



Striking community social services workers demand government action

May 13, 1999

Over 1,000 angry community social services workers rallied in downtown Vancouver today, demanding the government make good on its promises to end wage and benefit discrimination against 10,000 workers in this sector.

"I am angry that after two months on the picket line, we're still waiting for the government to honour its commitment to the women and men who care for our children, our families, and our society's most vulnerable," said John Shields, president of the B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union. "These low-paid workers deserve better. They deserve respect and dignity, not false promises."

Zorica Bosancic, acting secretary-business manager of the Hospital Employees' Union said, "Children and Families Minister Lois Boone should spend less time backing the employers' last offer and more time constructing a plan that would meet her government's commitment to parity. It's time for government to abandon its intractable position so we can get back to the table and conclude negotiations for fair and just collective agreements."

Barry O'Neill, President of CUPE BC said, "contrary to what the Minister is saying, the employer's last proposal does not include any long-range plan for parity with the health sector. What's more, the employer is refusing to address the problem of 24-hour live-in shifts or provide successorship protection, and is excluding child care workers from any wage and benefit increases."

Julio Trujillo, negotiator for the Health Sciences Association, said the government is seriously misinformed when it claims that community social services workers have been offered increases between 10 and 20 percent.

"Under the employer's latest offer, thousands of workers in this sector would get nothing more than 0, 0 and 2 per cent," Trujillo said. "Although the government claims they are committed to addressing wage and benefit parity, it seems this only applies to a limited number of workers in this sector."

Community social services workers are on strike province-wide at 140 agencies across the province. Most have been without a contract for over a year.

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