

BULLETIN

## **November 6: a day for recognizing the challenges community social service workers face**

November 6, 2014

Violence in the workplace, workload, health and safety issues are just a few major challenges community social service workers face.

Since 2008, the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) has recognized November 6 as Community Social Service Workers Appreciation Day. Now two provinces and over 125 communities across Canada also recognize November 6 as a day to show our appreciation for the compassionate work community social service workers do.

This year, as we continue to honour the contribution community social services workers make to society, it is a good time to reflect on the challenges they face in caring for the most vulnerable in our communities.

Survey results show violence in the workplace and workload among the biggest concerns for community social service workers

NUPGE surveyed community social service workers across the country to find out what are the biggest issues facing them in their positions.

The results of a recent survey on community social services made for grim reading:

- 65 per cent of community social service workers who responded have experienced workplace violence
- 60 per cent of community social service workers have experienced an injury in the workplace

Responses to two other questions made it clear workload is also an issue:

- Almost two-thirds of those responding have seen their caseloads increase
- 18 per cent were expected to do volunteer work for their employer

Shocking as these numbers are, they are not new. A 2007 NUPGE publication *Health and Safety in Community-Based Social Service* reported that 74 per cent of workers in B.C. had been victims of one type of violence in the previous year or had seen a colleague attacked. Researchers also found that cuts to funding for community social services resulted in major increases in workloads.

"Community social service workers are being asked to sacrifice their health and safety to try to make up for cuts to federal and provincial funding," said NUPGE National President James Clancy. "Workers who care for the most vulnerable people in our community deserve much, much better."

Advocating for increased funding and support for the community social service sector by NUPGE members is having a positive effect

The one silver lining is that the years of hard work by NUPGE activists is having an impact.

In British Columbia, B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU/NUPGE) led a successful fight

for additional funding for community social services, while the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU/NUPGE), working with families of people with developmental disabilities, succeeded in getting the Ontario government to commit to increasing funding.

Whether it's supporting adults, youth, and children with disabilities or providing a refuge for women fleeing violence, community social service workers make a huge difference in people's lives. Community Social Service Workers Appreciation Day is a chance to say thank you for the contribution those workers make to our community.

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