, in her community, and politically at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. And she was absolutely dedicated to our most vulnerable members – those on LTD, WCB, return-to-work or duty-to-accommodate.”

Cathy will be deeply missed

by colleagues, her children and partner Bob.

Retirements

A care aide for 30 years, **Elpidio Arguelles** (Central City Care) retired in October. “Jun” is recognized by his co-workers as a hard worker, a compassionate man who cared about residents, and an optimist who never complained. His retirement plans include relaxing and enjoying life at home with his wife and two children.

Colleagues and residents wish **Linda Hargreaves** (Cumberland) a happy retirement. Linda retired in June after 29 years as a housekeeping and laundry supervisor.

An energetic activist in her local and community, Linda also held all positions in her local during her 20-year career, and served three terms on the P.E. as regional vice-president (1992-1994, 1994-1996 and 2002-2004). She was a city councillor for 10 years, a Cumberland Historical Society-Miners Memorial Day organizer, a labour council delegate, and former NDP Comox Valley Constituency president.

Staff changes

HEU will truly miss recent retirees – Provincial Office servicing director **Dollia Ferguson** and Kelowna site servicing representative **Sonja Turcotte**. Both women were staunch trade unionists and fierce advocates for members. We wish them well and thank them for their many years of dedicated service.

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fnationspeople@heu.org

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First Nations members would like to hear from you! Please call if you would like to help educate our union sisters and brothers on issues that affect First Nations People.



pinktriangle@heu.org

PINK TRIANGLE

For support: afraid of being identified, feeling isolated, want to know your rights? Call for information on same-sex benefits, fighting homophobia and discrimination.



pwd@heu.org

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

If you are on WCB, LTD, or if invisibly or visibly disabled in the workplace, let us know how the union can better meet your needs.



women@heu.org

WOMEN'S

The HEU Women's Standing Committee works with women's groups, coalitions and other union committees to advance women's social and economic rights. Want to get involved?



TALK TO US TOLL-FREE!

You can call any HEU office toll-free to deal with a problem or get information. It's fast, easy and free.

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