

A publication of the B.C. General Employees' Union

Provincial



Changes to wildfire service needed to protect communities

Letter from the president

Solidarity in a changing world

It feels like just yesterday we were wrapping our 51st convention. But with the convention call in this edition the season is upon us again. Convention is the highest decision-making body in our union, and I couldn't be more excited to get back to the floor.

I have attended more than a few BCGEU conventions over the years. From my first time as a new delegate to helping lead the Component 3 delegation as 1st Vice, to running for treasurer in 2011 and president (for the first time) in 2014 to our first—and hopefully only—virtual convention in 2021. I remember them all vividly as moments of empowerment and inspiration that propelled my work as an activist.

Every time BCGEU members gather for convention the world looks different than it did the last time we gathered. And so does our union. The size and complexity of conventions grow along with the size and diversity of our membership. And the resolution topics change to reflect what is happening in the world as well as our members' evolving vision for their union, their workplaces, and the communities we all share.

So, yes, a lot changes between conventions. But what really inspires me is what remains constant.

No matter what is happening the world, no matter how large and diverse our membership

has grown, and no matter how the focus of and debate around resolutions changes, what remains constant is our solidarity—our shared commitment to leveraging our collective power to build better workplaces, and a better world, for each other.

Our solidarity has helped us get through some extraordinary challenges since our last convention—climate emergencies like floods and wildfires that have destroyed communities and taken lives, the rise of extreme political ideologies that threaten hard won rights and progressive values, an affordability crisis fueled by stubborn inflation that leaves working people falling behind and struggling to make ends meet, the ongoing impact of B.C.'s twin public health crises—COVID-19 and the poisoned drug supply. Just to name a few.

I am extremely proud of the way BCGEU members have supported each other and worked within our union and with our partners across the labour and social justice communities to protect our shared values and advance our shared goals through everything that has happened since last convention. And as we move towards convention 2024 our solidarity will be more important than ever as the world continues to change and challenge us.

In the next few months leading up to convention I will be travelling to communities across the province for worksite visits, activist

banquets, and community events and I look forward to meeting many of you and hearing your stories of solidarity, struggle, and triumph. In the meantime, I encourage all of you to consider putting your name forward as a delegate for convention—the BCGEU is not “the union” it is YOUR union and there is no better way to demonstrate your commitment to our history and our future than stepping onto the floor.

In solidarity,

Stephanie Smith
BCGEU president



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BCGEU scholarships

The BCGEU Scholarship program has provided members and their families with access to educational funds for over 40 years. Enshrined in the BCGEU Constitution, the scholarship fund is “\$75,000 or \$1 per member, whichever is greater” to fund post-secondary or post-graduate studies. Applicants submit an essay of up to 500 words on a topic selected by our union’s Education and Scholarship Committee.

The topics for the 2023 scholarship were workplace health and safety, community protest, implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, inflation, and a personal reflection on the challenges of seeking higher education.

In total, there were 338 applications submitted from across the province. The committee then reviews and selects winners based on the content of the essay. Scholarship funds are distributed equitably across the province, and between full-time and part-time students. In total, 48 students were awarded scholarships of \$1000-\$2000 for the 2023-2024 school year. Winners were presented with their scholarship by committee members at cross-component banquets and celebrations around the province.

“The BCGEU scholarship program is an accessible source of education empowerment that all members can be proud of,” said Judy Phipps, BCGEU executive vice president and chair of the committee. “This year’s applications were very impressive in breadth and scope of topics covered, highlighting many dreams and passion to shape the future of our province. We look forward to seeing where the recipients’ academic journeys lead them, and to next year’s round of applications.”

The 2024 scholarship program will open in December, with new categories for applicants, including bursaries for Indigenous members and their families.

For more information on the program visit bcgeu.ca/scholarships.



Vacancy control means security & stability for renters

On September 13th the BCGEU—along with groups representing organized labour, tenants, faith, and anti-poverty issues—held a joint press conference in Victoria calling on the provincial government to implement vacancy control.

At that event our union officially released *Evaluating Prospects for Vacancy Control Policy in B.C.'s Housing Affordability Crisis*, a report that provides a comprehensive assessment of vacancy control policy. It tackles key myths about vacancy control, and rent control more generally, and outlines case studies of vacancy control policies in B.C., Ontario, Manitoba, and P.E.I. from the 1970s onward.

The report also proposes seven recommendations—including the implementation of vacancy control as an "evidence-based social policy" rather than one that is determined based on purely economic grounds.





What is vacancy control?

Vacancy control is a form of rent control that ties allowable rent increases to a housing unit, rather than to individual tenancy agreements, the current model of rent control in our province. Vacancy control would limit the amount that landlords can increase the rent on a unit when a tenant moves out and would help remove the economic incentive to evict long-term tenants.

"Rising rents have been a key driver of housing inflation for over a decade, and this has become increasingly untenable for the one in three British Columbia residents who are renters," said BCGEU president Stephanie Smith. "While the provincial government has taken important steps to help limit runaway rent increases during a tenancy, they have stopped short of regulating rents between tenancies. We cannot leave vacancy control off the table any longer."

Delegates at BCGEU's 2021 convention passed multiple resolutions calling for our union to lobby for housing affordability measures—vacancy control, specifically was among those. Our policy report was commissioned as part of BCGEU's ongoing housing campaign, Affordable BC.

Get involved in our campaign for an Affordable BC

Visit AffordableBC.ca to:

- Sign up for email updates on our campaign and local actions in your area.
- Read our full report on vacancy control



Shaping change as a BCGEU member educator

Are you passionate about unions, social justice, and organizing for workers' rights? Do you want to build solidarity in the workplace and talk with members about the BCGEU and ways to get more involved? You should consider becoming a BCGEU member educator.



Member educators play an important role in delivering our union's worker-centered education programs and facilitating meaningful learning experiences for members.

Each spring an expression of interest (EOI) goes out to stewards, local officers, OHS reps, and equity networks to recruit new member educators. Expressions of interest are reviewed by a selection committee that includes the chair of the BCGEU Education and Scholarship Committee, two members of the Provincial Executive and union staff from a number of departments.

Member educators can choose to facilitate workshops offered through BCGEU Learning, Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), or our Organizing department. All member educators receive in-depth facilitation skills training and a paid leave-of-absence from

work is available for both the facilitation training and the course delivery.

Over the past year, many new member educators have been trained through this process. You will see them in action if you register for STEP UP!, the introduction to our union course (available to all members); Steward Fundamentals; OHS courses; and the new Organizing Fundamentals course.

You have to be registered as a steward to apply to be a member educator and the union strongly encourages applications from members of equity groups, young workers, and workers with additional language skills.

Be sure to watch for the member educator expression of interest in your inbox this February. It's a great way to meet members from all areas of the province and to support members in building worker power at their worksite.



Update: Atira workers join BCGEU!



When the last issue of *The Provincial* came out, BCGEU was welcoming over 500 new members from Atira Women's Resource Society (AWRS) to the union family. Across 35 sites, frontline workers led a bold, community-focused campaign, resulting in one of the largest organizing efforts our union has seen in years.

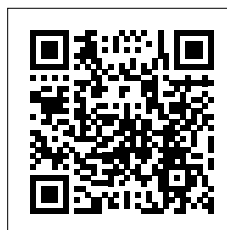
Their victory was impressive and instructive. AWRS members showed B.C. how to harness power in numbers to build justice. Now they're showing workers how to keep up the momentum after the initial organizing rush is over, so that they can enter bargaining, focused and united. Here's what the workers have been doing:

- Electing stewards
- Establishing leaders at every worksite
- Regular steward meetings
- Keeping locations connected and coordinated
- Letter-writing campaign
- Writing individual letters across sites to the employer to advance a common goal
- Rally outside Atira headquarters

Shirley Ram, a newly elected steward, said:

"Right now, the shop stewards are building awareness of employee rights and learning how to support our co-workers when they're treated fairly. We also believe we belong under the Community Health agreement with our peers in the supportive housing sector. Our BCGEU representatives have been attentive, listening to our concerns, and giving feedback on how we move this initiative forward. This has already opened up important conversations with AWRS leadership and is rebuilding trust with the organization. We're thrilled to have a voice at the table!"

If you know a worker who would benefit from a union, email organizing@bcgeu.ca



New members

28th Ave Homes Ltd. (Kingfisher and Blackbird Programs)

Community support services
↑ Vernon

The Royale Peninsula

Seniors assisted-living
↑ Surrey

Wellspring Support Inc.

Services for adults with diverse abilities
↑ Victoria
↑ Westshore

McCulloch, Nelson, Canyon, and Abbott Homes (0866488 BC Ltd.)

Homes for persons with developmental disabilities
↑ Kelowna

River Rock Casino Resort

Hospitality services
↑ Richmond

Vancouver Coastal Health

Texada Island Health Centre
↑ Texada Island

Atira Property Management Inc.

Maintenance workers
↑ Vancouver

Surrey Urban Mission Society

Unhoused services
↑ Surrey

Phoenix Drug & Alcohol Recovery and Education Society.

Addiction treatment centre
↑ Surrey



Tranquille triumph: 40 years of worker solidarity and strength

On July 19th BCGEU and community members gathered at our union's Kamloops area office to mark the 40th anniversary of the worker occupation of the Tranquille Institution.

The Tranquille occupation took place concurrently with Operation Solidarity in 1983, a province-wide movement to fight the then Social Credit government's budget cutbacks and regressive legislation.

One of those cutbacks was the announced closure of Tranquille, a residential complex for people with developmental disabilities. The government had no plan for what would happen to the residents. During the 22-day occupation, union members occupied the facility and managed it themselves, to increase pressure on the government to protect their jobs and the future of the facility's 350 residents.

"One thing that we can learn from Tranquille is that we, as workers, can run our workplaces, sometimes even more effectively than when we have management and bosses," said BCGEU executive vice-president Kari Michaels. "The workers had no legal grounds to

occupy their workplace, but they did it anyway."

Former Tranquille worker and occupier Deborah Forehead was present at the anniversary event and reflected on what the occupation meant for her.

"We were there because we were worried about the people in our care. We were fighting for human rights", said Forehead. "And what we learned through that process is that people—if they come together, and the numbers are strong enough, and if you stand your ground—you can overcome anything."

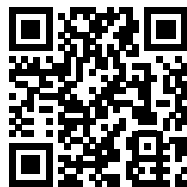
The workers' escalating pressure forced the government to agree to key demands: A committee, with union representation, to plan for the future needs of Tranquille residents. The government also agreed not to discipline the workers for the occupation and offered options for transfer or severance when the facility closed.



Want to learn more?

Visit www.bcgau.ca/tranquille to:

- Listen to a CBC interview with executive-vice president Kari Michaels and former Tranquille worker/occupier Deborah Forehead
- Watch our video about Tranquille



Retention bonus success for members in corrections and sheriff services



After several years of sounding the alarm about severe recruitment and retention problems amongst our province's corrections and sheriff services, our union achieved a \$10,000 per year recruitment and retention incentive payment for members in Component 1.

The incentive payment is intended to retain workers, especially during crucial times, and amidst more competitively paid job opportunities.

"It is a step in the right direction toward ensuring sheriffs and correctional officers are paid fairly, and that B.C.'s justice system is well resourced," said Dean Purdy, BCGEU vice president, Corrections and Sheriff Services. "But more needs to be done to get both corrections and sheriffs to a salary that will keep them from leaving for higher paying law enforcement agencies. The employer needs to look at every option, including extending the work week and expanding sheriffs' duties."

The new and welcomed incentive was announced by the Province of B.C.'s Public Service Agency (PSA) and applies to all classifications in Sheriff Services, Adult Custody Corrections, and Youth Custody Corrections. This incentive will be paid out twice per year with the first payment of \$5,000 effective July 1, 2023.

"Members in Component 1 have been saying for many years that the number one way to recruit and retain sheriffs and correctional officers in B.C. is to increase their pay. The retention bonus is a direct result of their tireless advocacy," said BCGEU president Stephanie Smith. "This incentive is a victory and a powerful reminder that when we stand together as part of our union, we can achieve significant results."

"Members in Component 1 have been saying for many years that the number one way to recruit and retain sheriffs and correctional officers in B.C. is to increase their pay. The retention bonus is a direct result of their tireless advocacy."





It's okay to not be okay: Breaking mental health stigma

As working people, we face many challenges that can impact our mental health. Whether it's the ongoing effects of the pandemic, the skyrocketing cost of living, our workloads, or increasingly, wildfire and other climate-related events. Yet while mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and stress are widespread, there is still a stigma that can prevent individuals from accessing help.

What is stigma and how do we break it? Mental health stigma has existed for a long time and broadly refers to negative thoughts, beliefs, and actions about people with mental disorders. Education is key to breaking the stigma. By learning what mental disorders are, that they are more common than ever, and that they are treatable, the less stigma there will be.

What exactly is mental health? Mental health is the capacity of each, and all of us, to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections, and personal dignity.

Who struggles with mental health? In Canada, almost one in five people aged 12 and older, reported that they needed some help with their mental health. Less than half of Canadians who think

they have depression or anxiety have gone to see a doctor about it. In the workplace, mental illnesses account for about a third of all disability claims.

What can we do? There are many actions we can take as a union to push back against stigma and improve mental health starting with supporting each other. Solidarity can include being there to listen to a struggling co-worker, or speaking out if you hear someone spreading mental health stigma. We can also work through our Occupational Health and Safety Committees to talk openly about work-related impacts on mental health and take action to address them.

Professional mental health support programs are also included in many of our collective agreements (contact your union steward if you need details) and all British Columbians have access to services and resources through www.healthlinkbc.ca. or by calling

8-1-1 any time of the day, any day of the year.

“Mental health matters to our union because it affects members and their families,” said Doug Kinna, BCGEU executive vice president and chair of the Occupational Health and Safety Committee. “Since the pandemic, there has been an increased focus on mental health in the media and in everyday conversations. By keeping that conversation going, and naming the broader, collective context of mental health, our union helps make mental health even easier to talk about and challenges the systemic issues in our workplaces and society—which ensures workers stay in their jobs, access appropriate care, and prevent mental illnesses.”



BCGEU and democracy: Why our union gets involved in political action

Have you ever wondered why unions participate in political action, like mobilizing members to vote in elections, or advocating for changes to government policy?

For one thing, union members and the working class feel the brunt of cuts to services and strict economic policies as well as wealth inequality. Past governments have pushed an agenda of downsizing, restructuring, cutting wages, and pensions—it's tax cuts for the wealthy and austerity for the rest. Governments come and go, but the policies they enact can leave long-lasting effects on the lives of workers. As an organization, our union represents the interests of workers, and engages in political action to defend and expand our interests.

"Unions are built on a foundation of solidarity and a shared desire for equality and social justice," said James Coccola, BCGEU executive vice president and chair of the Political Action Committee. "Without the political action efforts of the labour movement, we could be living in a world where the powerful and well-connected are the only ones with a say in how things are run."

When unions mobilize voters to help elect labour-friendly candidates, they contribute directly to social policies that have real, tangible benefits in our lives. Access to child care, paid time off, sick leave—among many others—are all policies that unions have fought for and won.

"As union members, we fight for justice not just for ourselves but for those around us—because when workers are united, our interests suddenly begin to



“Without the political action efforts of the labour movement, we could be living in a world where the powerful and well-connected are the only ones with a say in how things are run.”

matter. When we stand together, we win. Labour unions are powerful precisely because members are organized. Numbers matter,” said Coccola.

Unions engage in collective action, not only to build power in the workplace, but because we understand the importance of pushing governments to better reflect the interests of all workers and not just the wealthy—after all, a rising tide lifts all ships.

While those at the top blame workers for the rising cost of living, claiming workers’ wages are causing inflation, they conveniently ignore the price gouging, record profits, and ever-increasing inequality that are making lives less affordable for workers. It is the very workers who create economic growth in their communities who, themselves, have less and less access to life’s necessities such as housing, child care, and family doctors.

Our union is here to fight to have our voices heard by government decision-makers. Labour’s fight does not end at the bargaining table: first we organize our workplace, then we fight for better working conditions, then we change the world.





“It’s been really neat to actually understand the language in our collective agreement, that it’s not a bunch of gibberish, and it can help us.”

Paige Kastrukoff
Residential Care Aide

Local 406

Paige Kastrukoff has worked at Maeford Place in Quesnel for four years, primarily providing spa and shower care with the residents. “We all love the residents here,” she said. “They’ve worked their whole lives to live their senior years in a comfortable state, and they deserve it.”

Kastrukoff got involved with her union when one of her co-workers became a shop steward, and recruited Kastrukoff to join her workplace bargaining committee. “It’s been really neat to actually understand the language in our collective agreement, that it’s not a bunch of gibberish, and it can help us.”





Strength in solidarity: Maeford Place workers' journey to justice

“It was empowering telling our friends and neighbors about how the staffing shortages affect us and the residents we care for. Our community was incredibly supportive.”

When negotiations for a new collective agreement at the Maeford Place in Quesnel broke down in April, the member bargaining team was frustrated. A new owner, CareCorp, had recently taken over at the assisted living facility and refused to budge on any of the workers' top priorities. The 31 workers at Maeford Place knew they needed to apply additional pressure.

“Conditions for staff have been difficult for a long time,” said bargaining committee chair Roisin O’Brien. “With chronic short staffing, we are over-worked, and with no retirement savings plan and inferior benefits to other facilities in the region, it’s hard to recruit and retain enough staff.”

Members signed and delivered an open letter to their employer and voted unanimously to strike. This showed CareCorp they were ready to fight.

In July, they took their campaign public to raise awareness about the seniors’ care staffing crisis in Quesnel. They collected hundreds of signatures for their petition online and at the Billy Barker Days festival.

“It was empowering telling our friends and neighbors about how the staffing shortages affect us and the residents we care for,” said Paige Kastrukoff, another bargaining committee member. “Our community was incredibly supportive.”

All their efforts paid off. After two days of mediation in early September they reached a deal that included the retirement savings plan, additional paid time off, and improvements to benefits they had been fighting for.

Bargaining committee member Samantha Kardosi remarked, “You never get everything you want in bargaining, but it felt good to deliver on our key demands.”





B.C.'s wildland firefighters underpaid and undervalued

The 2023 wildfire season has been the worst that B.C. has ever experienced. Since April, more than 2,200 fires have destroyed over 2.5 million hectares. Smoke-filled skies; emergency evacuation orders; families, friends and neighbours forced to flee and, in some cases, losing their homes and livelihoods.

The grim reality of a “new normal” is inescapable for many of us including one group of frontline workers who, despite the risks and unsustainable staffing structure, are tasked to continue running towards danger.

Wildland firefighters—employed by the BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) and members of our union—include frontline crews, administrative professionals, dispatch operators and information officers. They often work in extreme conditions: blistering heat, smoke exposure, falling trees, long hours and long periods of time away from family and friends.

As climate change intensifies wildfire seasons, the cost of work as a wildland firefighter is also intensifying, but working conditions are not balancing out that cost. And the service is losing seasoned professionals and failing to recruit prepared crews.

The perfect storm

Many wildfire fighters get into this line of work because they want to help. But the scope of the job has changed – from fighting fires in wilderness to fighting fires in communities, too – and that comes with a different level of stress, a different level of fatigue and—due to the current staffing model—increasing amounts of overtime. In fact, many wildfire fighters this season worked 100 or more overtime days—work they had to do to keep their communities safe. As a result, burnout and safety reached life-threatening levels.

Additionally, wildland firefighters in B.C. lack the compensation, benefits and pension options that other public safety responders have.

“Many people in British Columbia would be surprised to learn that wildland firefighters are paid at close to the lowest grid for the public service and now start at \$26/hour,” said Rob Davis, Component 20 vice-president. “We fought hard for all public service members in contract negotiations, but what continues to be missing for our firefighters in particular is a compensation model that properly recognizes years of service, training levels, and experience.”

Furthermore, most BCWS positions are seasonal, and the positions that do facilitate career growth are few and far between—a structural holdover from a previous era when fire seasons were much shorter.

Needing better for themselves and

their families, seasoned firefighters are leaving BCWS for the private sector or municipal firefighting.

“Right now, we are seeing 10- and 20-year veterans leaving,” said Paul Finch, BCGEU treasurer. “They love the work, they love the job, but they don’t see a sustainable future for themselves.”

Physical and mental stress is on the rise for new recruits. Lack of experience and fires starting earlier in the spring and lasting longer into the fall all contribute.

“There are huge retention issues. Crew leaders that haven’t experienced highly stressful environments have no choice but to go out there soon after they are hired,” said Sebastian Kallos, firefighter and Local 2003 chair. “Yet, experience is critically important on a fire line. It can be dangerous and ineffective to have inexperienced crews, especially in the incident command and crew

To add your voice to the campaign, visit:

wildfire.bcgeu.ca



lead positions, making complex decisions about millions of dollars of resources and people's lives."

The path forward

Unsurprisingly, members are questioning the sustainability of their careers and are coming together to advocate for solutions.

In August, wildfire members launched an open letter asking government to overhaul the BCWS compensation system, increase wages, improve pension options and provide promising career paths.

Our call follows the B.C. government's announcement in February 2022 to evolve BCWS from a seasonal, to year-round service— a move our union had been advocating for, for years. At the time of the announcement, close to 2,000 BCGEU members worked for BCWS, but only 267 were in regular full-time positions. Through contract negotiations later in 2022, the government created 113 more regular full-time positions.

But as the increased burnout rates, and resignations, have proven this season, more than regular full-time positions are needed.

"We welcome the transition to a year-round model, but the fundamental shift that needs to happen is a compensation model that will attract and keep experience within the BC Wildfire Service", said Finch. "A sustainable professional wildfire service needs to offer a long-term career path for wildfire fighters. And compensating professional firefighters is going to save the province money, and lead to better fire outcomes for all communities."



Zachary Bunting
Initial Attack Crew Leader
Local 2005

Zachary Bunting has worked with the BC Wildfire Service for five seasons and is currently stationed in Lillooet. When he first started, he recalls being "barely" aware that he was a union member.

"I think that's the classic experience of being a seasonal worker where you're busy all the time," he recalled. "It was pretty much, 'Here's a Pulaski [hand tool], here's a little bit of training, and you should get out there and go to work' until the season ended."

Bunting has observed and felt the effects of higher turnover within the wildfire service in recent years, which he connects to a long-term trend of successive governments' disinvestment in public services. For him, getting involved with his union – first as a steward, and now as a local chair – is about getting involved with a movement that pushes to reverse that trend.

"I was kind of struck by the amazing opportunity I had to be involved in our union. And that means being part of making the world a better place. It's super inspiring that I get to be part of that."



The Gildan grip: A fight for fairness in fabric

Canadian company Gildan Activewear is one of the largest clothing manufacturers in the world with operations in the United States, Honduras, and the Caribbean. There's a good chance that a t-shirt in your closet bears its logo.

While the company prides itself on ethical manufacturing practices, Gildan workers report high rates of occupational injuries and illness caused by long working hours and high productivity goals. In addition, Honduras is considered to have a high rate of impunity for crime, and violent organized assaults on union activists have also occurred.

Solidarity with Honduran workers

On July 20, 2023, Gildan announced the closure of its San Miguel clothing factory, leaving 2,700 workers—primarily Honduran women—jobless. Hundreds have serious occupational injuries and illnesses from working in Gildan factories but have now lost access to medical and rehabilitation services and will be blocked from applying for disability pensions.

The factory closure came just months after the Supreme Court of Justice of Honduras ruled that Gildan had unjustly dismissed workers at this factory and must reinstate workers under better working conditions. Instead, Gildan shuttered the entire factory, citing changing “market conditions.”

“Other maquilas [sweatshops] won't hire Gildan employees because they know they've been broken,” said Andrea Duncan, BCGEU vice president for Component 3 and a co-chair of the BCGEU's International Solidarity Committee, who met extensively with Gildan workers in Honduras and witnessed working conditions firsthand. “This is Gildan's reputation in the garment industry: it wrings workers of everything they have and leaves them threadbare.

But it doesn't have to be this way. Gildan can and must choose to do better.”

To pressure Gildan to take care of its workers, the Honduran Women's Collective (CODEMUH) launched a letter-writing campaign addressed to Gildan's CEO demanding that the company rehire these workers at other Gildan factories in Honduras.

Our union also sent a letter to the company in July asking tough questions about Gildan's compliance with Honduran labour law, and whether it would relocate workers to other factories as it has done before. But the BCGEU is not stopping there.

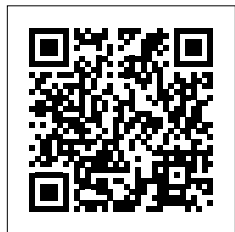
Fashioning change with investor power

In 2022, through our Capital Stewardship program, the BCGEU became a small investor in Gildan. We filed our first shareholder proposal earlier this year asking

the company to include human rights, employee safety, and workplace risk reduction into the company's next sustainability-linked loan in 2027.

“For the BCGEU, shareholder engagement is an integral part of responsible investment,” said BCGEU President Stephanie Smith. “We regularly bring issues to the attention of the companies our union is invested in, including working conditions and workers' rights, because we believe that better managed companies make better investments.”

Add your voice! Send a letter to Gildan at codev.org



RE UNION

BC GENERAL EMPLOYEES' UNION CONVENTION 2024

May 29 - June 1, 2024
Westin Bayshore, Vancouver, B.C.

What happens at convention?

Convention is the highest governing body of our union. At convention, members of our union like you, gather as delegates to set our direction for the next three years. Delegates elect our union's Executive Committee, debate and pass resolutions that amend our constitution or direct our priorities, and celebrate our collective work to win justice, dignity, and respect for working people.

Who gets elected at convention?

Our union's president, treasurer, and five executive vice-presidents will be elected by convention delegates. This will be the first convention where delegates will elect an executive vice-president for equity groups. Members interested in running for one of these offices should read the candidate guidelines on the next page.

How do resolutions work?

At convention, delegates will debate and pass resolutions that amend our union's constitution or direct our union's priorities. They're different than bargaining

proposals. Instead, they focus on the union as whole. For example, notable resolutions that passed at our 2021 convention included:

- The creation of a fifth executive vice-president for equity groups.
- Changing our name from the "B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union" to the "B.C. General Employees' Union" to reflect our union's growing diversity.

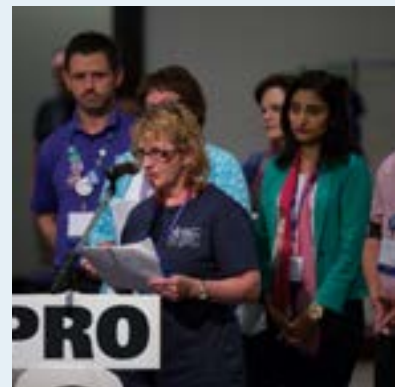
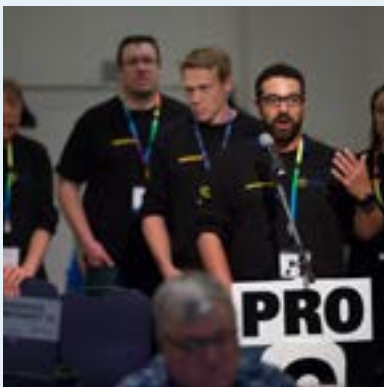
Resolutions originate in our union's locals or through the Provincial Executive and its committees. Any member can submit a resolution for consideration to their local.

Locals will hold meetings to discuss resolutions in early 2024.

How are convention delegates selected?

Over 500 BCGEU members will attend Convention 2024. The vast majority will be selected at meetings of their locals in early 2024—often the same meeting that will consider resolutions.

In addition to local delegates, your component will also elect young worker and equity delegates. These elections will happen online in the first few months of 2024. Details on participation in the young worker and equity delegate elections will be released in early-2024.



Guidelines for full-time officer and executive vice-presidential candidates' election campaigns

Policy H-10

1. No funds or assistance in kind will be contributed from the union, components, locals or cross component committees other than that specified in the guidelines.

There will be no component hospitality suites during convention.

2. Declared candidates will have an opportunity to have a picture and a personal statement of no more than 1,000 words in a special election issue of The Provincial and on the BCGEU website. These will be placed in random order by position being sought. Appropriate notices to potential candidates will be announced in The Provincial and on the website. Information regarding how members declare their candidacy, as well as the guidelines in this policy, will be provided to members on the website and in the last issue of The Provincial in the year preceding the Constitutional Convention and again in the March issue of the convention year.

3. Following The Provincial deadline as set for the personal statements by candidates for either full-time officer, or for the executive vice-president positions, the president will notify the provincial executive and the cross component committee chairs of the declared candidates and the offices they seek. Within ten days of that notice, the date for a video recording of each candidate will be announced by union headquarters to include declared candidates for full-time officer and executive vice-president positions. The video recordings will be posted on the BCGEU website.

Leave of absence and travel expenses for declared candidates only will be paid by union headquarters. Administrative assistance for the scheduling and conduct of the all-candidates' webcast(s) will be provided by the union.

4. If components wish to invite declared candidates for full-time officer and executive vice-president positions to address a component executive meeting, or a component caucus at convention, they must invite all candidates who have declared their candidacy for the same position prior to the component executive meeting or the component executive convention caucus.
5. Local executive and convention delegates' mailing addresses, telephone and email addresses will be given to candidates for the exclusive purpose of the election campaign and candidates and their campaign workers who will access the lists will be asked to sign a statement to that effect.
6. Photocopying at BCGEU offices will be available for candidates to a maximum of 2,000 copies, double-sided in black and white.

Copying will be done by union support staff.

Envelopes, labels and postage will be provided by the union for one all-delegate mailing by the candidate. If the candidate desires, support staff may run the envelopes through the union's postage meter. Such requests, as well as requests for photocopying, will be made through a servicing staff representative.

7. Campaign expenditures by each candidate are not to exceed \$2,500 in cash or in-kind contributions (value of material goods provided), in addition to those provided for in points 3, and 6. All claims must be receipted. In-kind contributions are counted as expenses and must be accompanied by a statement confirming fair market value. Candidates shall be reimbursed for \$1,250 of the \$2,500 maximum expenditure.
8. No money is to be solicited or accepted from outside organizations or any sources external to the Union.
9. Within 60 days after the convention, a statement of campaign expenditures will be submitted by each candidate to the provincial executive. Candidates will be asked to use the electronic form available from the finance department.
10. There shall be no staff involvement in the political process. If there are any allegations of staff interference, the complaint should be made in writing to the president who will initiate due process and take action if warranted. Elected members shall not initiate involvement of staff in the political process. Should staff have complaints, they shall make them in writing to the appropriate director who will refer them to the president for due process and action if warranted.

Staff will be advised by the president of each candidate at the time that they announce their candidacy.

11. No candidate shall produce or make statements that will bring disrepute on the union, other candidates or its members.
12. Campaigns will be kept internal and candidates will not seek out the media as a means of communicating with the membership or have the media present at all candidate meetings, nor will outside endorsements be permitted for a specific position.
13. During convention, the following rules will apply:
 - (a) No posters in the hall will be permitted. Posters to be posted outside the hall will be dealt with by the sergeant-at-arms committee.
 - (b) Buttons and leaflets must be distributed outside the hall.
 - (c) Equipment will be provided for candidates by union



headquarters for display of electronic campaign material outside the hall.

(d) Honoured guests as appointed by the president will form the balloting committee.

(e) Each candidate can appoint up to two scrutineers for the ballot count.

(f) The president will request an honoured guest or life member to chair the elections.

(g) Candidates will have a total of five minutes to address voting delegates from the convention stage. Nominators will speak from the floor and limit their remarks to nominate their candidate.

Should the candidate wish their nominator to speak for them, the nominator will have the opportunity to do so later, after the nomination is accepted, from the convention stage.

14. Any campaign materials that are accessible by the general public (e.g. websites) or produced for distribution at convention, must include the following statement: *"This is a publication of (name), candidate for office at the BCGEU convention. It is not an official publication of the BCGEU. Views expressed are those of the candidate"*. No campaign materials will use the BCGEU logo.
15. A candidate workshop will be provided for declared candidates prior to the candidate video recording.



Important dates and details:

- **January - February 2024** – Local meetings to elect delegates and submit resolutions
- **February - March 2024** – Equity and young worker delegate elections
- **February 14, 2024** – Deadline for declared candidates to submit a biography and high-resolution head and shoulders photo for publication in the Spring 2024 issue of *The Provincial*.

Running for one of the executive offices?

Declare your candidacy to: candidate.liaison@bcgeu.ca



OPEN SUNDAYS
OPEN HOLIDAYS
EXTENDED HOURS

SHOP PUBLIC

WHERE YOU SHOP
DOES MAKE
A DIFFERENCE

BC LIQUOR STORES
BC CANNABIS STORES

